

HIGHLIGHTS

- **UNHCR Representative Mireille Girard:** "At the moment we cannot encourage or promote refugee returns."



Visiting the Old souk in Tripoli with Director of the UN's Middle East and West Asia Political Affairs Division Susanne Rose. ©UNDP/Lebanon

FIGURES

(As of 31 June 2018)

# of estimated refugees	976,065
# of registered refugees	976,065
# of returnees	35,000
# of Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS)	32,000
# of Palestine Refugees from Lebanon (PRL)	270,000
# of vulnerable Lebanese	1,500,000
Total Lebanese population	4,400,000

FOLLOW US

Twitter: @OCHALebanon
@UNLazzarini



You can subscribe to our mailing list by scanning with any QR code reader app

In this issue

- UN and NGOs counter unemployment P.1
- Government eases humanitarian access P.2
- Interview with UNHCR Representative P.3
- LHF completes US\$6 million Allocation P.5
- Humanitarians update Contingency Plan P.6
- UNICEF response to stop measles spread P.7
- Islam's Story P.8

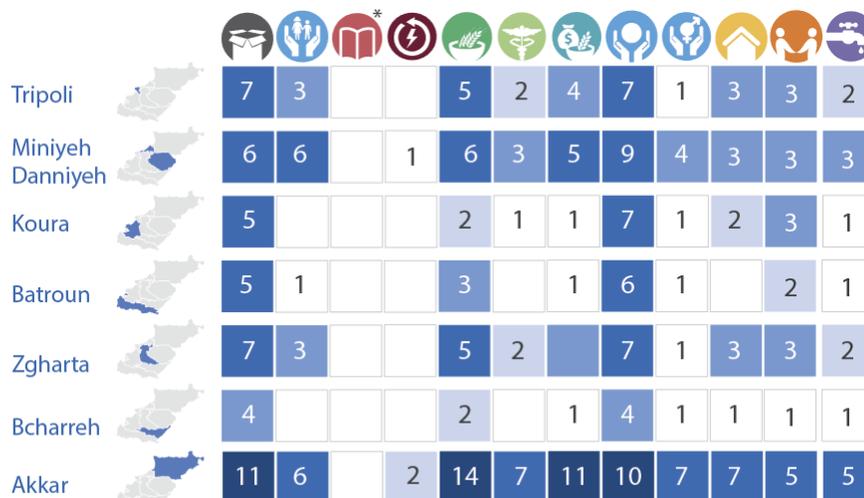
Welcome to the 32nd edition of the Lebanon Humanitarian Bulletin. In this issue, we look at the situation in the north of Lebanon, where poverty and unemployment are among the most prominent challenges faced by the population. We interviewed Mireille Girard, the UNHCR Representative in Lebanon to learn more about the situation in the country and share her views on returns. We give the latest news related to the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund and the Contingency Plan, while sharing the updates on the UNICEF measles vaccination campaign. Finally, we tell the story of Islam, a Syrian refugee with special needs, who received help from Medair.

UN and NGOs fight unemployment in Tripoli

Youth initiating new approaches to tackle conflict transformation

Northern Lebanon is one of the country's most deprived regions, with worrying poverty levels, high numbers of refugees and some of the worst unemployment rates in the country. Out of a total population of 1.1 million people, 708,000 live under the poverty line, this includes 341,000 deprived Lebanese, over 266,000 Syrian refugees, 88,000 Palestine refugees and almost 12,000 Lebanese returnees from Syria.

Residents of northern Lebanon face key challenges such as impoverishment, high level of early school dropout, drug abuse, worn-out infrastructure and lack of public spaces.



* Data not available

Number of LCRP projects implemented in northern Lebanon

According to the latest World Bank statistics released in October 2017, the working-age population in the North among Lebanese is estimated at 610,000 individuals, of which 53 percent are inactive, leaving a total labour force of 288,000. Within the participating labour

force, 20 percent are employers and 22 percent are self-employed – both largely informal. Residents in Tripoli believe that youth unemployment is a key reason for unrest in the region.

In response to the extensive needs in the two governorates, 61 humanitarian actors operate in the area, implementing 89 projects notably in the sectors of social stability, livelihoods, food and protection.

New social stability mechanisms established in Tripoli

During a visit to Tripoli on 2 July, the Director of the UN's Middle East and West Asia Political Affairs Division Susanne Rose and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Philippe Lazzarini met dozens of young people and adults living in different neighborhoods of the city and discussed their needs and challenges.

