



## Lebanon Winter 2023 Preparedness & Response Overview

In winter, Lebanon faces seasonal storms including heavy rain, snow, strong winds and thunderstorms, as well as consistent low temperatures across parts of the country. As a result, some areas experience flooding due to clogged canals and melting snow, landslides caused by heavy rain and poor infrastructure, road blockages due to accumulated snow, and damage to shelters, particularly in informal settlements.

Harsh weather situations have worsened living conditions across Lebanon, where most people are already struggling to survive the country's economic crisis. Few can afford sufficient fuel for heating or electricity costs amid widespread power cuts, jeopardizing their ability to meet basic needs. The capacity of institutions and municipalities to prepare for the winter and to respond to weather-related emergencies continues to diminish due to financial constraints, especially for securing funds for fuel, cleaning canals, managing solid waste, and maintaining and operating equipment.

Despite the challenging context, and based on lessons learnt from previous years, under the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), preparedness actions were put in place at the household and site levels before the start of the season across all Lebanese governorates to help mobilize assistance, ensure a swift activation of Rapid Needs Assessments (RNAs) and maintain strong communication across response partners.



Emergency response during snowstorm in Saadnayel city, Lebanon. Photo: © UNHCR/Houssam Hariri



## WINTER PREPAREDNESS

The multi-sectoral winter response combines efforts across the Basic Assistance, Shelter, WASH, and Social Stability sectors, with LCRP partners working to support vulnerable refugee and host community families and institutions to mitigate the consequences of harsh weather conditions. This includes winter cash assistance, municipal support projects, site improvements, critical winterization shelter repairs, and provision of winter-related items and clothes.

### Preparedness for Emergency Response

Before each winter season, partners work through Inter-Agency coordination to update available contingency stocks in warehouses and storage sites and plan together for the season. In response to winter emergencies, a geo-split is updated with Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) teams established with partners in each region, ready to be activated when a storm event is large enough to affect multiple households and require a coordinated multi-sector response. To improve communication, practical channels have been developed including emergency WhatsApp groups with the Ministry of Social Affairs, Disaster Risk Management (DRM) unit and the Inter-Agency to facilitate coordination during an emergency response. Partners implement post distribution monitoring across the regions to monitor the quality of the response, to ensure that distributions met the needs of families and to use data in informing future emergency preparedness.

Lessons learnt and best-practices reflected on from last winter season requiring further efforts across regions include: close adherence to the geo-split (to avoid duplication of efforts) and wider mapping of sites and partners; updating of the RNA tool when needed to take on board contextual changes; strengthened contingency planning; coordinated capacity building of partners and advocating for funding to ensure sufficient emphasis on preparedness interventions before emergencies including municipal support, weatherproofing, cash assistance and site improvements.

### Basic Assistance Sector

Under the Basic Assistance sector **winter cash assistance** is provided to vulnerable households to support purchasing of heaters, winter clothes, blankets, and fuel for heating. Vulnerable households and individuals who receive seasonal cash assistance can better cope with seasonal shocks without having to resort to negative coping mechanisms or deprioritize other essential needs such as food. The Basic Assistance sector coordinates with the Environment Taskforce under the Ministry of Environment to ensure cash assistance is efficiently used to buy fuel, and to further explore environmentally- friendly heating solutions. Further coordination is needed with local authorities to monitor whether households are cutting trees for heating, negatively impacting the environment.

For 2023 the sector aims to target 273,000 Syrian households (based on poverty levels), 35,000 Lebanese HHs (based on coverage in past season), 32,850 Palestine Refugees in Lebanon HHs (based on poverty levels), and 9,967 Palestinian Refugees from Syria HHs (full coverage) with winter cash assistance. The sector recommends between USD 60 and USD 90 monthly to cover winter needs. In-kind support is provided in response to storms and is usually done through geographic/community level targeting.

While cash transfers remain the preferred support modality for basic needs, the Basic Assistance sector continue to maintain the **distribution of in-kind Core Relief Items (CRIs)** on a smaller scale, when needed. In-kind assistance, which includes the distribution of blankets, mattresses, sleeping mats, kitchen sets, jerry cans and solar lamps, supports families to both prepare for the winter season and recover after losing basic household assets due to floods, fires, evictions, and/ or relocation.



