

Lebanon

10 July 2020



“We are pleased to have re-opened our four reception centres, with precautionary measures in place for refugees to stay safe. We have resumed interviews in person for the most urgent protection, documentation, status determination and resettlement cases.”

- Mireille Girard
UNHCR Representative

Operational context

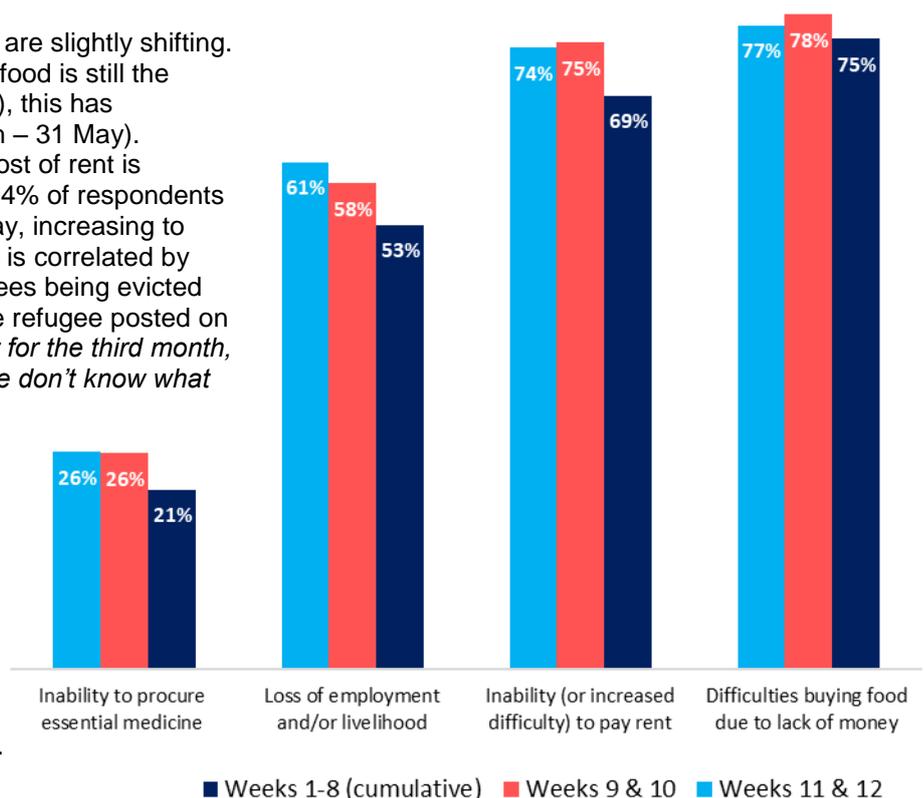
The socio-economic situation of refugees continues to deteriorate, with the cost of basic needs exponentially rising as a result of the deep economic and financial crisis, exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19.

Protection trends

Protection monitoring conducted with partners to analyse trends in the protection environment and situation of refugees in all regions of Lebanon is ongoing, with latest results available for 14 June (top four impacts on families across all weeks illustrated below).

The priorities of refugees interviewed are slightly shifting. While assistance to cover the cost of food is still the highest priority (at 46% for 1-14 June), this has decreased from 54% during 20 March – 31 May). Meanwhile, assistance to cover the cost of rent is increasing; it was the top priority for 34% of respondents consulted between 20 March – 31 May, increasing to 44% during the first half of June. This is correlated by increasingly frequent reports of refugees being evicted after being unable to pay rent. As one refugee posted on social media *“We did not pay the rent for the third month, and the landlord wants to evict us. We don’t know what to do or where to go.”*

UNHCR is working closely with the national and local authorities to prevent evictions of refugees confirmed or suspected of having COVID-19, or arbitrary collective evictions. However, it is increasingly difficult to convince landlords to provide further respite with rent payments, as they are themselves dependent on the income for survival.



Voices of refugees

Refugees continue reaching out to UNHCR via various channels to communicate their desperate situations and request assistance. Below are a few of the thousands of messages received by UNHCR in recent months:

"Maybe because I am an adult man and supposed to be my family's breadwinner but I cannot find jobs, I was evicted from our home because we could no longer afford the rent, now I don't have 1,000LL to buy a bag of bread for my children. What am I supposed to do and where am I supposed to go."

All refugees are facing the same struggle including the adult men that are known to be traditional income providers knowing that most of the refugee men are struggling to find jobs and that have become double burden on their families: 1) causing exclusion from assistance; 2) relying on their women and children to provide for them.

Those who receive WFP and UNHCR assistance for one year at least, their financial situation and coping mechanism is supposed to improve, why don't you then help others in the next round that are not benefiting from any type of assistance?

