Sirte displacement reaches 90,000: Protection and WASH needs on the rise

The United Nations and its partners continue to monitor the latest movements of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the west of Libya, as a two-month campaign against the so-called Islamic State (IS) drives more families to flee from Sirte.

Since April/May, 35,000 people have left Sirte, bringing the total number of IDPs originating from the coastal city to 90,449, representing more than three quarters of its total population. The majority continue to seek refuge in Bani Walid, Tarhuna, Misratah and Al Jufrah, with smaller numbers reaching 15 other locations throughout western Libya. In Misrata, the local crisis committee reported a spike in recent arrivals, estimating that it is hosting approximately 1,700 families, or 8,775 individuals. Among them, there are some 3,000 children below the age of three.

As the numbers of IDPs swell, host communities are struggling to provide assistance. According to the UNHCR/Reach Rapid IDP Protection Needs Assessment conducted in May, only one to 25 per cent of Sirte IDPs feel that they are self-sufficient and 41 per cent do not have access to protection services. Water and sanitation conditions in an informal accommodation are deteriorating rapidly and hospitals face shortages of beds and medical supplies to aid growing numbers of patients.
Humanitarian community and local responders discuss Sirte

On 11 July in Tunis, the UN and its partners together with local Libyan authorities and partners met to discuss the ongoing response to the Sirte crisis and exchange key information on humanitarian needs. Participants agreed to build on existing response efforts and scale up the delivery of humanitarian assistance. As a follow up to this workshop, a second meeting took place with the relevant Libyan authorities to discuss key humanitarian activities for the people who remain in Sirte, as well as those who have been internally displaced.

In Brief: Assistance to Sirte IDPs

Since the recent outbreak of conflict, the UN and partners have provided critical assistance to those who have fled from Sirte, centering their efforts on the most vulnerable.

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) distributed assistance in Misrata, focusing on those IDPs sheltering in makeshift accommodation. In June, UNHCR through its partner Libaid distributed non-food items (NFIs) to 229 families composed of 1,145 individuals. The distributed kits are tailored to meet essential needs of the newly displaced and contain blankets, kitchen sets, jerry cans and solar lamps.

Also in the month of June, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) distributed NFIs and Hygiene Kits (HKs) to over 400 IDP families from Sirte, currently residing in Tarhuna, in Tripoli and in the countryside of Zamzam, Abugrain and Abunjaim.

Following up on the 6 June interagency rapid assessment mission to Misrata, UNICEF with its national implementing partner, the Libyan Society for Charity Works, completed the distribution of Hygiene Kits to 1,300 vulnerable displaced families in Misrata, Tarhouna, Bani Walid and surroundings. The hygiene kits contain soap, detergents, diapers and other essential household items that are frequently cited as unaffordable or unavailable by IDP families. In addition to assisting IDPs, the team from the Libyan Society for Charity Works overcame the fragile security situation and ongoing fighting to deliver assistance to people in need on the outskirts of Sirte where the situation remains precarious.

Fear from general conflict and the presence of armed groups is the primary reported displacement driver for identified IDPs, accounting for the displacement of 95.7 per cent of households.
Funding shortage threatens food assistance: US$12 million urgently required by September

The World Food Programme (WFP) is working to provide food assistance to people in need throughout Libya, but is facing a funding shortage that threatens ongoing life-saving food assistance.

In June, WFP provided general food distributions to 77,380 beneficiaries in western and southern Libya and 36,949 beneficiaries in eastern Libya. In addition to aiding IDP populations, WFP was also able to reach vulnerable refugee populations, assisting 5,000 refugees in Benghazi and Tripoli in June.

Overall, WFP has received 36 per cent of its requirements for 2016, which will be used to purchase food for upcoming distributions until September. The Programme is in need of US$12.2 million to continue providing life-saving food assistance to planned beneficiaries through December 2016.

Health supplies reach hospitals thanks to CERF and WHO CFE

On June 28, the World Health Organization (WHO) shipped a planeload of life-saving medicines and supplies to Tripoli to meet the acute health needs in the country. The supplies include life-saving medicines, trauma care supplies, intravenous infusions and trauma kits sufficient for 20,000 patients for a period of at least three months. The supplies will be distributed from the WHO warehouse in Tripoli based on hospital demands, and pending the outcomes of ongoing assessments being conducted by WHO. Further life-saving supplies are set to arrive in the coming days, including a range of essential medical equipment.

On 21 June, WHO was also able to ship 40 trauma kits directly to Misrata. Just one trauma kit can serve 100 major surgical procedures, and the 40 kits will cater for injured patients in hospitals in Misrata and surrounding areas, including where IDP movement is taking place. The kits are stored in a private warehouse in Misrata and distributed on an as needs basis by WHO Libya.

The procurement of these supplies was made possible through funds allocated from the OCHA Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Central Fund for Emergency (CFE) from WHO Headquarters. While these supplies will meet some of the acute health humanitarian demands for the coming weeks and months, they fall well short of the enormous humanitarian health needs of the vulnerable population, particularly IDPs, migrants and injured people in places where hospitals and health clinics are dysfunctional.
Tackling education needs: 279,000 children affected by nonfunctional schools

Recently released data from Libya’s Ministry of Education (MoE) paints an alarming picture of education access, with a total of 558 schools across various regions of Libya classed as nonfunctional, affecting approximately 279,000 school-age children. According to MoE officials, some schools are nonfunctional due to partial or complete damage as a result of conflict and fighting. In cities such as Bani Walid and Benghazi, a number of schools have become shelters for the displaced, preventing children from accessing them.

UNICEF is working with its partners to address education gaps and support children to continue with their education.

Through partnership with two national NGOs, Ekraa and Breezes, a total of 1,728 school-age children in Benghazi, 150 of whom are children with disabilities, were enrolled in catch-up classes in June. These classes serve as learning centres through which recreational and educational support is provided to conflict-affected children as part of an informal education programme. Upon successful completion of catch-up classes, students are assessed and re-integrated into formal education.

Also in June, UNICEF signed a cooperation agreement with the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides of Libya to provide recreational and remedial education activities to some 9,900 children in conflict-affected cities in Libya. Remedial education is an essential programme targeting children experiencing difficulties that helps them to take the final exams and move to the next scholastic year.

Time to play for Az Zawiyah children

Az-Zawiyah, a city in north-western Libya overlooking the Mediterranean Sea witnessed fierce fighting between Gaddafi troops and revolutionary forces in 2011. Five years after the revolution and with the conflict ongoing in Libya, children in Az-Zawiyah are looking for safe spaces to play and feel a sense of normalcy and security.

UNICEF has partnered with STACO, a non-governmental organization from Az-Zawiyah, to establish Child Friendly Spaces to provide a safe environment for children to meet and play, offering recreational activities for conflict-affected, displaced and vulnerable children. Since the beginning of the project early in March, an average of 700 boys and girls have attended activities every week, bringing the total number of children benefiting from the activities to-date to approximately 5,000 boys and girls.

In the Child Friendly Spaces, children can enjoy singing, drawing, story-telling and dancing, helping them to express their feelings and recover their confidence while receiving psychosocial support.

Social workers and animators, trained by UNICEF partners, identify boys and girls in need of specialized care and refer them to appropriate services.