

HIGHLIGHTS

- HC Lazzarini reasserts the international community's support for the stability of Lebanon
- Launch of the 2018 LCRP and key results under the 2017 LCRP
- UNRWA's funding crisis risks assistance to millions of Palestine refugees
- ERC Lowcock meets refugees and promises to advocate for them with the international community
- Lebanon Humanitarian Fund bridges critical protection funding gaps in 2017
- Cash winter assistance helps refugees overcome harsh weather
- Key upcoming events

FIGURES

(As of 31 December 2017)

# of estimated refugees	997,552
# of registered refugees	997,552
# of returnees	35,000
# of Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS)	32,500
# of Palestine Refugees from Lebanon (PRL)	174,422
# of vulnerable Lebanese	1,500,000
Total Lebanese population	4,400,000

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Distributing fire extinguishers in the Bekaa.
Source: Medair

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Welcome to the first Humanitarian Bulletin of 2018! In this issue, discover the Humanitarian Coordinator's key priorities for this new year. We also look at some of the key results of the 2017 LCRP and the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund, while shining the spotlight on the UNRWA funding crisis. Finally, find out how a Syrian refugee family survived a fire, with support from the NGO Medair.

Lebanon's stability is not a given

Editorial by Humanitarian Coordinator Philippe Lazzarini:

Seven years after the start of the Syria crisis the humanitarian community has spared no effort to end the suffering of one million registered Syrian refugees, but this has not been enough to turn the tide of rising humanitarian needs in Lebanon. The challenges are starker than ever: refugees endure extensive socio-economic hardship and deep-running vulnerabilities, amid rising pressure on host communities and widespread anxiety and uncertainty over the future. Additionally, the recently-announced budget cuts to UNRWA bring back to the forefront the endless suffering of Palestine refugees. What is next?

The short answer is: We will not give up. Until the Syria crisis ends, it is our collective responsibility to stand by Lebanon, the Lebanese, and all refugees.

We are determined to continue to cater for the needs of the most vulnerable communities in Lebanon. But humanitarian assistance alone is no longer enough. Innovation will mark our next steps. Continuing to link humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities will be at the heart of our initiatives. We will continue to work in close partnership with the Lebanese Government and civil society to promote self-reliance while at the same time building social protection systems for both vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugees as a cornerstone of national stability.

For the vast majority, the future of the Syrian refugees will be in Syria. They will return safely and in dignity to their homeland when conditions are ripe. The registration of refugees would be a key component to facilitate sustainable solutions outside Lebanon and voluntary returns when conditions are conducive. We are about to launch the 2018 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan and we will actively advocate for strong support for this plan, which is the cornerstone of the response in Lebanon. We will also focus our efforts and advocacy on the three international conferences in the coming months: the Conference in Support of the Lebanese Armed Forces and Security Institutions in Rome in February; the CEDRE conference to support the Lebanese economy and the Brussels Conference to mobilize support for the response to the Syria crisis, including for refugees in Lebanon.

Another key milestone in 2018 will be the long-awaited parliamentary election in May that will shape the country's political outlook for the next four years. The United Nations fully supports the Lebanese government in the preparation and running of these elections. We will do our utmost to help Lebanese leaders, the media and the public to have a fair and open debate. This is part of our continued commitment to supporting stability in Lebanon through international cooperation and collective security.

In support of all these goals, I will continue to advocate with international partners to boost their support through multi-year funding to ensure more predictability. Preserving Lebanon's stability is essential to maintain the country as a model of diversity and a driving force for tolerance and democracy in a troubled region.

2018 LCRP calls for \$2.68 billion for the response

More than 120 organizations plan to assist 2.8 million people in 2018

The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2018 (LCRP) was launched on 1 February 2018 by Lebanon's Prime Minister Saad Hariri, Minister of Social Affairs Pierre Bou Assi and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Philippe Lazzarini. In line with the overall 2017-2020 plan, the 2018 LCRP follows four strategic priorities identified by the Government of Lebanon and partners: to ensure the protection of vulnerable populations; provide immediate assistance to vulnerable populations; support service provision through national systems; and reinforce Lebanon's economic, social and environmental stability. Below is a glimpse of the key results achieved under the 2017 LCRP.