Key developments

Positive COVID-19 cases

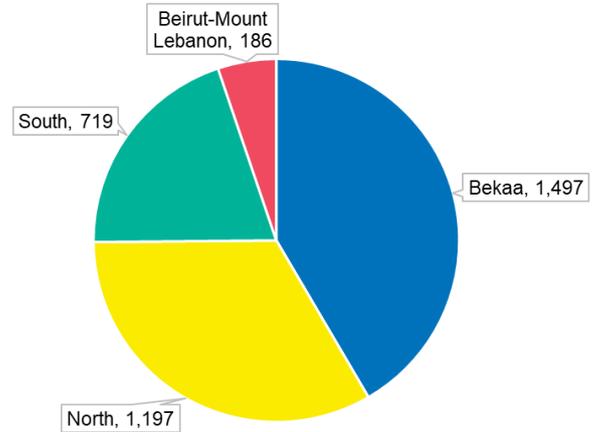
As of 10 July, 125 Syrian refugees are confirmed to have tested positive to COVID-19, of whom one has died from the virus. These cases have been identified in urban areas through contact testing, where clusters of cases have been found among the local population.

Isolation capacity

Efforts to expand capacity for isolation are ongoing. UNHCR is supporting 11 of the L3 isolation facilities approved by the GOL, including 7 municipal facilities. Works are ongoing at 4 of these sites (Al Hayat Health Centre in Bekaa, Dalia Company in Baalbek-Hermel, Maraad Hotel in North and Al Aziz in Akkar Governorates), and 2 are functional (Tal Hayat isolation centre in Akkar and Makassed School in Bekaa Governorates) with operational capacity to host 89 COVID-19 infected persons in need of isolation outside their home to date.

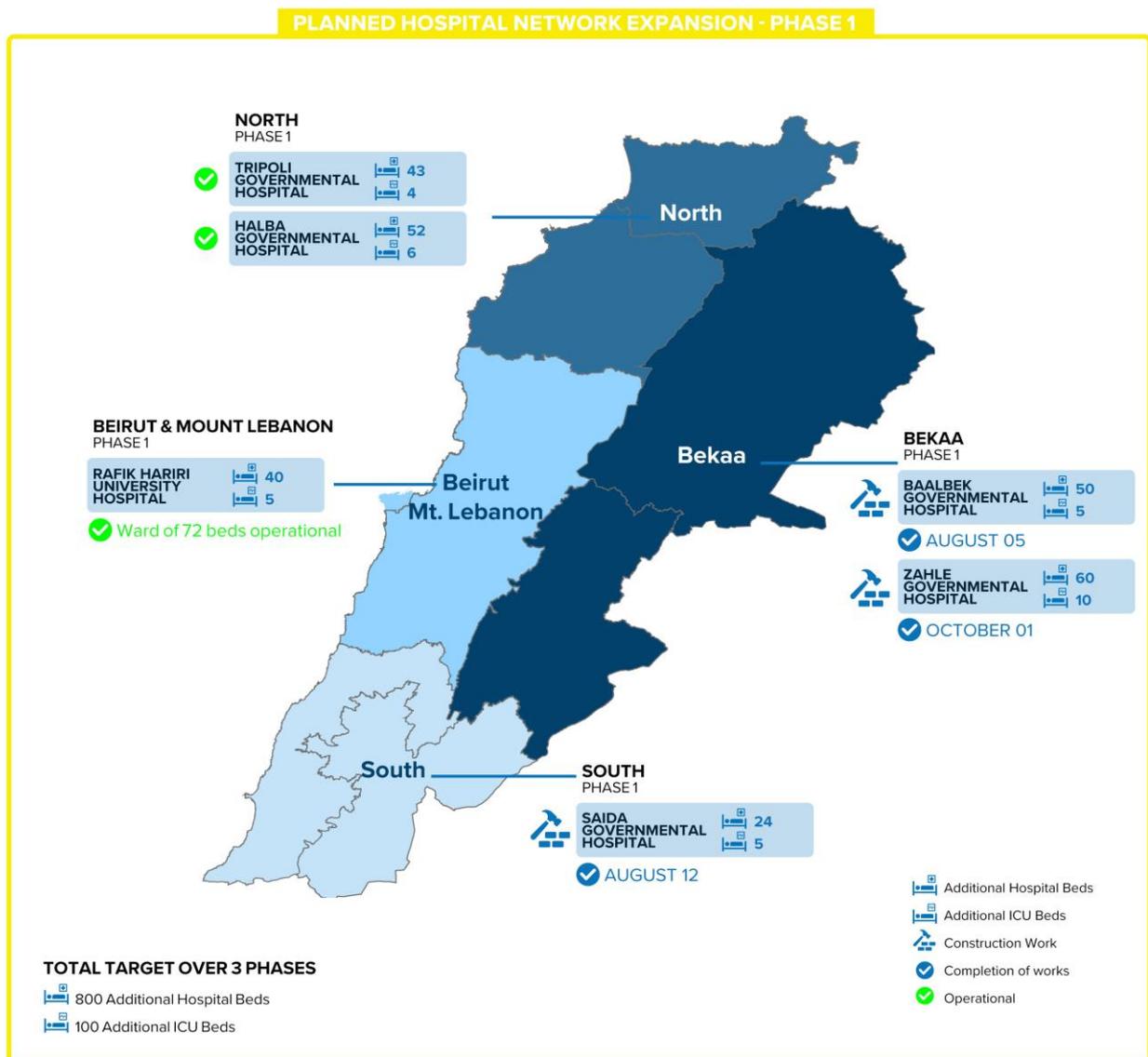
National testing campaign

The UNHCR-supported polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing campaign in informal settlements and collective shelters was completed on 26 June. In total, 3,599 samples were tested in 147 sites across the country. All test results have been negative. Chart to right shows breakdown of tests conducted.