In Qobbeh, one of Tripoli's neighborhoods linking the vulnerable areas of Bab El-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen, the delegation visited a newly-established Social Development Centre (SDC). The creation of the new SDC comes in response to pressing needs as Qobbeh has welcomed large amount of internally displaced people and refugees in the last two decades, making it one of the most overpopulated areas in Tripoli.



The Social Development Centre on Qobbeh is a space for youth to share thoughts and interact together ©UNDP Lebanon

The SDC's objective is to become a common space for youth to meet, share their thoughts and interact together.

The delegation met with youth who started a UNDP-supported initiative in June 2017 to boost social stability in Qobbeh and other neighborhoods in Tripoli. The first initiative is led by a group from Al Harake Barake Mouvement who work with people disabled as a result of the Tripoli clashes between 2012 and 2015, to help them reintegrate in the society. The second project by the Tripoli-based Playback Theatre troupe, is helping to create spaces to share thoughts and empathy between affected communities from both sides of the conflict. The third project mainly targets young female entrepreneurs, activists and social workers in the area; it aims at empowering women to help build peace in the city.

Government eases humanitarian access

50 humanitarian aid workers granted access to Lebanon

During the Brussels II Conference on 24-25 April 2018, the Government of Lebanon renewed its pledge to facilitate the work of Non-Governmental Organizations by easing bureaucratic constraints, notably the issuance of visas and work permits to foreign NGO workers.

Since the conference, the UN-led Access task force has facilitated, through dialogue, the issuance by the Ministry of Labor of work permits for more than 50 international experts from 18 different international NGOs.

INGOs rely massively on Lebanese staff, which constitute at least 90 percent of their workforce, according to OCHA surveys. INGOs operations benefit from Lebanese labour whose knowledge and expertise are indispensable. Foreign experts can however be needed when initiating new projects which require international experience, keeping

The working age population in the North is estimated at 610,000 individuals, of which 53 percent are inactive.

The UN-led Access task force has facilitated the issuance by the Ministry of Labor of work permits to more than 50 international staff.

existing projects up to global standards or streamlining operations with headquarters procedures.

Despite this progress, many INGOs continue to face structural problems. Various bureaucratic processes are still mired in unpredictable delays, imposing significant expenses on organizations and making it challenging to attract and retain qualified international staff. Ultimately, the repercussions of procedural delays are felt by the populations in need, as delays in issuing paperwork end up delaying the delivery of assistance to refugees and vulnerable Lebanese alike.

Interview with UNHCR Representative Mireille Girard

“At the moment, we cannot encourage or promote refugee return.”

Q: What is specific about the Lebanese context on the issue of refugee returns?

“For UNHCR, it is essential to be able to visit returnees as they go back or to be able to assess villages before they return.”

Mireille Girard: The specificity of Lebanon is, first of all, the large concentration of refugees in a very small country. Lebanon is the country that presents the highest concentration per capita in the whole world and in history. So the challenge for Lebanon is the scale of the refugee presence. This is a challenge for the country, and for us as humanitarian workers as well. Meeting the needs of a population that is increasingly vulnerable is a daily struggle. For instance, it is very serious to have to turn away people from hospitals simply because we don't have money for chronic diseases, or to have only half of school-age children in schools because their parents rely on their children to supplement their incomes. The needs are increasing, the scale of vulnerability is huge, the humanitarian response is barely keeping people afloat and cannot really change the overall environment for refugees. That's a challenge for the situation in Lebanon.



Mireille Girard ©UNHCR Lebanon

In the context of returns, similarly, for the Syrian refugees, the challenge to return is the scale and the complexity of the issues in Syria. This is a vast country. The scale of destructions is massive. Many people's houses have been destroyed, the level of trauma is very high.

Predictability of access is an obstacle for return. For UNHCR, it is essential to be able to visit returnees as they go back or to be able to assess villages before they return. If we don't have access, we cannot answer to refugees who ask whether and when we will be there at their place of destination.

In terms of logistics, there are not many logistical issues. There are good roads in Syria. Lebanon is a neighbouring country, and there are a number of entry points between the two countries. The challenge is not a logistical one. It would be simple for refugees to go back to their homes if the obstacles they see to their return were addressed.

Q: What is UNHCR's position on returns?

