

Winter Storm in Middle-East

Some updates from Caritas organizations

19th January 2015

From Caritas Lebanon

Since Tuesday January 6, 2015 a severe storm that lasted for 5 days has shown the national and international organizations working on the emergency response in Lebanon the delicacy of the situation especially due to the time that the response to the storms is bounded by and the urgent needs during this freezing season.

The needs of the Syrian refugees is mostly common all over the Lebanese territories and is highly urgent in the Bekaa and the north as they are considered to be the main two regions that have the lowest temperature. As CLMC offices in the Bekaa are based in Zahle and Baalbak the storm has cut off any access to CLMC premises by the staff. Roads were blocked, the snow covering most of the area of Bekaa and the temperature is freezing especially during the night. All CLMC offices are currently accessible, however it is likely that some offices will close their doors as we expect a new storm will hit Lebanon in the coming few days.

The situation of the refugees is falling back and reaching an unacceptable level, their lack of winterization items especially the basic items requested for their minimum survival during this period.



During the last couple of months in 2014, CLMC offices around Lebanon were able to support the refugees with several humanitarian assistances in order to insure the minimum survival of this community during the winter season. The situation all over Lebanon and especially in the freezing regions of the Bekaa Valley is devastating and the possibility of survival is decreasing as the winter season goes forward especially that a new storm is expected to hit again on in the next couple of days. Moreover, CLMC was able to secure 6000 pajamas that were distributed throughout the Lebanese territories.



All over Lebanon, Syrian refugees have died as a result of the previous storm and the ongoing decrease in the temperature, a three months old baby girl died after being stuck on the Masnaa Boarder for four days. Three other persons including six years old boy and 2 men also died while crossing into Chebaa Farms from Syria. Further to these incidents, 2 tents were burned, the first one in Lebaa, Jezzine which was grouping a family of 6 persons including a handicapped 10 year old boy and the second one in Akbieh, Saida which was totally burned and was grouping a family of 4 including a pregnant women. in Mount Lebanon several tents were burned an flooded by water. A 12 years old boy

died when he tried to save the member of his families from a fire that started in his tent. All the families currently have no basic items to insure their survival; they are trying to borrow several items from their neighbors to at least be able to cope with their current status.

Thousands of refugees are now trapped in several regions over Lebanon especially in the high mountain regions with a very little food and heating supplies, as CLMC struggles to reach out to International Donors in order to be able to cover the funding needed to provide assistance to the refugees which will secure their survival throughout the winter season. CLMC has started contacting international partners and Caritas network in order to insure the financial support needed throughout this period. CLMC has developed its winterization appeal in order to respond to the current situation and provide assistance to the refugees trapped in the high mountains of Lebanon.



From Caritas Syria's employee.



“This photo, with its small faces, pierced my heart, and threw me into the depth of sadness...

It is not about the snow that is falling heavily on their weak bodies, it is not that sweater pulled up to cover a bare head and protect it from severe cold, it is not the open air all around them without any means of defense... What hurt me the most was the look in their eyes! Sometimes I feel that it is the look of a deep pain, which their small bodies can't withstand anymore. Sometimes I feel that it is a look of huge anger, burned with the desire for revenge from an enemy who was a brother in the past. Other times I feel it is the look of an adult who is looking for his lost childhood, and his lost toys; the toys that the war has stolen from him. He started to make new toys with his friends from simple things around; some daggers, some guns, and some bombs, to be able to play the war just like the adults...

Sometimes, I see in their eyes a great blame on humanity because they were neglected, forgotten, and left out in the open air, without any means of defense. Until nature's White Wolf arrived, and started to swallow them slowly, one after the other, with cold blood... very cold blood ...

It is true that children in my country need lots and lots of things; perhaps warmer clothes, rubber boots to protect their small feet from getting wet, safe houses to protect them from the rigors of nature, maybe some stoves, firewood, fuel oil, or electricity ... But can these things erase that telling look of deep misery in their eyes????