Key results under the

2017 LCRP

169

Municipal services projects

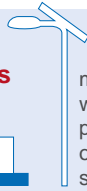
implemented in

83 municipalities



42

municipalities were provided with off-grid solar street lighting systems



89%

of Syrian refugee households which required primary health care services (46% of them) were able to access these services



Over

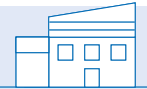
1.3 million

individuals have improved water services



\$2.9 million

were invested in developing Lebanese businesses as a way to promote more decent employment opportunities



Over

130,000

people received legal counselling, assistance and representation regarding legal stay

210 tons

of solid waste sorted and/or recycled through environmentally sound sorting facilities



250,000

Non-Lebanese children between 3-18 benefited from learning opportunities

And

5,251

Palestine Refugees from Syria attended camp-based schools



70%

of children aged 6 to 14 were enrolled in schools

86%

of Syrian Refugee households reported access to improved sanitation facilities



2,305

long-term jobs were created or maintained through local businesses



Over **180,000**

individuals received support to weatherproof or maintain their makeshift shelters

\$232 million

were injected into the local economy through multipurpose and winter cash assistance



Reaching more than

870,000

with food assistance and agricultural support



183,000

households were supported to deal with the harsh winter weather



To fulfil its objectives in 2018, the LCRP will bring together 123 partners and appeal for US\$2.68 billion. It aims to assist 2.8 million vulnerable people living in Lebanon, provide protection and immediate assistance to 1.5 million Syrian refugees, 336,000 vulnerable Lebanese and 54,000 Palestine refugees, and deliver basic services to 2.24 million people. The response plan focuses on humanitarian assistance to vulnerable communities, but also strongly seeks to invest in Lebanon's infrastructure, economy and public services.

UNRWA hit by drastic funding shortage

UNRWA seeks new funding alliances and initiatives

On 22 January, UNRWA launched an unprecedented appeal seeking support in the aftermath of major funding cuts to the agency on the part of the United States.

Washington announced on 16 January that it would provide US\$60 million to UNRWA in 2018, while withholding US\$65 million out of the US\$125 million that it had initially planned to provide to UNRWA this year. The news comes as a major setback for UNRWA as the US is by far the largest contributor to the agency, which is almost entirely funded by voluntary contributions from UN member states. The total US contribution to UNRWA in 2017 was above US\$350 million.

UNRWA Commissioner General Peter Krähenbühl described the reduction as "very severe, abrupt and harmful," noting that it would impact regional security at a time when the Middle East faces multiple risks and threats.

Krähenbühl promised refugees to maintain services in 2018 and pledged to protect UNRWA's 30,000 full-time professionals and staff across its five fields of operation, emphasizing that this crisis is a "moment for internal cohesion and solidarity."

The funding cuts jeopardize the access to education and future of 525,000 boys and girls in 700 UNRWA schools, as well as refugees' access to primary health care and other life-saving services. In addition, the cuts will impact millions of Palestine refugees in need of emergency food assistance and other support in Jordan, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Through the #DignityIsPriceless global fundraising campaign launched on 22 January, UNRWA has called on UN Member States, partners, host countries, donors and the general public to rally in support of Palestine refugees. (Click [here](#) for more details on the campaign.)

ERC Lowcock meets refugees in Burj al-Barajneh Palestine refugee camp

In a bid to examine the situation of Palestine refugees in Lebanon and listen to their concerns, Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock visited the Palestine refugee camp of Burj al-Barajneh in Beirut on 12 January. The ERC was on his first visit to Syria and Lebanon.

The situation in Burj al-Barajneh refugee camp, south of Beirut, reflects the severe challenges of daily life in Palestine camps across Lebanon where high numbers of Syrian (47.9 per cent of the total population inside the camp), Palestinian Syrian refugees (3.7 per cent) and Palestine refugees (44.8 per cent) endure extremely difficult living conditions. Meeting the refugees and listening to their stories was an opportunity for the USG to understand some of the major issues refugees deal with on a daily basis.



