



January Storm: Situation Update 23 January 2024



Inter-Agency
Coordination
Lebanon

In early 2024, Lebanon faced challenging weather conditions, including heavy rain, snow, strong winds, and cold temperatures starting from January 9. These weather conditions led to soil erosion, flash floods, high and overflowing rivers, with strong winds exacerbating the situation. The storm's impact was most pronounced in the North and Akkar, experiencing widespread flooding and damage to shelters in vulnerable locations, particularly in Informal Settlements (ISs). Limited consequences at the household level were observed in Bekaa, Beirut, Mount Lebanon (BML), and the South.

Response partners in Lebanon mobilized in coordination with local authorities and the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) to assess the damage and provide assistance to affected families. A coordinated Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) was activated in the North and Akkar region. Access issues were reported in North Lebanon, Bekaa, and BML due to flooding and severe weather conditions. Ongoing access challenges persisted in certain areas of BML due to restrictions on partners' interventions in ISs by local authorities. Collaborative efforts are underway to ensure improved access for emergency assessment and response.

7

As the first storm of 2024 concluded, more than 3,100 individuals were affected in 159 sites in the North and Akkar regions. At the onset of the storm, over 1,700 affected Lebanese and displaced Syrian individuals required relocation to alternative accommodation. In other regions, the impact of the storm was more limited. In the Bekaa and Baalbek El Hermel, 66 sites were confirmed as affected, receiving WASH support at the site level, along with the provision of shelter kits and essential winter items. In Beirut Mount Lebanon (BML), field visits confirmed that only five sites were affected. In the South, 13 sites were identified as being affected, receiving support through the acquisition of Core-Relief items (CRIs) and minor shelter repairs, while there was no major impact or flooding observed at the site level.



Figure 1. Photo Credit: Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) | Location: Semmaqiye, Akkar, January 2024.



PREPAREDNESS

In the autumn months, partners coordinated efforts to prepare for the onset of storms at both the household and site levels, as part of a wider inter-sectoral winter season response documented in the [Overview of Lebanon Winter Preparedness & Response for 2023-2024](#). Actions included revising Emergency Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), reviewing the RNA tool and online dashboards, updating the geographical distribution of organizations responding in different areas, conducting RNA refresher trainings for partners throughout the country, updating prioritization maps, risk matrix, and contingency stocks. Other measures involved distributing shelter weatherproofing kits and clothing, conducting site improvements, providing fuel for institutions, and activating communication trees and linkages with Disaster Risk Management (DRM). These comprehensive actions were implemented to enhance preparedness and response in anticipation of the challenges posed by winter conditions.

In addition, region-specific preparedness measures were adapted:

- Distributing shelter kits and CRIs, with a focus on flood mitigation at 15 previously affected sites in the **North**, emphasizing a *high level of prioritization* due to limited funds.
- Training partners on RNA, replenishing stocks, and improving communication with partners and persons of concern by unifying referral pathways.
- Prepositioning shelter and CRI kits, distributing weatherproofing kits, installing measurement bars in flood-prone areas, supporting vulnerable families with high rigidity tents, distributing solid fuel to remote locations at high altitude, along with recirculating winter messaging to displaced Syrians and outreach volunteers in **Bekaa**.
- Updating geo-split, ensuring contingency stocks, providing RNA refresher training, and distributing winter shelter kits in **BML** to identified families in ISs, with ongoing efforts to address access issues.
- Assessing partner preparedness in the **South** during the last quarter of 2023 and updating emergency and contingency plans, particularly for Shelter, WaSH, and Non-Food Items (NFIs).

It is important to note that there are a range of factors this year that contribute to the vulnerability of families in the winter. These include the very low capacity of local authorities to prepare for and respond to weather events, the impact of increased hostilities in the South, as well as heightened challenges for response partners including access constraints and funding limitations, for example leading to very limited seasonal cash assistance, as described below.



Figure 2. Photo Credit: Medair, Abdul Dennaoui | Location: Al-Nabi Shayt, Baalbek – Hermel, Bekaa Valley, 2023.



IMPACT OF CURRENT STORM ON INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

| | Affected | Assisted |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|
| Sites confirmed | 243 | 164 |
| Estimated households | 792 | 763 |
| Estimated individuals | 4,077 | 3,905 |

Figures are cumulative to date. Assessments are ongoing. Additional numbers will be reflected in an updated sitrep.

RESPONSE

North

In the North and Akkar regions, the storm resulted in significant consequences as the El Naher El Kabir and Ostouene rivers completely flooded nearby lands, including the villages of Semmaqiye, Hekr El Dahiri, and Knaisseh. This has affected both refugees and the local community. As of January 23, 159 sites were confirmed to be affected out of 378 referred sites, impacting 634 households or 3,170 individuals.

In response to the immediate impact of the storm, the municipality of El Semmaqiye temporarily relocated 1,705 displaced Syrians from affected ISs to various locations. Simultaneously, the LRC and Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) transported approximately 75 individuals to nearby shelters in Knaisseh. Likewise, Khat El Petrol area in Wadi Khaled experienced complete flooding, leading families to relocate to nearby shelters. On Sunday 14 January, LRC distributed blankets, bread, and water gallons to relocated displaced Syrian and Lebanese families. As of January 17, all the families had returned to their areas.

