

A.17 Lebanon – 2011 – Conflict

Case Study: **Keywords:** Hosting, Support for host families, Rental support, Housing repair and retrofitting, Cash / vouchers, structural assessment

Country:

Lebanon

Project location:

Bekaa valley and Wadi Khalid (northern Lebanon)

Disaster:

Syrian conflict

Conflict date:

March 2011 (ongoing)

Number of people displaced:

Project start: 6,900 registered refugees in Lebanon
End of 2012: 119,596 refugees, though numbers were rapidly rising

Project outputs:

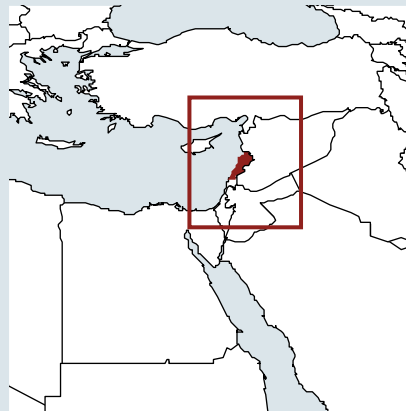
Rehabilitation of 980 houses
"Sealing off" 1,555 houses
Non-food items for 1,200 households

Shelter size:

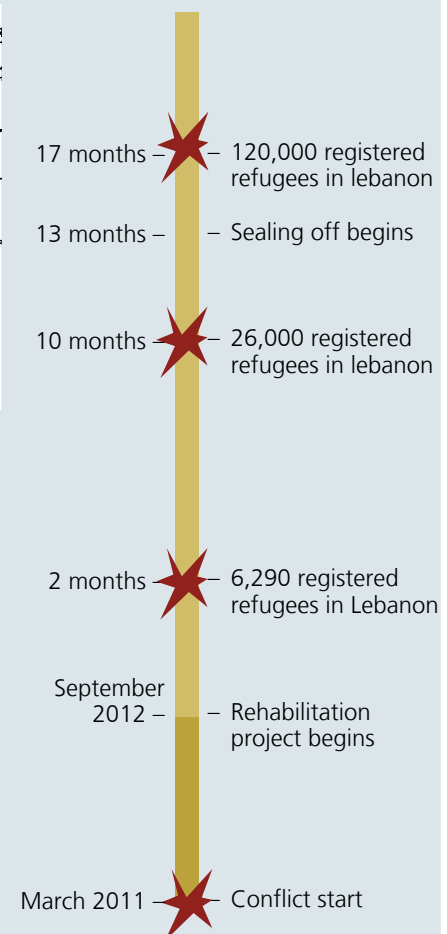
Variable
One room with sanitation facilities per hosted family

Cost:

