

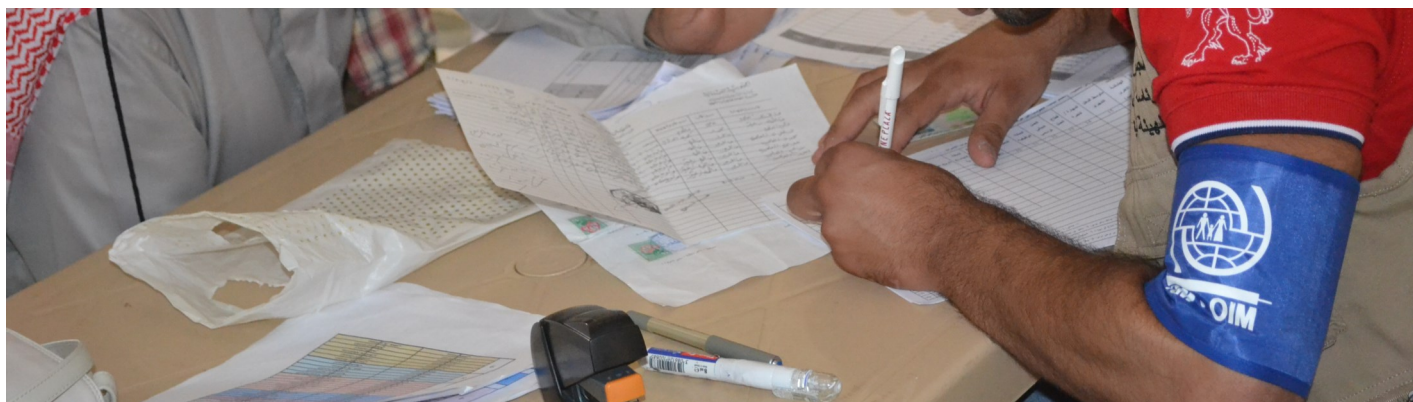


IOM and HRC Profile over 17,000 Lebanese Returnees that were forced to return from Syria

Wednesday, December 11 - The International Organization for Migration and the Lebanese High Relief Commission (HRC) launched a report on the findings of a project to register and profile Lebanese who have fled the conflict in Syria. These Lebanese families, most of whom had been in Syria for decades, joined the flow of refugees entering Lebanon from 2011 onwards. Arriving with very little, they now find themselves living in difficult circumstances in their country of origin, but have often gone under-assisted.

Lebanon – a country of only 4.2 million people – is currently hosting over 800,000 refugees, with thousands more arriving daily. The economic and social impact of this influx has been huge, and without sufficient resources, both the government and humanitarian partners have struggled to keep up. “In the current context, the needs of Lebanese returnees have often been overlooked – either because they aren’t refugees or because there has been a lack of detailed information on their situation,” said Angela Santucci, IOM Emergency Coordinator for Lebanon. “We see it as crucial that that Lebanese returnees – whose vulnerabilities are similar to those of refugees – no longer fall into this crack.”

In July 2013, IOM and the HRC began a project, funded by the UN’s Emergency Response Fund (ERF), to register and profile this population, detailing their location, circumstances and needs. The



registration exercise, which lasted until October 2013, was implemented by the HRC, with technical support and training from IOM. In total, 3,206 households, or 17,510 individuals, were registered across the country. The results of the exercise will be published on Wednesday in a report titled “The Situation and Needs of Lebanese Returnees from Syria.”

“This report provides an important opportunity for donors and humanitarian actors to respond to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of Lebanese returnees in ways that are targeted and effective,” said Fawzi Al-Zioud, IOM Representative in Lebanon. “It is particularly important that this assistance comes quickly, given the onset of what is expected to be a very harsh winter.” The study confirms that the conditions of the Lebanese returnee households are broadly similar to those of Syrian refu-

gees: most came without their belongings, are unemployed and are either renting accommodation or being hosted by Lebanese families, while some are living in collective centres and tents. A majority came from the Syrian province of Homs and settled in parts of North Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley where opportunities for work are scarce, and public services are overstretched due to the already huge presence of refugees. Returnees most frequently ranked food, health, shelter and access to work, as their first or second priority needs.

“IOM would like to thank the Lebanese government and OCHA for their cooperation and support throughout this project,” Mr. Al-Zioud added. “As the registration initiative enters its second phase, we hope that the humanitarian community will ensure that vulnerable returnees will receive more than the limited assistance they have got thus far.”

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IOM MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: Flash Report

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