

Her name is Sham. She's just over a year old and was born in the refugee camps on the borders of Lebanon. She's just learned to walk. I stretch out my hand to her to help steady her, and watch as she walks towards me. What happens next is a surprise. She gets onto my lap, puts her head on my chest, and falls asleep.

Her parents and two older children are from near Homs in Syria. When the fighting got intense, they left their village and walked over the mountains into Lebanon. It took them a week, walking at night, sheltering in the trees when they could, so as not to be a target for the snipers. They made it.

Many of their friends did not. Some killed by bullets along the way; others died from drinking the impure water.

We sit in the one-room homemade tent as we listen to Sham's parents. It's immaculately kept. A carpet on the dirt floor, plastic sheeting around the wooden framework. Cushions around the edges which double up as mattresses at night.

As we sip sweet tea, the family tell us their story. They had a big house, and helped with a farm. Now it's just a tent. They are grateful to be alive and would do anything to bring back the ones they have lost, which includes a brother and sister-in-law and an uncle.

The father has started language classes in English and Arabic during the day for the children. There's little else for the kids in this camp.

'At first, many agencies came. But now it's just Heart for Lebanon', says the father.

Heart for Lebanon, a Tearfund partner, work in a number of the camps, providing food parcels. A supply of cooking oil, soap, and essential foods such as pasta, tins of vegetables, tinned meats and fish. Each package lasts the best part of a month.

It's not free to live in this camp. The farmer who owns the land charges around USD100 a month rental. They do what they can to raise the money, working on the land when they can.

The oldest child has been given a place in the Heart for Lebanon school; one of the few in this area of the Bekaa Valley. The parents hope there will be room for their other children too.

What of the future?

'We want to go back when we can', says the mother. 'We know our village is in ruins- but it's *our* ruins.'

Over in South Lebanon, it's a similar story. Here too, a school has been started. Erynia, the head of the school, has given up her well paid job as an engineer to serve the children. She tells the story of one child she was concerned about.

'Maya just wouldn't join in the practices for the mother's day celebrations. I asked her why. It turns out her father died in the war. Her mother has had to go away to find work and has left Maya with her grandmother. Maya didn't want to join in the mother's day presentation because her mother would not be there.'

'We worked with the grandmother and were able to help the mother return for the event. It was a joy to see Maya's face when she saw her mother in the audience!'

We meet another family, living in a converted garage in South Lebanon. The mother, Rasha, explains how they got there.

'We lived on the outskirts of Aleppo. When the shelling began, we knew it was time to leave. My husband got us onto a truck. He said he would follow the next day, once he had helped his parents. That was three years ago. I haven't seen him since. All I have heard are rumour of his death.'

It's turned Rasha into a recluse. She rarely leaves their home. She talks of suicide. The grandmother has rescued the family, taking the eldest to the Hope for Lebanon school, and arranging for food packages. She was surprised by the genuine kindness of the team. The Syrian Muslims were the enemies of the Lebanese Christians, but here the Christians are, helping and supporting. She was so intrigued, she started to attend one of the Bible studies set up by Heart for Lebanon.

'When I'm there I feel different. I feel God', she says. Still a Muslim, she is on a journey.

Back in central Beirut, there is one more visit. This time to a Christian family who escaped from Mosul in Iraq.

There's tiredness in their faces but brightness in their eyes. The mother explains:

'When ISIS took over our town, they started painting signs of the doors of Christians. We came home from work one day to see the paint on the door. We were told we had to pay an impossibly high tax to remain. The other alternatives were to convert to Islam or to die.

'With the help of our Muslim neighbours, we escaped. We don't know whether we will ever go back. We lost everything. Our home, our savings, many of our friends. But we haven't lost our faith. We still have Jesus.'

Just a few stores from Lebanon- a country that has seen a 50% increase in its population because of the conflicts.

'We do what we can', says one of the Heart for Lebanon leaders. 'It's love with no strings attached. If they want to attend one of our Bible studies they can do, but there's no pressure. We work through relationships. We want to build with these communities, to help transform them.'

There are now 12 Bible studies among the refugees. Many more are planned.

The school in the Bekaa Valley is hoping to increase its intake from 75 to 250 students next year. The other two schools, one in central Beirut and one in the south also hope to grow.

The food distribution is increasing too. But Heart for Lebanon is careful not to take on too much too fast. They remain one of the most respected of the charities working with the refugees.

As little Sham grows, the prayer is she will one day have a real home, a real hope and a genuine future.