Peace... Peace... and peace... That is what the children in my country really need...”

At work in Damascus office :



Brief notes from Caritas Turkey

The winter in Turkey falls to temperatures below zero and with sporadic snowfalls that are affecting even more the already difficult living conditions of both urban and not urban Syrian refugees. The temperature saw -5C in Istanbul and -7C in Hatay last week.

Based on the last report of UNHCR, 73 percent of the refugees in the camps and 53 percent of the refugees out of the camps do not consider their housing unit suitable for the climate and a greater percent (about 71-81 percent) of the refugees out of the camps rated all of their basic needs as inadequate as compared to the refugees in the camps. Therefore, the basic needs of the refugees out of the camps are more inadequate than those in the camps and more attention should be paid to their basic needs.¹

Caritas has been working on the emergency response to the Syrian crisis both in Istanbul and Hatay distributing coals, blankets and vouchers nevertheless it has also witnessed an increase in the number of refugees coming to the office asking for blankets and support to face the cold winter. The time constraint of responding to the winter emergency fast is crucial. Following brief notes from Reyhanlı (Hatay) and from Istanbul regarding the winterization needs Caritas team observed.

¹<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224>

We need to say that as this report is prepared by AFAD which is managing the camps itself it might be biased and might not reflect the exact conditions in the camps. Still as non-camp refugees are not receiving regular support from state they are left more alone with their own resources and/or they depend on the support coming from NGOs.

REYHANLI

During Caritas ticket card (e-voucher) distribution in Reyhanlı villages, it was noticed that most of the families in Reyhanlı villages need support for winter such as, mattresses, stoves and/or coal. IOM was contacted and Caritas asked them to deliver us the blankets so Caritas could distribute 598 blankets to the most vulnerable families who are living in tents or in unfinished buildings in Reyhanlı.

Last year together with IOM Caritas distributed coal and stove in Reyhanlı and Kırıkhan.. This year IOM is distributing winterization items in Kırıkhan like (coal, stoves, blankets and few carpets) but not in Reyhanlı.

In Reyhanlı villages refugees are specifically asking for blankets and coal distribution. They have stoves and they are can use coal. Sometimes municipality arranges coal distribution in Reyhanlı but no other NGO or local authorities reached to those villages.

Mostly these villages are suffering because of the lack of sufficient nutrition, especially in the winter time as it is more difficult to find a job during the winter compared to the summer. They are living in very poor house conditions like in makeshift tents or unfinished buildings (constructions left unfinished). For this reason the e-voucher program is considered very helpful so Caritas will continue this program but also blankets distributions are crucial

As Caritas Turkey we consider to support Reyhanlı for winterization in February 2015:

- 1) Blanket, coal, mattress distribution either distributing blankets of IOM (as they already purchased and they ready for distribution) but we wait their response) or through the existing funds of the CI, with CI approval.
- 2) Continue and extend e-voucher distribution in Reyhanlı. In addition, once the registrations are completed Caritas will continue in Kırıkhan as well.
- 3) Distribution of plastic sheeting to be used for building up a bit stronger shelters to face the winter .

ISTANBUL

Last year for Syrian refugees Caritas distributed blankets in Istanbul. 1100 families received 2998 blankets in total.

This year new families and already registered families are asking for blankets. Our Services in Istanbul prioritized FI and NFI market vouchers and medical support due to fund restrictions. Last year as the number of newcomers to Istanbul was very high, we prioritized the blanket distribution. But this year winter is colder and there are many families that are really in need of blankets. For this reason a small budget for blankets would be very helpful to help Syrians in Istanbul. But more important than that in almost all refugee houses people economize and don't use the heating systems sufficiently as they don't have the economic resources to pay the bills. The rents increased incredibly and people are really not able to manage the cost of heating in Istanbul. So our team believes and supports the idea to have a 3 months support for the heating systems for the most vulnerable families, people. We consider to share a very short proposal with partners who would be interested to support this intention.