US\$ 1,700 / family housing rehabilitation
US\$ 40 / family sealing off



Project timeline



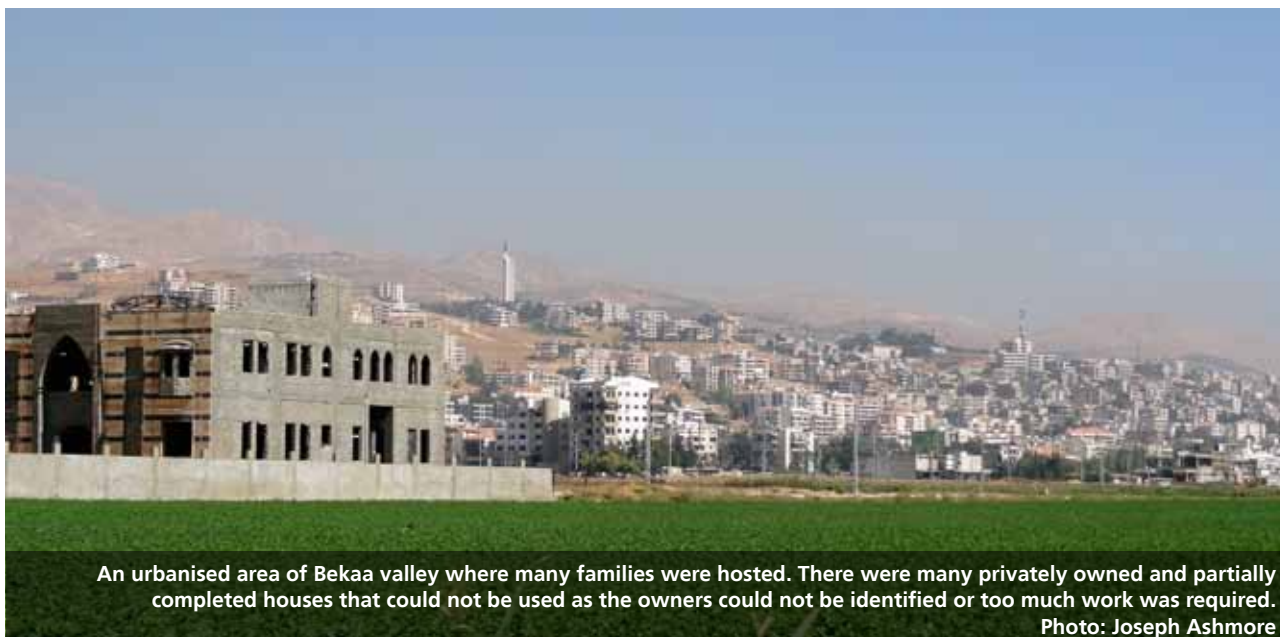
Project description

This project rehabilitated houses where people fleeing from Syria were hosted. It also made quick repairs to winterise dwellings and distributed non-food items, including stoves and fuel. Particular care was taken with targetting of affected populations through detailed social and structural assessments of hosting arrangements. Assessments were followed by phased cash payments for host families to make repairs. As refugee numbers continued to rise, the organisation conducted pilot cash for rent and transitional shelter construction projects.

Strengths and weaknesses

- ✓ The project built upon existing hosting capacities and provided support for the host families.
- ✓ The investment in improved shelter and domestic infrastructure remained with the hosting families. This encouraged good relationships with the refugees.
- ✓ Although the project was focused on shelter, the project was flexible and included works to improve water and sanitation for hosts' houses.
- ✗ The project required a large number of staff to make multiple visits per house. This made the project difficult to scale-up quickly in response to rapid refugee influxes.
- ✗ As a practical solution to assure tenure, limited one-year hosting agreements were signed, after which there was no assurance that the families could

- remain. In reality, however, there were few evictions.
- ✗ The total hosting capacity in case of new influxes of refugees was not assessed in detail.
- ✗ It was not always clear if hosted families stayed free of charge or had to make some payment to their hosts.
 - There are significant numbers of privately owned empty and incomplete buildings in Lebanon.
 - Whether or not refugee families would be welcomed by host families strongly depended on the political allegiances of the local authorities.
 - Significant intervention costs per family were due to high commodity costs in Lebanon.
 - Although the total number of direct beneficiary households may seem relatively low, assessments actively identified many families as being able to cope without assistance.



An urbanised area of Bekaa valley where many families were hosted. There were many privately owned and partially completed houses that could not be used as the owners could not be identified or too much work was required.

Photo: Joseph Ashmore

Before conflict in Syria

Lebanon has had a long history of immigration from Syria, with hundreds of thousands of Syrians estimated to be working and living in Lebanon.

Despite its relatively small size, the climate in Lebanon varies greatly both seasonally and geographically. In summer it can be very hot at lower altitudes. During winter, parts of the north and east of the country see snow, while coastal regions remain warm.

There are a large number of privately owned, unoccupied or partially complete houses across Lebanon. Most houses are reinforced concrete buildings with cement block walls. A few older houses have mud block walls. Most buildings in urban areas as well as in rural areas are multi-storey.

Lebanon is classified as an upper-middle-income country by the World Bank. There is significant wealth, especially in coastal areas. However, there is also considerable poverty, and migrant workers can be found across Lebanon living in makeshift shelters made from timber and plastic sheeting.

During the conflict

Following intensified civil conflict in Syria in March 2011, thousands of Syrians fled into Lebanon, mainly into the north and east of Lebanon,

the Akkar Region and the Bekaa valley. The numbers of registered displaced Syrians rapidly increased from around 6,000 at the project inception in October 2011 to over 100,000 by the end of 2012. This far exceeded initial planning figures for the expected scale of migration.

The situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is made more complicated by political and religious divisions. Refugees mainly settled in locations with sympathetic municipalities, where they felt safe. This led to relatively localised populations of refugees in the Bekaa valley. It also led to challenges in identifying refugee families, as some preferred to remain in anonymous.

Shelter strategy

The strategy adopted by the organisation focussed on six core activities:

- **Housing rehabilitation** - Mid-term solution that provides weather-proofing (doors and windows), and improves sanitation, safety, electricity and privacy
- **Non food item distribution** - This includes heating stoves and refill coupons and hygiene kits
- **Management of collective shelters** - Capacity building and follow-up to provide the larger collective shelters with proper management.

- **Weatherproofing** - Quick rehabilitation with plastic sheets to provide weather.
- **Cash for rent and t-shelters** - Planned in case of larger influxes in 2013.

This case study focuses on the housing rehabilitation component.

Initial beneficiary selection

The project was established in locations with the largest populations of registered Syrians displaced by the conflict.

As there were relatively few actors involved in host family support early in the response, the organisation was able to coordinate with the other organisations, both formally and informally, in the field as well as with the local authorities.

The organisation received a list of Syrian families from the United Nations who were registered as being displaced from Syria, and who met additional vulnerability criteria. These criteria included families with extremely low incomes, families headed by women or elderly people, families with chronically ill members, families with no adults and households without a water supply.



House being refurbished to house several refugee households.
Photo: Joseph Ashmore



Migrant worker housing. Such structures were in use before the refugee influx.
Photo: Joseph Ashmore

Household assessment

The organisation carried out a further assessment visiting all shelter with a team of engineers and social mobilisers. This team completed two assessment forms: one highlighted structural and infrastructure needs with questions, including:

- Are the kitchen and wc separated?
- Is the bathroom connected to a permanent water supply?
- Are there sewerage connections/networks?
- Is there structural damage?
- Is there access to drinking water?
- Is there access to electricity?
- How large is the room?
- How many people are sleeping in each room?

The second form focussed on social issues and other vulnerabilities. Approximately one quarter of households were identified as needing assistance while the others appeared to be coping adequately.

Implementation

Once families had been identified for inclusion in the project, the engineering team returned and conducted a detailed assessment of the works required using a standard but detailed bill of quantities template.

Each line in the bill of quantities was given a unit cost, from which materials costs were calculated.

The documents were reviewed in the office, and a schedule of work was agreed with the homeowner.

“Repair minor cracks in walls - cut out the cracks with a masonry grinder to form square edged slots and remove all dust and debris. Apply Epoxy Primer liquid by brush and whilst tacky lay in the putty-like repair mortar, Mouldable Epoxy Mortar. Apply mesh tape and plaster. Work to include all plaster.”

Example of detail in the BOQ

Cash grants were allocated to households so that they could pay for repairs. Cash grants were paid in installments following the organisations’ monitoring teams’ confirmation that certain stages of the construction had been completed:

- 1st installment of 25 per cent was paid when the contract agreement was signed.
- 2nd installment of 30 per cent was paid when sixty per cent of the 1st installment were completed.
- 3rd installment of 45 per cent paid on completion.

A contract agreement was signed by all parties to prevent the host family from demanding additional rent from the Syrian family or evicting them following the rehabilitation.

The organisation operated from two field offices, each less than three hours drive from Beirut. Staff worked in teams of three people. Project managers at each location supervised two teams each.

Collective centres

In addition to rehabilitation of host family houses, some collective centers were also repaired. Typical works carried out include:

- replacement of doors and windows and broken walls
- roof repairs
- rehabilitation of sanitation facilities
- provision of cooking facilities
- water and electricity supply
- installation of partitioning for privacy.

Further works, such as decorating and the provision of additional social spaces were also assessed but not prioritised during the emergency rehabilitation.

What next?

In late 2012, as the number of Syrians in Lebanon continued to rise rapidly, and winter approached, additional solutions were required. New programming responses included rental subsidies, ongoing distribution of non-food item, including stoves and fuel vouchers, and simple “sealing-off kits”. These kits consisted of timber, plastic sheeting, tools and fixings that could be used by mobile teams to seal windows and doors in unfinished buildings.

Contingency planning was also undertaken to include tents and other emergency shelters that could be deployed at scale, either individually on small plots of land or inside unfinished buildings.