USG Lowcock touring Burj al-Barajneh camp after his meeting with refugees. ©OCHA/ Milena El Murr

"At stake are the rights and dignity of an entire community,"
- UNRWA Commissioner General Peter Krähenbühl

Meeting the refugees and listening to their stories was an opportunity for the ERC to understand some of the major issues refugees deal with on a daily basis.

Accompanied by Humanitarian Coordinator Philippe Lazzarini, OCHA Head of office Nathalie Fustier and UNRWA Director Claudio Cordone, USG Lowcock listened to Syrian and Palestine refugees who voiced serious concerns about their future amid fears of drastic UNRWA funding cuts.

Hiam, Soha, Maher, Ahmad, and many others candidly shared their concerns with the visiting delegation. They addressed the lack of job opportunities, the need to educate their children, their issues with their identifications papers, the high cost of living in Lebanon, and their need for more assistance. They emphasized that just as their situation steadily deteriorates, they are very worried that they could be facing more cuts on the already-reduced help they receive from UNRWA.

USG Lowcock promised to voice their issues at UN headquarters in New York, and reiterated the United Nations' commitment to provide refugees with indispensable humanitarian service and advocate for their rights.

The visit to Burj al-Barajneh camp came within the framework of USG Lowcock's first mission to the region, including a three-day visit to Syria where he met with governmental officials, humanitarian agencies and key stakeholders, and advocated on key priorities to reduce humanitarian suffering in Syria. [Click here](#) to read the USG's statement on Syria.

Census records 174,422 Palestine refugees in 12 camps and 156 gatherings

According to a newly-released census of Palestine refugees in Lebanon, 174,422 Palestine refugees are currently living in 12 camps and 156 gatherings across the country. A third phase of the census is aimed at capturing Palestinian refugees outside of these areas. The census was conducted in 2017 by the Lebanese and Palestinian National Statistics Authorities, the Lebanese Central Administration of Statistics and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, under the oversight of the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee. For the first time since the 1948 Palestinian displacement, official data on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is made available thanks to this census. Until now the main reference on Palestinians in Lebanon has been the 2015 survey conducted by the American University in Beirut which estimated the number of Palestinians in Lebanon to be between 260,000 to 280,000 in addition to Palestine Refugees from Syria – currently UNRWA is assisting about 32,500 of them. This data is currently being analysed. It will assist the UN and other concerned parties to work together with the Lebanese authorities and other stakeholders on developing policies to respond to refugee needs and rights, using the information on the refugees' socio-economic conditions, health, education as well as employment.

Winter support for more than 163,000 households

Vulnerable families are struggling to secure basic winter needs

The cash assistance package for the winter provides \$225 per vulnerable family – that is \$75 for each of the three coldest months.

As winter hits Lebanon and sends temperatures down to as low as minus 5 degrees at high altitudes, winter assistance has kicked in to support more than 168,000 Syrian, Palestinian and Lebanese families across the coldest parts of the country.

The winter season is a double challenge for vulnerable families, as they have to deal with very difficult conditions in many of the basic dwellings, informal settlements or collective shelters live in, while having fewer opportunities for casual income to support their families because of the lack of agricultural activity in winter.



UNHCR staff unload building materials at an informal settlement in southern Lebanon. ©UNHCR/ Lisa Abou Khaled

Year after year, the situation is becoming more complicated: 76 per cent of Syrian refugees lived below the poverty line in Lebanon in 2017 compared to 71 per cent in 2016, 69 per cent in 2015 and 49 per cent in 2014. 58 per cent of those living in poverty live below a survival minimum of US\$435/month for a household of five.

Supporting families through cash

From November to December 2017, partners distributed nearly US\$50 million in direct cash assistance for a total of 168,030 households (out of 238,434 households assessed to be in need). This assistance covered 157,767 Syrian households, 9,618 Palestinian families and 645 Lebanese households. 7,000 households were also reached with in-kind core relief items such as blankets, mattresses, fuel and other winter essentials. The winter 2017 campaign will continue until the end of March 2018.

The cash assistance package for winter provides US\$225 per vulnerable family – that is US\$75 for each of the three coldest months. This assistance is crucial for the survival of severely and highly vulnerable families during the tough winter months. With more funding being secured, these households will be receiving an additional top-up (for one or two months) during January and February 2018.

