

WHY LEBANON?

More than five million refugees have fled violent conflict in Syria, the majority seeking safety in nearby countries (Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt). More than six years since the start of the crisis, host countries like Lebanon are at the breaking point trying to deal with hundreds of thousands of Syrians who have found refuge within their borders. Humanitarian assistance has dwindled and refugees are struggling to meet their basic needs. Because most are unable to work legally, some have turned to unhealthy means of surviving, such as prostitution or child labour. Out of desperation, others are choosing to return to Syria or risk the journey to Europe, often on foot.

Lebanon has the highest refugee population per capita of any country in the world – one in five people is a Syrian refugee. With more than one million refugees, the economy has suffered from rising unemployment, lower wages, and increased debt. Continual border clashes and a proliferation of armed groups on the Lebanese-Syrian border in the north of the country have caused instability. The political fragmentation in Lebanon has allowed fighting in Syria to spill over onto Lebanese soil, causing additional hardship for refugees and the Lebanese. Rising social tensions between the Lebanese and refugees continue to be a concern as vulnerable Lebanese also struggle to cope with the situation and provide for their basic needs.

As the refugees' resources have been depleted over time, their dependence on humanitarian assistance has increased. During the winter, snowstorms sweep through the Bekaa Valley causing damage to the fragile tents where many of the refugees are living. In the summer, tent settlements are at risk from fires. Aid agencies need sufficient funding to be able to respond quickly to emergencies and save lives.

WHERE DO WE WORK?

Medair is based in Beirut and Zahle and provides relief in the highland Bekaa Valley, temporary home to hundreds of thousands of refugees living in makeshift tents on agricultural land or unfinished buildings. Medair began responding to the crisis in Lebanon in 2012, and has since expanded work in the region to include Jordan, Iraq, and Syria, responding to the needs of refugees and displaced persons.

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS**Shelter Assistance**

Thousands of refugees in Lebanon live in flimsy tents in informal settlements on farm land or in sub-standard buildings such as garages and unfinished buildings. Medair provides shelter assistance to these refugees by distributing vinyl, wood, plastic sheeting, and nails. Specific interventions and kits for refugees living in substandard buildings are also distributed to seal off buildings from the weather. Medair also rehabilitates substandard buildings to make them safer and more habitable for families. A project to improve accessibility and safety of tents and substandard buildings for elderly and disabled people is conducted on a case-by-case basis. Settlements also receive fire extinguishers and training to make tents safer from fires, and flood relief kits in emergencies, to help refugees' tents stay safe and dry.

Using Technology to Reach the Most Vulnerable

Medair is the lead agency in Lebanon for mapping refugee settlements. Teams make quarterly sweeps of Bekaa, gather data on refugee settlements and feed that into a map shared with all humanitarian agencies in the country. The maps are used to identify needs and ensure that aid is coordinated and reaches the people who need it most.

Medair also uses Last Mile Mobile Solutions (LMMS), a software package developed by World Vision to speed up assessments and organise the distribution process. A tablet is used to electronically register the beneficiary's information and produce a bar-code photo ID card. During distributions, teams scan the barcode and deliver items directly, improving accountability and eliminating inefficient paper systems.

Clean Water and Sanitation for Settlements on Farmland

For refugees living in informal settlements, access to clean water and sanitation is limited, which poses serious

disease risks and health concerns. Many of the settlements flood easily and do not have proper access to latrines. Medair works with communities in the settlements to improve drainage and sanitation, and provides clean, safe drinking water and latrines.

Health Care for Refugees and Host Communities

Many refugees in Lebanon struggle to find access to basic health services. Existing health services are overwhelmed and often only emergency care is offered. Medair is supporting seven primary health care clinics in collaboration with the Government of Lebanon to improve care for refugees and vulnerable Lebanese families. Medair subsidises the cost of treatment and medicines to provide affordable health care and education for Lebanese and Syrians. Medair also trains Community Health Volunteers to provide health messages on topics such as malnutrition, to inform families about health services, and to educate mothers about the importance of breastfeeding, antenatal care, and postnatal care. Midwives conduct field visits and work closely with Community Health Volunteers to identify pregnant women in need of prenatal services and new mothers with their infants in need of postnatal visits, in order to carry out those services and act as link between the clinics and the settlements. Medair provides psychosocial support through sessions with a trained psychologist, who is based in one of the clinics and receives referrals from the Community Health Volunteers.

THE REFUGEES WE SERVE

"The last day I attended school was the worst day of my life. I was in the playground at sports hour, enjoying running around with my friends. In a split second a rocket fell on the school, the roof collapsed, everything was chaotic and loud. My math teacher died, the school's principle died—many of my friends died that day."

-Haya (18), Syrian refugee woman and community leader, Bekaa Valley

"Refugees are fleeing and swimming to European countries. I wouldn't leave Lebanon. It's very hard that we are refugees, but here I'm closer to home than in Europe. In Lebanon, I can smell the air that comes from Syria. I feel Syria and Lebanon are the same. My country and my home."

- Saada, Syrian refugee woman and grandmother, Bekaa Valley

"I had great guidance by Medair's midwife during and after my pregnancy, so I had a healthy delivery"

-Salma (18), Syrian refugee woman and new mother, Bekaa Valley

"Our life completely changed after receiving clean water by Medair, my children stopped itching and are always clean now"

-Shawy (51), Syrian refugee man and father, Bekaa Valley

TOTAL BENEFICIARIES 2016: 152,106

HEALTH and NUTRITION

- 58,777 patients treated at Medair-supported health clinics; 5636 people vaccinated
- 77,604 people in 426 Informal settlements received health promotion
- 3371 people served by community midwife

WATER, SANITATION, & HYGIENE

- 6,555 people received safe drinking water
- 7,784 people received improved sanitation
- 2,055 hygiene kits and 700 families' baby kits distributed

SHELTER and INFRASTRUCTURE

- 59,254 families received shelter support

- 232 families with elderly or disabled members received shelter assistance
- 160 sub-standard buildings rehabilitated
- 52 informal settlements received site improvement
- 2,078 fire extinguishers distributed

MAPPING

- 3,781 informal settlements mapped, providing their identification, location, and needs to all NGOs in Lebanon

ORGANISATIONAL & PRIVATE DONORS AND FUNDING PARTNERS

The European Commission's Humanitarian aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA), Swiss Solidarity, Global Affairs Canada (GAC), World Relief Canada (WRC), ERIKS Development Partner, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and generous private donors.

For Media

Interviews, photos, and stories are available in English and Arabic.

For enquiries and interviews on the ground, please contact:

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Syrian refugee woman in the field of the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon
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Syrian women refugees participate in the health promotion session conducted by a Medair health volunteer.
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Syrian refugees received a new arrival shelter kit in the Bekaa Valley.
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