CRIs distribution in Damour. Photo: © Medair/Esraa Maalouf

### Shelter Sector

The Shelter sector utilizes several modalities to improve the shelter conditions of vulnerable households living in Informal Settlements (IS), including **weatherproofing** and **minor repair activities** through the provision of in-kind shelter materials and fire-fighting equipment. In addition, partners share technical guidance and manuals with beneficiaries on recommended practices in shelter maintenance. **Site improvements** are conducted by the sector in high-risk areas such high altitude, flood-prone areas, previously affected areas to prevent negative consequences of the winter season such as through cleaning rivers and repairing infrastructure to prevent floods and landslides. For 2023, the Shelter sector aims to target 200,905 households living in ISs with 40,181 shelter kits. The Shelter sector coordinates with the Environment Taskforce to map and mitigate the environmental hazards and risks that might arise from burning solid waste and plastic sheets for heating.

**Investing in site improvement has proven effective in decreasing the risk of flooding** especially in the North and Akkar. After implementing site improvement measures including cleaning rivers and repairing canals and infrastructure, the number of flooded sites in Akkar dropped from 614 to 171 from 2021 to 2022.



***Before and after site improvement. Location: Ouadi Jamous 053 IS, Akkar Governorate.***



## WASH Sector

Some of the key elements included for winter preparedness by the WASH sector are performing awareness and cleaning campaigns for channels in informal settlements and in hosting villages/localities by the end of summer, completing a full set of desludging before winter and updating the winterization response plan. For emergency response, key activities for WASH include dewatering flooded areas in the informal settlements and supporting families in relocating for their WASH needs. In addition, the sector contributes to winter preparedness by focusing on safe water supply management and improving wastewater management, in line with Ministry of Environment's environmental safeguards, by targeting the most vulnerable areas and addressing the most urgent issues.

## Social Stability Sector

The Social Stability sector provides support to municipalities to alleviate resource pressure and mitigate tensions. Specifically in the past two years, sector partners have been prioritizing support to municipalities, in view of their extreme shortage of financial and human resources, which hampers the delivering basic services such as solid waste management and cleaning of water canals.

Sector partners support municipalities in prevention and preparedness for winter within available resources, mainly through construction and rehabilitation of stormwater and rainwater drainage and sewage canals, provision of machineries and vehicles for cleaning and opening roads, and jetting trucks to clean clogged canals. Projects are conducted particularly in areas with a high presence of informal settlements, as well as through identification of rivers with a high risk of flooding. Other support programmes include a cash for work component used mainly in cleaning of storm water canals and riverbeds to prevent flooding.

## CHALLENGES & GAPS IN THE 2023 RESPONSE

Limited **municipal capacity** to prepare for and respond to the winter season is reported to be the main preparedness challenge and a source of tension across all governorates, including cleaning activities, managing solid waste, removing snow, and ensuring financial support for fuel provision and maintenance of equipment.

At the sector level, limited financial capacity to meet the needs of all population groups especially vulnerable Lebanese remain a challenge.

- Under **Basic Assistance**, just 6,462 out of 35,000 targeted Lebanese households have been reached so far due to funding constraints.
- In addition, there are major gaps in site improvement activities for the **Shelter** sector and might lead to an increase in the number of flooded sites. Regarding essential shelter upgrades, out of a target of 200,905 households living in ISs, just 39,438 have so far been reached this season.
- For both the **WASH and Social Stability** sectors, inadequate solid waste management is expected to contribute to flooding due to accumulated waste in irrigation canals and rivers; as well as posing a health risk in contributing to the spread of cholera and other diseases.
- Consistent support to the Environment Taskforce to **mitigate environmental concerns** related to winter heating and shelter materials remains an important focus for 2023.





Road opening in Qab-Elias, Central Bekaa through a Save the Children supported project under Social Stability sector. Photo: © Qab-Elias Municipality