Mireille Girard: The position of UNHCR, and of the UN in general, is that at the moment we cannot encourage or promote refugee returns. Our teams are discussing with the concerned authorities in Syria and internationally about removing obstacles that refugees

see for their returns, for example, recovering identity documents upon return, or non-punishment for having left the country or for not having gone through the military service. Recovering property is a critical issue as well. While we are still working on these issues, we cannot organize returns.

That said, it is everyone's right and own decision to decide when the time is right for him or her to return. A number of people are returning now to Syria. Last year, 11,000 returned from Lebanon to various parts of Syria. This was their decision. We are not here to decide on their behalf and we respect their decisions. What we are trying to do is to be as relevant and useful as possible as refugees prepare for departure. For example, making sure that they get their civil documents before leaving is part of our job. Sometimes people don't see that as a priority, they are more concerned trying to sell the little they have so they can return with some money to reestablish themselves in Syria. We explain to them how important it is to try and secure documentation as well, this will ease their arrival back home. For instance, having an ID card for a child is very important to prove his nationality, to go to school, to be vaccinated. Recovery of national ID documents and associated rights is dependent on refugees having their birth registration from Lebanon, their parents' marriage registration or divorce registration, or the death certificates of their relatives who passed away in exile, so they can also be recorded back in Syria. We try to expedite the obtention of these documents for refugees before they go.

"We respect [refugees'] decisions. What we are trying to do is to be as relevant and useful as possible as refugees prepare for departure."

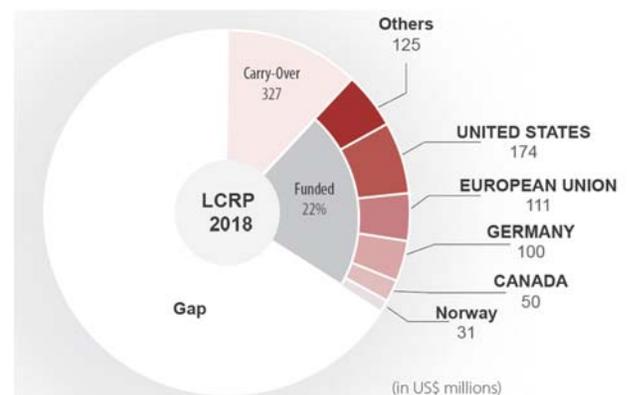
Other important documents are in the area of education, whether refugees leave after the exams or before, they need certificates from the schools to show that they have actually completed the levels; otherwise they may have to redo them in Syria. Having their residency documents in Lebanon up to date is also important so that refugees do not have to pay a fine for expired residency upon departure; this is another key deterrent for people. If they anticipate and worry that they will have to pay several hundreds of dollars of penalty for expired residency when they have already about \$800 of debts per family, this is a dramatic expense. They prefer to keep any savings they may have for when they go back, or to settle the debts they have in Lebanon before leaving. We work with the security authorities to expedite residency renewals or to wave the penalty upon departure.

Other key issues are vaccinations such as polio. It is important that children are vaccinated before they leave, because the date of the next vaccination campaign in their area in Syria is unknown. Health structures continue to function in Syria, but many have been damaged. Stocks of medicines may be missing, so they need to go back with a stock of medications if they have serious diseases. This is the kind of help we give before departure. We cannot promise or anticipate what we will be able to do for them in Syria. It depends on the access on the ground. There have been cases where we have had access when people returned from Lebanon and we have been able to visit refugees several times after they returned, looked at their situation and followed up. At the moment we don't have unconditional access to all returnees when they go back; and this is something we are trying to secure.

Funding

LCRP activities 34 percent funded

At the end of June 2018, LCRP partners reported a total of US\$ 918 million in available resources, including US\$591 million received in 2018 and US\$327 million carried over from 2017. In total, partners have 34 percent of the funding required to implement activities under the 2018 LCRP.



Source: Inter-Agency Q2 funding update as of July 2018

LHF completes US\$6 million Standard Allocation

Funding mobilization for 2018

During the donor meeting held on 24 October 2017 to mobilize resources for the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF), RC/HC Philippe Lazzarini announced a new fundraising target of US\$20 million for the LHF in 2018. As part of this, the RC/HC also encouraged donor partners to increase their support for the LHF through multi-year funding to ensure its continuity and to provide better visibility for the coming years.

As of mid-July OCHA, is pleased to report that \$16 million have been received so far, with an additional \$0.5 million pledged.

The LHF has received \$16 million since October 2017, with an additional \$0.5 million pledged.



