



January Storm: Situation Update 5 February 2024



Inter-Agency
Coordination
Lebanon

As challenging weather conditions persisted after the initial storm in early January, Lebanon continued to grapple with ongoing repercussions, particularly in the Northern regions. The persistence of heavy rain and strong winds inflicted further damage on communities already affected by the initial storm. Additionally, snow descended to lower altitudes, compounding the challenges, and causing additional harm to the impacted areas. The storm's impact remained significant in the North and Akkar, with widespread flooding and damage to shelters in vulnerable locations, especially in Informal Settlements (ISs). The impact also extended to Beirut and Mount Lebanon (BML).

In the last week of January, 944 households composed of 5,109 individuals were estimated to be affected in 48 sites in North, Akkar, and Beirut and Mount Lebanon (BML).

The Northern areas, particularly North Lebanon and Akkar, continued to face the impact of adverse weather conditions. The landscape, already affected by the initial storm, experienced additional challenges, intensifying issues such as flash floods, soil erosion, and agricultural crop loss. This cumulative effect remained a persistent threat to the situation of shelters for both the Lebanese population and displaced Syrians, especially in vulnerable locations and Informal Settlements (ISs). While the North continued to grapple with the intensified impact, the second phase of the storm saw a heightened impact in certain areas in BML, warranting closer attention and response measures. Field visits are ongoing to evaluate the evolving situation and provide support based on needs.

Conversely, in the South and Bekaa regions, the situation appeared to stabilize as the storm progressed. No major impact or flooding was observed at the site level in these areas. The limited severity of the storm and the preparedness measures seem to have contributed to minimizing the potential damage, highlighting the importance of preparedness activities.



Figure 1. Photo Credit: Bilal Akel, UNHCR | Location: Semmaqiye, Akkar, 27 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 Rapid Needs Assessment (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.

In addition, region-specific preparedness measures were adapted:

- Distributing shelter kits and Core Relief Items (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. Moreover, the canals in Semmaqiye, Hekr El Dahiri, Tal Bireh, Masoudyeh and Knaisseh were cleaned to mitigate flooding.
- 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: Abdul Dennaoui, Medair | Location: Al-Nabi Shayt, Baalbek El Hermel, Bekaa Valley, 23 May 2023.



IMPACT OF CURRENT STORM ON INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

	Affected	Assisted
Sites confirmed	48	45
Estimated households	944	392
Estimated individuals	5,264	2,011

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

RESPONSE

North

On January 23, a storm commenced in the North with initially low water precipitation levels. Subsequently, heavy rain began on the night of January 26, leading to the overflow of the El Naher El Kabir river for the second time that month. This overflow resulted in the complete flooding of nearby lands, including the villages of Semmaqiye, Hekr El Dahiri, and Kneisseh, affecting both Lebanese and displaced Syrians. In the last week of January, more than 930 households composed of 5,008 individuals were affected in 37 sites with over 320 affected Lebanese and displaced Syrian individuals required temporary relocation.

Displaced Syrians in need of location were temporarily relocated to four sites, namely the Mosque Hall, a School, and two Halls. Additionally, more than 20 families found shelter within the local Lebanese community in Semmaqiye. By January 28, all families had successfully returned to their informal settlements.

Tragically, despite the awareness of potential dangers associated with river flooding, one young Syrian child was swept away and lost their life during the storm in Sammouniye, Akkar.

Growing concerns surround the recurring nature of such situations with every storm, notably due to limited responses from partners and municipal capacity for heavy equipment, canal drainage, and riverbank reinforcement. The unreliability of weather forecast sources and existing breaks in riverbanks at various locations further intensify these concerns. The need for enhanced preparedness and response mechanisms becomes increasingly apparent in the face of these recurring weather-related challenges.

In response, all RNA partners were mobilized to the field to conduct RNA assessments, and assistance was provided accordingly. At the sector level, the **Food Security and Agriculture** sector partners distributed 800 hot meals for displaced Syrians in Semmaqiye. **WASH** sector partners cleaned the canals in Semmaqiye, Hekr El Dahiri, Tal Bireh, Masoudyeh, and Knaisseh following the first storm earlier in January. **Basic Assistance** sector partners are conducting individual assessments to ensure that affected households are supported with CRIs and winter clothes. Starting 30 January, **Protection** sector partners are providing Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services, as well as Psychological First Aid (PFA) to the children in Semmaqiye. In the following week, MHPSS and group support services will be provided to affected families. Protection Case Management services will also be offered in response to emerging needs.



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Following the deteriorating weather conditions on January 26, partners established contact with 161 IS in BML through an initial phone survey to assess the situation of referred sites and evaluate the impact of the storm.

Out of these settlements, 63 revealed no impact, while 98 reported various degrees of damage, encompassing heavy leakage (78 sites), floods (8 sites), and extreme wind (12 sites).

Despite encountering access challenges, particularly in the Chouf and Aley areas, partners managed to conduct on-site visits to 37 locations. Among these locations, 11 sites (comprising 101 individuals) were confirmed to be affected by the storm.

As a response, at eight sites of those confirmed affected, nine affected households composed of 65 individuals were supplied with shelter kits.

Partners continue visiting additional sites to confirm impact, prioritizing those that have reported being affected, and the distribution of essential shelter kits is underway.



Figure 3. Photo Credit: Amin Mahmoud, Medair/
Location: Damour, Chouf, January

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. 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

Caritas, Concern Worldwide, Humanitarian Aid and Network for Development (HAND), International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Lebanese Red Cross (LRC), Medair, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Order of Malta, Premiere Urgence - Aide Medicale Internationale (PU-AMI), Relief International (RI), Save the Children International (SCI), Utopia, UNHCR, UNICEF, World Food Programme (WFP).

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