



February Storm: Situation Update 03 February 2023



Inter-Agency
Coordination
Lebanon

Cold weather hit Lebanon for the first time in 2023 on 31 January with heavy rain causing some flooding, thunderstorms, strong winds and snow at 900 meters altitude. As a result, areas across Lebanon experienced road blockages mainly due to accumulated snow, landslides caused by heavy rain and poor infrastructure, and damage to shelters, particularly in Informal Settlements (IS). The effects varied throughout the country, with people in the Bekaa (particularly Baalbeck, Saadnayel, Hermel, Rachaya, and Marj), Beirut & Mount Lebanon (BML), and South (particularly Babliye, Aaddoussiye, Insariye, and Mansouri) more affected, and to a lesser extent, the North.

The current socio-economic crisis and the financial hardship faced by many, including due to the rise in fuel prices, make it more difficult for vulnerable populations to cope with the winter season. Municipalities' ability to respond to emergencies continues to be limited due to financial constraints. Based on lessons learnt from previous years, preparedness actions were put in place at the household (HH) and site levels at the start of the season across all the Lebanese governorates to help prepare for the winter, ensure a swift activation of Rapid Needs Assessments (RNAs) and strong communication across partners, and to mobilize assistance.

In response to the latest storm, the RNA was activated by partners in three regions (BML, Bekaa and South). Access issues were most significantly reported in BML, Bekaa and the North due to river flooding, coupled with the snow accumulation that resulted in roads becoming inaccessible, with a need to dislodge water from informal settlements.



Photo credit: INTERSOS | Hala Audi, South Team. Location: Babliye 002, Saida District.



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PREPAREDNESS

In advance of the winter season, partners worked together through Inter-Agency coordination to prepare for the onset of storms at the household and site levels, as part of a wider inter-sectoral winter season response.

Winter preparedness actions included: revising the Emergency Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)s, reviewing the RNA tool and online dashboards, updating the geo-split of organizations responding in different areas, conducting RNA refresher trainings for partners around the country, updating prioritization maps, risk matrix and contingency stocks, distributing shelter weatherproofing and kits and winter cash assistance, conducting site improvement, providing fuel for institutions, and activating communication trees and linkages with Disaster Risk Management (DRM). Warning notifications were sent to partners, informing them about the RNA activation and weather forecast from the Disaster Risk Management Unit and Inter-Agency prior to the storm.

In addition, region-specific preparedness measures were adapted:

- 12 relocation sites were identified in the **Bekaa** in 6 municipalities, and flood prone sites were shared with partners to anticipate needs like desludging.
- In **BML**, shelter kits were distributed to 324 households for 1,219 individuals in preparation for the winter season.
- In the **North**, 15 site improvements were conducted in 2022 for locations near rivers that are typically at high risk of flooding each year.
- As mitigation measures in the **South**, partners provided informal settlements (ISs) with weather proofing kits and solar lamps, and thermal clothing in high altitude areas in anticipation for the winter season.



Before and after site improvement. Location: Ouadi Jamous 053 IS, North Lebanon.



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IMPACT OF CURRENT STORM

	Affected	Assisted
Sites confirmed	55	32
Estimated households	240	8
Estimated individuals	1388	57

**Figures are cumulative to date. As of 2 February 2023, 171 sites in total were assessed, with 55 confirmed as in need of assistance. Assessments are ongoing. Numbers will be reflected in an updated sitrep.*

RESPONSE

Bekaa

The RNA was activated on 1 February in the Bekaa due to continuous rain and snow accumulation. As of end- 2 February, 58 IS have been referred, 24 were assessed and 12 were confirmed to be affected with an estimated 155 HH/877 individuals. The majority of referrals are for tents leaking due to rain and snow, with the concentration of sites in Baalbek and Zahle. Partners continue to conduct assessments in the field throughout the bad weather.

12 sites were flagged as in need of shelter support including one for Medium Repair Kit (MRK), 151 for Light Repair Kit (LRK), and 46 Floor Raising Kit (FRK). One site in Saadnayel was flagged to be in need blankets.

Both Shelter and Basic Assistance interventions for the affected sites are planned for 3 February.



Photo credit: UNHCR | Muhammad Ilyas. UNHCR partner conducting assessments in an IS in Marj in response to the storm Location: West Bekaa

Beirut & Mount Lebanon



Photo Credit: MEDAIR | Esraa Maalouf. Location: Damour IS

BML activated the RNA on February 2nd. Partners assessed 118 sites by phone surveys, out of which 41 were reported as affected. A total of 28 sites were visited, confirming that 14 were impacted by the weather conditions. In the impacted sites, 20HH/ 115 individuals were so far reported to be affected.

8 Light Repair Kits (LRK) were distributed, and shelter kits provision is ongoing.



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South

On 1 February, the RNA was activated in both South and Nabatiyeh governorates after the heavy rainfall, extreme wind and significant temperature drop and a number of referrals were received.

RNA partners assessed and confirmed 29 sites affected where 65 HH/ 396 individuals reside.

The most needed items identified in the assessments were Core Relief Items (CRIs) such as blankets, and winter clothing and shelter kits in IS, with the majority of tents affected in confirmed sites due to the extreme weather.

Partners will begin distributions on 3 February.



Photo credit: INTERSOS | Hala Audi, South Team. Location: Mansouri, Tyre District

KEY CHALLENGES

Limited **municipal capacity** to prepare for and respond to the winter season is reported to be the main preparedness challenge across governorates. In terms of response, access remains the key barrier for partners particularly in mountainous icy and snowy areas. For **Bekaa**, most of the municipalities have drained canals, however due to financial challenges, limited river cleaning is taking place. Meanwhile, whenever possible they used the Cash for Work (CFW) projects, such as in Kabelias, Mekseh, and Housh el HaremeH for cleaning purposes. Although significant river flooding has not yet occurred this year, the cleaning of canals is becoming more critical considering the lack of solid waste management, including in informal settlements, which increases the risk of floods when canals are blocked with waste. In addition, all municipalities in the Bekaa requested support for fuel and maintenance of equipment, as well as support in contracting bulldozers to have on standby in the event of snowstorms. Municipalities' capacity for road opening is either limited to main roads only or none, leaving movement barriers for most residents and hampering the response. Municipalities continue to request support with stock of anti-freezing salt for road opening, fixing potholes and fuel and heating for municipal buildings. In the **North**, requests for support were received from the civil defense (Qobbayat and Al-Arida centers) and included: new equipment, financial support for fuel provision and maintenance of existing equipment, and protective gears for volunteers. In the **South** local authorities have requested support to access fuel and equipment to dislodge storm water and to clean canals, as in other parts of the county.

PARTNERS INVOLVED IN THE RESPONSE

ACF, AVSI, DPNA, INTERSOS, Medair, MoSA, NRC, PU-AMI, Save the Children, SHEILD, UNHCR

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