\$7 million received

\$6.91M Paid amount
\$0.50M Pledged amount

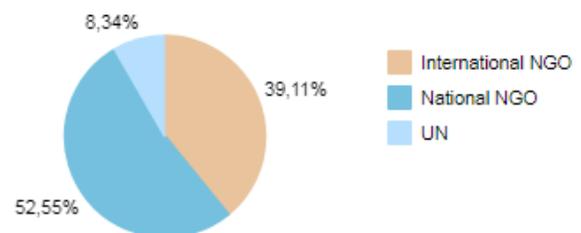


Since November 2017, the LHF received \$7.35 million from Germany (\$3.55 million), Denmark (\$3.2 million) and France (\$0.6 million) towards our 2018 budget. In 2018 alone, five donors contributed with a total of \$6.9 million: Ireland (\$2.41 million), Sweden (\$1.89 million), Belgium (\$1.85 million), Qatar (\$0.5 million) and Iceland (\$0.25 million). The contributions grow to \$7.4 million when Switzerland's pledge of \$0.5 million for 2018 is taken into consideration. In addition, there has been progress on multi-year funding, with Qatar providing multi-year financing alongside with Belgium and Switzerland.

Launch of the first Standard Allocation

Following the call for proposals issued in March, seven Sector Review Committees with Sectors coordinators, UN and NGO representation conducted the Strategic review of 54 projects. A total of 16 projects were selected and approved by the Humanitarian Coordinator for funding. The list of projects is publicly available on the LHF's Business Intelligence platform, accessible [here](#) (After landing on the page, please deselect all countries and select only Lebanon). Following the signature of the Grant Agreements, and ahead of the start of the new projects, the HFU conducted kick-off meetings with all partners to ensure mutual comprehension of expectations throughout the projects' implementation.

Out of the 16 projects, 8 are implemented by National NGOs (amounting to \$3.15 million, or 53% of the allocated funds), 7 by International NGOs (\$2.34 million or 39% of allocated funds) and 1 by a UN Agency (\$0.5 million, or 8% of allocated funds). These proportions are aligned with the LHF's strategy of increasing direct funding towards local partners whenever possible and adequate.



The second Advisory Board meeting of 2018 took place on 19 June, and the final results of the allocation were presented, together with a pilot on Localization which received very positive feedback.

The next Standard Allocation is expected to be launched in September.

To stay updated the latest LHF updates, follow them on Twitter at [@LHF_Lebanon](#).

Humanitarians update Lebanon Contingency Plan

Plan aims to enhance preparedness for crisis scenarios

Lebanon's humanitarian community is updating its HCT Contingency Plan for 2018-2019, with a stronger emphasis this year on operational preparedness. The exercise, led by OCHA and UNHCR, kicked off on 25 June with the contingency planning workshop which was attended by 65 experts from UN agencies, the UNIFIL peacekeeping mission, donors, national and international NGOs, the Lebanese Red Cross and Government counterparts.

This exercise was followed by an overview of the existing preparedness measures in Lebanon, with a summary of the crisis response tools and mechanisms

Reviewing preparedness tools and mechanisms

This exercise was followed by an overview of the existing preparedness measures in Lebanon, with a summary of the crisis response tools and mechanisms in Lebanon (from Operation Rooms to Rapid Needs Assessments) followed by presentations by UNIFIL, UNRWA, WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF on agency-specific emergency plans. The Bekaa intersector also



presented its draft contingency plan, which is a good example of the regional-level contingency planning that is currently underway. Building on this overview, the groups had an initial look at the humanitarian community's level of operational readiness for each scenario, identified key challenges and bottlenecks, and formulated a series of recommendations on improving preparedness.

Next steps

The next step is to feed into the contingency planning processes at the sub-national level, which will articulate detailed crisis response plans for the Bekaa, South, North and Mount Lebanon – including coordination mechanisms, minimum preparedness actions, and a response matrix outlining who does what in case of an emergency.

The revised Contingency Plan, due to be completed by September, will include an analysis of the context, an overview of all the crisis response tools and mechanisms in Lebanon, and the four area-level contingency plans, as well as an annex outlining coordination arrangements with UNIFIL in case of an emergency.

UNICEF initiates emergency response to stop measles spread

US \$1.11 million is granted for measles vaccination campaigns

Measles, which was previously sought to have disappeared in Lebanon, has reemerged in recent months. 813 rash cases were reported between January and June 2018, 706 of which have been confirmed as measles, according to the Ministry of Public Health.

