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Director of Emergencies, ODE

DATE: 26/04/12

THROUGH: John Crisci, Chief, RMBB

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(N.B. Please number all paragraphs.)

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE EMERGENCY OPERATION

Lebanon EMOP 200426

Emergency Food assistance to Syrian refugees in Lebanon

PART 1: INFORMATION NOTE

NATURE OF EMERGENCY:

1. Since May 2011, a large number of Syrians (mainly from areas of Homs, Hama, Tartous, and Rural Damascus) have crossed the border and sought refuge in Lebanon as a result of the ongoing conflict in Syria. The situation in Syria is further compounded by the economic stagnation leading to fewer employment opportunities, another contributory factor for households not to stay and risk the insecurity.
2. Initially some hundreds of families sought protection in two villages in northern Lebanon but, over time, families also started to settle in the Bekaa Valley and in the cities of Tripoli, Beirut and Saida. As of the end of April 2012, an estimated total of 25,000 Syrian refugees¹ are spread across the country. In addition, a smaller number of Syrians continue to cross the border on a daily basis looking for a safer environment. Some 80 percent of Syrians have so far been generously hosted by the local Lebanese communities with a further 15 percent renting accommodation², thus so far there are no organized camps or settlements, separating the refugees from host communities.
3. With the exception of the north, registration of refugees by UNHCR is currently ongoing. The breakdown of refugee numbers, by location, is as follows (UNHCR figures):

¹ According to UNHCR update

² WFP Rapid Assessment March 2012. Details are not available for the remaining five percent.

Location	Number
North	10,000
Bekaa Valley	8,500
Tripoli	3,000
Beirut	2,200
Saida	720
Total	24,420

4. Once in Lebanon, Syrians are neither given formal refugee status (which would allow the issuance of work permits) nor do they have access to Lebanese social services. Some have found illegal work in agriculture or construction, and others are depending on their (rapidly depleting) savings. According to WFP's April 2012 Rapid Assessment, 78 percent of refugees are dependent on humanitarian assistance, ad-hoc charity, sharing host families resources and using credit for their survival. As such, the Syrian population is in need of food assistance in order to ensure their nutritional well-being. Furthermore, without this assistance, the ability of host families to accommodate the refugees will be overstretched, leading to tension and possible further displacement. Similarly, the absence of humanitarian support could force Syrians illegally into the limited labour market, potentially causing tension between host communities and refugees.
5. The Lebanese High Relief Commission (HRC) has undertaken monthly food distributions in northern Lebanon (Wadi Khalid) and in Tripoli since the start of the crisis. Their food basket is based on guidance provided by WFP and currently includes a variety of cereals, pulses and food items appropriate to the Syrian diet. The monthly food rations for each family are packaged and then distributed house to house. This arrangement allows for a very detailed follow up on each family but requires considerable time and resources. Those Syrians living in the Bekaa Valley have so far been receiving food aid funded by UNHCR and distributed through NGOs with support from local communities. However, refugees in the neighbourhoods of Beirut and Saida have not yet received any formal assistance.
6. Despite the assistance provided, WFP's April 2012 Rapid Assessment shows refugee families have already started using negative coping mechanisms as a result of depletion of their resources. Such coping mechanisms include reducing the size of the meal, reducing the number of meals, opting for cheaper and lower quality commodities, credit, sharing with host families, as well as relying on local charity. Without assistance, they may be forced to adopt further negative coping mechanisms beyond working illegally such as very high credit levels, theft, begging etc.
7. UNHCR has now requested WFP to assume the responsibility for meeting the food needs of the refugees in the Bekaa Valley. WFP is also very likely to be requested to provide food assistance to the caseload in Beirut and Saida who have not received assistance so far (see table in paragraph 3 above).
8. This IR EMOP therefore envisages providing value-based food vouchers to

15,000 registered Syrian refugees located in the Bekaa Valley, Beirut and Saida as well as including those covered by the HRC food distribution in Tripoli and Beirut.

WFP IR EMOP:

9. **Justification for an immediate response, expected impact:** Syrian families arriving in Lebanon are leaving their homes with few possessions and meagre savings, looking to host communities for help with shelter. The living cost in Lebanon is relatively high compared to Syria and what resources the refugees have been able to bring with them cannot cover their needs. WFP's April 2012 rapid assessment shows that the vast majority of refugees are dependent on external forms of support to meet their food needs. In addition, they are already resorting to coping mechanisms such as reducing the number of meals, reducing portions, or buying food on credit. Regular food assistance will therefore safeguard against the deterioration of the refugees' nutritional status given their very limited livelihood opportunities, reduce their dependence on the resources of the host population which will deplete over time, thereby becoming a source of tension between the two communities, and prevent the adoption of negative coping mechanisms.
10. Assistance to the Syrian population will be provided through value-based food vouchers. The option of using cash was explored but was discounted as the Lebanese Government had concerns over how this cash might be used. A joint WFP/UNHCR mission to the Bekaa Valley in late March 2012, concluded that the use of value-based food vouchers would be the most logical given the availability of food in the market, the good market integration and the appropriate infrastructure. The mission concluded that this would be better than establishing parallel food and logistics supply chains for small and erratically dispersed refugee groups. These conclusions are confirmed by the extensive consultations, carried out by WFP in April with international NGOs who have been operational in the Bekaa Valley for many years. Furthermore, WFP visited a sample of shops in the Bekaa Valley and not only confirmed the availability of a wide variety of food items with reliable resupply mechanisms, but also confirmed shop owners' willingness to abide by WFP terms (e.g. payment at the end of the month for redeemed vouchers, recording items and values of food items purchased by the beneficiaries). The Lebanese HRC and local authorities are also in favour of using vouchers which they believe is the most appropriate and feasible mechanism, noting this modality provides additional support to the local economy.
11. **Duration of assistance:** Assistance will therefore be provided through vouchers for two months, June and July 2012, ensuring continuity of assistance from that provided by UNHCR and partners till the end of May 2012. However this project will start in May 2012 to allow time to complete the necessary pre-distribution steps for distribution to start in a timely manner on 1 June. Subsequent assistance will be under the regional EMOP, currently under preparation.
12. **Voucher Value:** Each person will receive a monthly voucher of USD 25

dollars which can be redeemed on a weekly basis in the identified shops. This voucher value has been determined on the basis of the local market value of a typical WFP food ration of cereals, pulses, vegetable oil, sugar and salt providing 2,100 kcal requirements per person per day³.

13. There is an expectation that refugees might share some commodities purchased through the vouchers with their host families as these families have helped refugee families meet their requirements so far. Given the concern over the situation for host families in the Bekaa Valley, the need for WFP support to host communities will be assessed and could be included in the forthcoming regional EMOP.
14. **Voucher system:** Given the absence of electronic points of sale in many of the towns and villages in The Bekaa Valley and the small number of Syrians holding Lebanese cell phones, this assistance will be initiated using paper vouchers in the targeted areas.
15. **Total cash requirements:** USD 1,482,140 for value-based food vouchers for two months and support costs for three months.

Mode of implementation:

16. The distribution of the paper vouchers will be done by WFP cooperating partners (CP), Danish Refugee Council and World Vision International⁴, to Syrian refugees who have been registered by UNHCR. The vouchers will be redeemed for food commodities in identified shops in The Bekaa Valley, Tripoli, Beirut and Saida. The cash voucher will give its holder the freedom of choice to purchase commodities included in a list of items commodities (including fresh vegetables and dairy products) but which excludes luxury food items, tobacco, beverages, etc. The paper voucher will have basic security features to prevent copying. Lessons learnt from the oPt paper voucher experience have, and will, guide the implementation of this IR-EMOP.
17. WFP will conduct sensitization and information sessions for the refugees at the main voucher distribution centres along with cooperating partners. In addition to these sessions, posters and leaflets designed and printed by WFP will be distributed at all shops to inform beneficiaries about the entitlement and type of food commodities. The food entitlement will be communicated to beneficiaries at the time of registration. Beneficiaries will present their registration ID given by UNHCR along with paper voucher at the shop when collecting food items to avoid exchange or sale of vouchers.
18. The distribution will be done through private and cooperative shops. Those shops already surveyed by WFP have all expressed their willingness to abide by WFP conditions, including maintaining prices for each month, receiving monthly payments and ensuring stock availability. WFP's implementing partners will enter into an agreement with each outlet specifying the transfer

³ This is an average figure as there are small variations in cost in different locations

⁴ Both agencies have a long history of working in this area so bring a good understanding of the context. WFP will also benefit from the synergy of this operation with the agencies' other activities.

modalities. WFP will transfer at the beginning of each monthly cycle the amount of the distributed vouchers to the CP. Payment to the shops will be made on presentation of invoice supported by proof of delivery to the beneficiaries after verification by the CP. Final payment by the CP to the shop will only be made after counter verification of the lists against the redeemed vouchers by WFP and the CP. Any balance remaining with the CP after paying the shops will be documented and carried over to the following cycle. The CP will monitor the shops' performance as well as conduct household level post distribution monitoring. WFP will conduct overall monitoring on CP performance as well as monitoring the shops and beneficiaries.

PART 2: EMOP BUDGET (attached)

Total EMOP budget is attached as Annex 1.
(Use standard EMOP Project Budget Plan Format)

PART 3: EMOP APPROVAL

- 1) IRA funding is available to cover EMOP budget

Chief, RMBB: John Crisci

Date:

30/04/12

- 2) EMOP is approved

Director of Emergencies: David Kaatrud

Date:

Annex 1 – Budget Summary