At the sector level, the **Food Security and Agriculture** sector distributed 3,200 snacks and 3,400 hot meals, as well as 750 food parcels for displaced Syrians and Lebanese households affected by the storm.



Figure 3. Photo Credit: Khodr Debby | Location: Qlaiat, Akkar

WASH sector partners conducted emergency desludging at 41 sites with limited capacity to carry out dewatering and address the scale of the problem. It is important to note the limited capacity of WASH partners in the initial stages to undertake large-scale dewatering and desludging, considering the volume of water in flooded sites.

Basic Assistance sector partners distributed core relief items to affected households including 1,685 blankets, 602 mattresses, and 1,157 sleeping mats.



January Storm: Situation Update 23 January 2024



Inter-Agency
Coordination
Lebanon

Bekaa



Figure 4. Photo Credit: HAND | Location: Maalaqa, Zahle, Bekaa, January 2024. Flooded Site identified in need of dewatering and floor raising kits.

In Bekaa and Baalbek El Hermel, a total of 66 sites have been confirmed to be affected with shelter and WASH issues, impacting 122 households (710 individuals), mainly experiencing shelter leakage. Ongoing assessments are being conducted for an additional 42 referred sites. In Central and North Bekaa, 15 ISs experienced flooding, but tents remained secure. In Kiara, one IS with two households and 11 individuals faced temporary flooding due to an overflowed irrigation channel, with families returning after a few hours.

Despite the persistence of slow and steady rain, displaced Syrians and partners managed the response without the need for relocation. While partners face persistent access constraints in providing interventions in ISs, for the emergency response, exceptional access approval was granted by the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM) with support from the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), facilitating response efforts and kit distribution.

In terms of sites assisted, 54 sites were supported, providing 145 shelter kits to 139 families (768 individuals) in Central, West, and North Bekaa. Seven ISs at risk of flooding were identified for site improvements by partners, 16 sites were successfully dewatered, and regular desludging activities (992 m³) were conducted at 51 sites. Additionally, four families in Aarsal received support in the form of 28 mattresses and 28 blankets.

Beirut & Mount Lebanon

To assess the situation of referred sites, partners successfully made communication with 174 IS in BML through an initial phone survey aimed at evaluating the impact of the recent storm. Out of these settlements, 101 reported no impact, while 73 revealed various degrees of damage, encompassing heavy leakage (53 sites), floods (4 sites), extreme wind (15 sites), and one site with a collapsed tent. Despite encountering access challenges in specific areas of Mount Lebanon, partners managed to conduct on-site visits to 12 locations. Within this set, five sites (comprising 54 individuals) were confirmed to be affected by the storm and supplied with shelter kits.

South

The South and Nabatiyeh governorates encountered heavy rainfall, with the Saida district specifically witnessing intense storms. A total of 13 sites were identified as being affected, and support was provided through the provision of CRIs and minor shelter repairs. No significant impact or flooding was observed at the site level.



January Storm: Situation Update 23 January 2024



Inter-Agency
Coordination
Lebanon

KEY CHALLENGES

Limited **municipal capacity** to prepare for and respond to the winter season is reported as the primary preparedness challenge across governorates. This includes draining canals, reinforcing riverbanks, and removing solid waste. **Urgent attention is required to address these issues before future storms, particularly in areas with a high flood risk.** Coordination through governors is essential for effective response efforts. In the **North**, concerns have been raised about limited municipal and response capacities, specifically in terms of the use of heavy equipment (including insufficient fuel) for dewatering flooded areas, canal drainage, and riverbank reinforcement. Additionally, response funding challenges for site improvement, shelter kits, CRIs, and WaSH services (such as dewatering, desludging, and waste cleaning) were highlighted. In the **Bekaa** MoSA intervened, securing exceptional approval for access from the MoIM. Partners in **BML** are also grappling with access challenges for the distribution of shelter kits in several areas. Addressing these challenges is crucial for the delivery of ongoing programmes to support vulnerable people in ISs as well as future emergency response.

PARTNERS INVOLVED IN THE RESPONSE

Action Against Hunger (ACF), American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA), Caritas, Concern Worldwide, Humanitarian Aid and Network for Development (HAND), Intersos, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Jusoor Al Nour, Kuwaiti Aid, Lebanese Organization for Studies and Training (LOST), Lebanese Red Cross (LRC), Medair, Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM), Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Nusaned, Premiere Urgence - Aide Medicale Internationale (PU-AMI), René Moawad Foundation (RMF), Save the Children International (SCI), SHIELD, Solidarite International, UNHCR, UNICEF, World Food Programme (WFP), and World Vision International (WVI).

Focal Points for Extreme Weather and Referrals:

Bekaa: Marguerite Nowak, nowak@unhcr.org; Yara Atallah, atallahy@unhcr.org; Muhammad Ilyas, ilyas@unhcr.org

BML: Pierre Alejandro Chacon, chacon@unhcr.org; Dima Jamileh, jamileh@unhcr.org

North: Nizar Gubartal, gubartal@unhcr.org; Elias Sawan, sawan@unhcr.org; Danielle Fares, faresd@unhcr.org

South: Arash Behazin, behazin@unhcr.org; Haydar Hadad, hadad@unhcr.org