From Caritas Jordan

1. The situation and the humanitarian needs for Syrian and Iraqis in Jordan included also vulnerable Jordanians

According to The UN latest report living in the Shadows said that as the Syrian conflict approached its fifth year, many refugees were becoming "increasingly dependent on assistance, with Jordan's resources and infrastructure being stretched to the limit".

As of the end of 2014, more than 10,000 additional Syrian refugee households had identified as eligible for such assistance but, due to lack of funds, could not be helped, it said.

One in six of Syrian refugees live in extreme poverty, with less than \$ 40 for each person every month, according to the report.

Two thirds of refugees across Jordan are now living below the national poverty line.

Almost half of the households' researchers visited (15,000 Syrian refugees) had no heating, while a quarter had unreliable electricity and 20% had no functioning toilet.

Rental costs accounted for more than half of household expenditures, with refugee families being forced to share accommodation with others to reduce costs.

2. The current response of each regional Caritas regarding the (winter) humanitarian needs

The blizzard that hit Jordan did not cause major damages to refugees either those who are in or outside the camp as the Jordanian authorities put a well-organized emergency plan to prevent any harms. However, some tents were destroyed and submerged; some areas inside the camp looked like swamps. The Jordanian authorities moved a very small number of affected refugees from the Zaatari camp to Al Azraq camp, whereas UNHCR provided others with emergency thermal tents.

Many campaigns were carried out by Caritas Jordan in many governorates across Jordan, namely Amman, Fuheis, Mafraq, Zarqa and Irbid where blankets were distributed to Syrian refugees. Caritas has put a new distribution plan to be implemented soon, which will cover all areas where Syrian refugees reside. Blankets, gas heaters and clothes vouchers will be given during this campaign.

Also, Caritas Jordan inaugurated a winterization campaign at Al Salt Al Ahlieh School, followed by other campaigns in Karak, Mafraq and Zarqa, where blankets and kerosene heaters were distributed to the neediest Jordanians.

The following table explains the winterization services:

Type of service	Quantities	Frequency
Gas Heaters	1 960	1 960 households
Blankets	17,670	3 534 households
Thermal clothes	3 110	3 110 vouchers

3. What is your plan and what do you want to request from partners to support the humanitarian needs (any project to be covered? – give some details)

In light of the explained circumstances and likelihoods and as Caritas is an emergency organization that builds its efforts on disasters-like scenarios, it is highly requested that donors lend a hand to Caritas Jordan to enlarge its intervention and activities that are enormously needed to meet the basic needs of neediest refugees', as well as local communities who are negatively affected by receiving hundreds of thousands of refugees on its soil and draining Jordan resources.

There are many basic needs that are highly requested, but this does not mean that these assistances are restricted to the following:

Medical sector: allocate additional funds to respond to the acute and chronic needs of Syrian refugees so they can get proper medical treatment in a country that is plagued with crowded and inadequate medical facilities, amid a significant destruction of Syria's medical system.

Mother and Child: provide sufficient funds to cover increasing needs of mother and child feeding and hygienic services, in accordance with healthy life-style plan in place, to prevent feeding-related health diseases and respond to efficiently manage chronic health conditions.

Counseling: Caritas needs to have a physical structure where Syrians affected by war atrocities and blood scenes can be cordially received, listened to, and psychologically, physically and legally assisted, be provided with specialized training from which they can earn a living or promote certain skills and entrepreneurship, or referred to specialized services, according to each individual case need.

4. Basic fundamental needs and Emergency Cash:

Caritas has to receive support to efficiently and effectively resume a momentous relief aid and reach out to neediest refugees and provide them with voucher-based tailored cash assistance that is likely to respond to their immediate needs such as winterization items, beddings, kitchen ware as well as emergency cash assistance, fresh, dry and dieted food.

The following table illustrates Caritas Jordan needs for 2015:

Service	Target group
Medical	59,000 individuals
NFIs	51,500 individuals
Food	46,500 individuals
Counseling	23,000 individuals
Education	4,100 individuals

Total budget: USD17 million