While cases have been observed in all regions, the vulnerable provinces of Bekaa and Baalbeck/Hermel have been most affected. As a sober reminder that disease hits all

These funds have allowed UNICEF to launch an emergency vaccination campaign, targeting children in need.

regardless of nationality, 78% of those affected are Lebanese nationals compared to 22 percent Syrians, with victims being mostly children under the age of four.

In response, the Humanitarian Country Team submitted a CERF request – the Central Emergency Response Fund – in May on behalf of UNICEF. A CERF allocation was granted on 12 May for an amount of US\$1.11 million, to cover urgent immunization activities.

These funds have allowed UNICEF to launch an emergency vaccination campaign, targeting children in need either because they weren't previously inoculated, or because they have been in contact with measles cases.

Doing so, the Fund prioritized the most affected and vulnerable cadasters, delivering vaccines either through the local Primary Health Centers, or via mobile units in the more remote border regions, where vaccines were provided freely to every child.

A key objective was also to use the occasion to strengthen pre-existing local health systems. UNICEF thus managed to train more than 150 health workers, and has automatized the data entry system, giving workers more time to focus on the response. The Fund's joint efforts with local partners and the Ministry of Public health have so far stopped the epidemic's attack rate from increasing, a significant first step towards bringing it under control.



*Emergency vaccination campaigns targeting children in need
©UNICEFLebanon2018/Diego*

Islam's story

LHF and Medair help people with specific needs to have better lives

Coming to the Bekaa valley in Lebanon from Rural Damascus (Rif Dimashq) in Syria was not easy for Islam, a 12-year-old girl. Though she came with her parents and siblings two years ago, and she didn't have to separate from any of them, she had to leave behind her school and friends, her cousins, her home and other things that made her comfortable and eased her life.

Islam used to sleep on the floor, Medair provided her a mattress, as well as a commode chair and a ramp.

Islam was born with a disability and is not able to walk or grow the same way as other children. Nonetheless, despite her situation, she is very optimistic about life and wants to keep learning. Islam, who loves going to school more than anything else, spends most of her time at home writing and drawing. She misses her homeland Syria a lot, especially going to school and her cousins who she used to play with. "I hope we can one day go



Islam with her two brothers and little sister ©MEDAIR

back to Syria, so I can get back to school and see my cousins and play together.”

Two years ago, Islam’s family decided to move to Lebanon. Zahria, Islam’s mother, explained why they had to leave their homeland: “It was really hard in Syria. My husband used to work as a taxi driver, but he couldn’t anymore since it was no longer safe.” With her husband unable to work, either as a taxi driver or as a butcher, his old profession, the family slowly began to run out of money.

It was not always easy for Zahria to take care of Islam in Lebanon, especially enrolling her in school, she says: “until now I am not able to find a school that can accept Islam, none are equipped for her.”

Islam used to sleep on the floor. Medair, through the ‘Person with Specific Needs’ intervention funded by the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF) provided her with a bed and a mattress, as well as a commode chair and ramp that gave her easier access to the toilet. “My life became much better”, says Islam. “I can easily do what I love most, which is writing and drawing, since I now have a bed and mattress”.

The purpose of the ‘Person with Specific Needs’ intervention in Lebanon is to address the issue of inadequate shelter quality for uniquely vulnerable people living in informal settlements or in sub-standard buildings. These persons are unable to address their own shelter needs due to physical or visual impairments from birth, or resulting from illness, infection, injury, or old age.

About Medair

Medair is a humanitarian organization inspired by Christian faith to relieve human suffering in some of the world’s most remote and devastated places. It works to bring relief and recovery to people in crisis, regardless of race, creed or nationality, providing a range of emergency relief and recovery services in Lebanon.

About the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF)

LHF is one of OCHA’s Country Based Pooled Funds (CBPF), established in 2014 following the decentralization of the Regional Syria Fund. Under the overall authority of the Humanitarian Coordinator, it plays a key role in funding urgent humanitarian needs in Lebanon by injecting funding into prioritized and underfunded sectors. find out more at: <https://bit.ly/2K0rGQb>

For further information, please contact:

Milena El Murr, elmurr2@un.org or **Anne-France White**, white5@un.org, or email: ochalebanon@un.org

OCHA Humanitarian Bulletins are available at www.unocha.org | www.reliefweb.int | Twitter: [@OCHALebanon](https://twitter.com/OCHALebanon)