Lebanon Humanitarian Fund update

Reserve Allocation steps in to bridge protection funding gaps

The Humanitarian Funding Unit has finalized the Reserve Allocation – which was initiated on 15 November 2017 by Humanitarian Coordinator Philippe Lazzarini to help address UNICEF's 2017 end-year shortage of funding. The allocation aimed at bridging critical humanitarian funding gaps that were threatening the continuity of existing programmes. Out of the five funding requests submitted to the OCHA Lebanon Humanitarian Fund, three were approved for funding for around US\$306,000. The technical review was conducted by the relevant sectors coordinators, and the projects have now started.

The Fund's programmable amount currently stands at \$9.5 million, and is anticipated to reach \$13 million when pledges materialize in 2018.

Funding Update

Following the donor meeting held on 24 October 2017 to showcase its achievements and discuss its future (issue 29 of the Humanitarian Bulletin), the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund's resource mobilisation efforts are bearing fruit: in December and January, the LHF received contributions from Germany (EUR 3 million, i.e. around US\$3.5 million), France (EUR 500,000, i.e. around US\$600,000), and Denmark (DKK 20 million, i.e. around US\$3.2 million). The Fund's programmable amount currently stands at US\$9.5 million, and is anticipated to reach US\$13 million when pledges materialize in 2018. While this is a very positive trend, the LHF still stands US\$7 million short of reaching the US\$20 million target necessary to implement the vision of the Humanitarian Coordinator for 2018.

The LHF Advisory Board is scheduled to meet in March to discuss the upcoming Standard Allocation and related strategy.

Ahmad's Story

Rebuilding lives after a fire

The last few weeks were far from easy for Ahmad and his family, and the 29 other families living in a refugee settlement in Ghazze, in the Bekaa Valley. On 7 December 2017 a fire tore through 30 tents in the village, killing eight children and destroying many families' entire homes and possessions.

Syrian refugees and Lebanese living in the village joined forces that night and did their best to save as many lives as they could, with emergency assistance from the Lebanese Red Cross, but the damage was still extensive. Ahmad says that "on that night, the cries of children got mixed with the shrieks of women while the flames burned deep red and amber".

He added: "I only have God to thank for the safety of my family, since they were in the market at that time. Everything that is lost can be recovered somehow, but not my family!"

The disaster affected many families in Ghazze camp and deprived them of all their belongings, leaving them without a roof over their head. Families had to find a place to stay until they could rebuild the tents. Some of them were hosted by other Syrian refugees living outside Ghazze camp or by Lebanese families, as the settlement was under reconstruction for more than two weeks after the fire.

Following the disaster, the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF) partnered with Medair to respond to the critical situation and provide assistance to the families in an efficient and effective way. Medair distributed new equipment and tents for the families and started site improvement work in order to prepare the land for tent construction. In early January, the Medair team went back to Ghazze to check on the families and distributed eight fire extinguishers, along with guidelines and instructions about how to properly use them.

*"Now I will be more cautious with anything that can cause a fire. I care a lot about my family's safety and I want to thank you for your constant help and support – without it, we wouldn't have a place to live."
Ahmad, refugee in Ghazze*



Ahmad's family in Ghazze camp. Credits: George Mghames

Ahmad, who has been living in the Ghazze settlement for five years, thanked Medair and the LHF for the help provided to his family and to the other families who suffered from the fire. "Now I will be more cautious with anything that can cause a fire," he added. "I care a lot about my family's safety and I want to thank you for your constant help and support – without it, we wouldn't have a place to live."

About the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF)

The Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (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 (HC), it plays a key role in funding urgent humanitarian needs in Lebanon by injecting funding into prioritized and underfunded sectors.

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.

Medair contributed to the production of this article.

Key upcoming events:

- **28 February 2018:** Rome International Conference in Support of the Lebanese Armed Forces
- **April 2018:** Paris IV donor conference for Lebanon to mobilize investments in Lebanon
- **24-25 April 2018:** Brussels II Conference to mobilize support for the response to the Syria crisis

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