Hospital expansion and provision of equipment

As part of UNHCR’s support for the expansion of hospital capacity for treatment, a first phase of extension works is completed in Halba (Akkar) and Tripoli governmental hospitals. The delivery and installation of medical equipment (including ventilators, patient beds, emergency trolleys, and other medical furniture) started on Monday, 6 July in the completed expanded structures. Total added capacity to date at these two hospitals is 95 hospital beds and 6 ICU beds. The rehabilitation of a 72-bed capacity ward in RHUH is also completed.



Key Figures

- **As of 10 July, 125** positive COVID-19 cases among Syrian refugees, including one death.
- **6,529** refugees and **650** UNHCR and partner frontline staff trained on COVID-19 awareness.
- **450** refugees with medical background mobilised as **community health volunteers**.
- **Site community groups to support isolation** procedures established in more than **1,600 informal settlements** so far.
- **More than 345,000 refugees in overcrowded settings** reached with hygiene promotion and materials (100% of the IS and CS population)
- **10,000 shelter kits in stock** for Level 2 isolation in informal settlements.
- **2 UNHCR-supported Level 3 isolation facilities** are operational, with 4 under preparation.
- **MoPH COVID-19 hotline capacity expanded** with **10** additional operators (trained nurses) and technical equipment.
- Expansion and rehabilitation works are completed at **3 public hospitals** for additional capacity of 95 hospital beds and 6 ICU beds to date.
- The first round of in-kind distribution of **10,000 food parcels** has been completed.

Story from the field – “We need soap now more than ever”

Midia Said Sido, a Syrian refugee from Aleppo living in Southern Lebanon, makes soap so that her children and others living in her community can wash their hands regularly and reduce the spread of the virus. “We need soap now more than ever,” she says.

Back in Aleppo, Midia used to watch her parents boil ingredients to make the region’s renowned laurel soap. Through a course offered by UNHCR in Lebanon, she learned how to use a cold process to make soap at home. When asked if she would like to contribute to coronavirus prevention efforts by producing medical soap, she quickly agreed and joined an online training session.

“It’s something good for me, and it can benefit other people too,” she says. “I would like to teach other women how to make it.”



Social media highlights

Recent social media highlights have included:

- A [message](#) from the High Commissioner Filippo Grandi at the fourth Supporting Syria and the Region conference in Brussels on 30 June ([English](#)); and
- A video highlighting the UNHCR-supported hospital expansions currently underway ([Arabic & English](#))

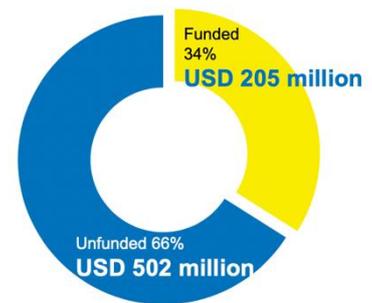
Advocacy messages

In the context of the COVID-19 response, UNHCR is advocating for:

- One **coordinated and coherent national response** to the COVID-19 emergency, led by the Government with technical support from relevant partners, within which all Lebanese and non-Lebanese in the country have equal access to information, testing and treatment based on our common objective to save lives;
- **Non-stigmatization** of any individual or community based on real or perceived infection, by emphasizing that the virus does not discriminate based on nationality or other status, and by noting that fear of stigmatization, arrest or other risk may inhibit people's readiness to report symptoms and constitute a public health risk;
- **Non-discriminatory** application of movement restrictions and curfews announced by the central and local authorities, including by allowing refugees to undertake necessary movements to shops, pharmacies, ATMs and health care facilities with due respect for the precautionary and prevention measures;
- Allowing refugees with medical background to be engaged in health activities to reinforce the **health care response capacity**;
- A **moratorium on evictions** by landlords or municipalities of refugees and Lebanese unable to pay their rent, or for other reasons, as homelessness can exacerbate the risk of COVID-19 infection and transmission;
- Scaled up support and access to **basic assistance** as the COVID-19 emergency affects refugees and Lebanese families' already diminished livelihoods and ability to survive.

Financial requirements

- UNHCR Lebanon's total requirements in 2020 is USD 607.5 million, of which USD 91 million is to deliver new activities in 2020 responding to COVID-19.
- This includes both additional 2020 financial requirements published in the UNHCR Global COVID-19 Appeal (USD 85 million), and COVID-19 activities for which UNHCR Lebanon reprioritized from its regular 2020 budget but are still not funded (USD 6 million).



Thanks to our donors

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed in 2020 to the Lebanon operation, including through the COVID-19 appeal, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds and private donors, including:

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