

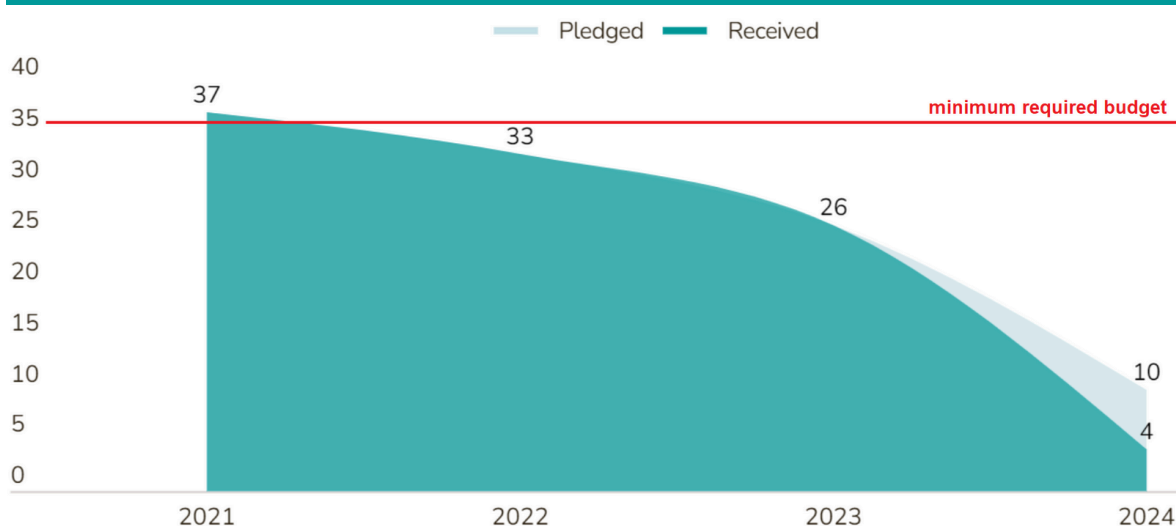
US\$ 25 M is urgently required to bridge the gap in informal settlements

From the onset of the Syrian crisis in 2011, Lebanon has been hosting the highest number of refugees per capita and per square kilometre. Over 300,000 refugees reside in informal settlements where no permanent infrastructure is allowed, meaning that temporary arrangements for water supply and sanitation have to be provided by the international community. The country's unprecedented socio-economic crisis since 2019, coupled with a cholera outbreak in 2022 and the intensifying armed cross-border conflict since late 2023, has left millions of Lebanese, Syrians, Palestinians and others fighting for survival and devastated critical infrastructure, including water and sanitation, putting the health and future of the children at risk.

The WaSH sector requires around US\$ 35 million annually to deliver adequate, up-to-the-standard services and facilities to refugees in informal settlements. Since 2020, WaSH sector started observing a decline in the funding trend for WaSH in informal settlements, falling significantly below required levels in 2024. To date, only US\$ 4 million is available. The significant decrease in funding now puts these vital services at risk, which may result in **suspending water trucking and desludging services for a further 100,000 residents of informal settlements.**

The risks associated with further declining access to WaSH services are deeply concerning. Unsafe drinking water, poor sanitation and inadequate hygiene may lead to an increase in water-borne and water-related diseases, including another cholera outbreak, which would not only stigmatize informal settlements but also fuel the tensions between communities and disproportionately affect the youngest, as infectious diseases, notably diarrhoea, remain a leading cause of under-five mortality. This will also increase a child's risk of undernutrition, especially in children below two years old, and overall result in communities' higher levels of acute malnutrition. Moreover, due to water shortages, women, girls, and persons with disabilities face heightened risks of exploitation and gender-based violence while accessing water, particularly due to increased reliance on intermediaries and contractors. The reduction of other programs, such as cash-based assistance, will further strain the coping capacities of displaced Syrians, and exacerbate all existing risks.

Funding gap for WaSH activities in informal settlements



For 2024, less than US\$ 10 million is pledged, but only US\$ 4 million has been received so far

WaSH Sector ALERT



Despite the current funding situation and limited resources, the WaSH sector will continue to support the displaced people living in certain informal settlements to the extent possible. However, partners will have to make the difficult decision to discontinue some services provision in less vulnerable areas and/or reduce the level of services. Where maintained, the water trucking services will meet only the bare minimum quantity standards⁽¹⁾. Desludging will be prioritised for the areas with the highest environmental and tension risks.

In December 2023, humanitarian actors supported 43% of informal settlements in Lebanon, trucking safe water into 2,381 sites to serve 179,445 residents. In 2023, over 1.4 million cubic meters of water have been delivered via the water trucking modality. However, due to funding constraints, the quantity of water delivered to households has been inconsistent and has not reached the agreed minimum standard of 35 litres per capita per day, averaging out at around 20 litres per capita per day. Similarly, nearly 400 thousand cubic meters of wastewater were removed in 2023 from 3,562 informal settlements and safely disposed of. The inability to continue such operations will pose a threat to surface and groundwater pollution and environmental degradation, and exacerbate tensions between Syrians and Lebanese communities.



14%
female-headed



52%
children



3%
elderly

An additional US\$ 25 million is immediately and urgently needed to maintain the existing WaSH services for informal settlements and reduce the risk of a major health crisis that will affect all populations in the country. The WaSH Sector urgently appeals for funding support to stave off this crisis.

(1) <https://spherestandards.org/>