LEBANON Response Plan

At a Glance

2025 Water Scarcity and Drought Preparedness & Response

Overview

Lebanon is currently facing **drought-like conditions not seen in recent decades**, with rainfall down by more than 50 per cent and reservoirs at alarmingly low levels. More than **1.85 million people** (roughly one third of the total population) **live in areas highly vulnerable to drought**, while **44 per cent of the population relies on unsafe and costly water trucking**. Lake Qaraoun, Lebanon's largest reservoir, has received only **13 per cent of its usual inflows**, crippling agriculture, hydropower, and water supply.

Drought-related impacts vary significantly across regions:

- **North & Akkar:** Rainfall down 37%; groundwater depletion rising; early signs of water-related tensions.
- **Bekaa & Baalbek–Hermel:** Hardest hit. 25% of wells dried up, springs depleted, and agriculture severely undermined. Protests reported.
- **Beirut & Mount Lebanon (BML):** Water trucking costs up 60% in Beirut city; low-income households forced below safe consumption levels. Illegal wells and weak regulation add strain.
- **South & Nabatieh:** Scarcity compounded by conflict-damaged infrastructure. Municipalities under severe pressure; demonstrations and community fundraising underway.

The crisis is already affecting every sector:

Sector	Impact	Budget Required
WaSH	Risk of service collapse due to depleted aquifers and outdated infrastructure. 1.85M people in highly vulnerable areas.	USD 42.2M needed to provide emergency services and sustain water access and resilience.
Food Security & Agriculture	213,284 people in need, including 43,026 farmers directly affected. Reduced yields and fodder shortages drive up food prices.	USD 59M required.
Health	High risk of cholera and other waterborne disease outbreaks; funding gaps concern supply pre-positioning, response capacity strengthening and community outreach.	
Nutrition	Unsafe formula feeding in water-scarce areas endangers infants; breastfeeding support and wasting treatment are critical.	
Education	Water shortages in schools undermine WaSH services, fuelling absenteeism (esp. among girls) and learning loss.	
Social Stability	Reduction in the availability of water is becoming a trigger for disputes, protests, violent incidents, and host community–refugee tensions.	

In total, the WaSH and Food Security & Agriculture sectors estimate that approximately USD 100 million is required to prepare for and respond to drought conditions in Lebanon.

While some repurposing and reprogramming of already funded activities to initiate the response has been initiated to cover some needs, this remains largely insufficient to address the gaps.

Without urgent action, water scarcity risks spiralling into a wider crisis of health, nutrition, education, livelihoods, and stability.

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Preparedness & Response

Lebanon's worsening water scarcity demands a coordinated, multi-sectoral response bridging life-saving interventions and long-term resilience. In complementarity to the public awareness campaign on water conservation that was launched by the government, Sectors have been engaging key line ministries to identify priority areas:

- **National Preparedness:** Early-warning systems strengthened, drought vulnerability mapping rolled out, monitoring of wells, water prices, and tensions in place.
- **Immediate Priorities:** Safe water supply, food security, disease surveillance and health services, education continuity, and public awareness.
- **Medium to Long-term Priorities:** Rehabilitate outdated infrastructure, diversify water sources, promote climate-smart agriculture, reinforce governance, and strengthen local resilience.
- **Coordination:** Led by the Ministry of Energy and Water, supported by inter-ministerial mechanisms, with collaboration across WaSH, Health, FSA, Nutrition, Education, and Social Stability sectors.

Challenges & Gaps

- **Funding shortfalls:** Only part of the USD 100M required has been secured.
- **Damaged infrastructure:** Wells, canals, and networks in disrepair.
- **Structural weaknesses:** Low cost recovery, outdated systems, weak enforcement enabling illegal connections and unlicensed wells.
- **Unsustainable support modalities:** Heavy reliance on costly diesel pumping and trucking.
- **Rising instability:** Protests and disputes already reported.

Key Recommendations

1. **Scale Up Financing:** Mobilize the USD 100M urgently; secure flexible, multi-year funding.
2. **Stabilize Services:** Rehabilitate wells/canals, expand solar pumping, scale real-time monitoring.
3. **Strengthen Health Preparedness:** Update cholera preparedness plan, pre-position critical medical supplies, expand risk communication.
4. **Protect Food Security & Livelihoods:** Provide cash/food support, climate-resilient crops, safe water trucking.
5. **Mitigate Social Tensions:** Strengthen early warning, grievance redress, and dialogue platforms.
6. **Fix Water Management:** Improve cost recovery, upgrade outdated systems, enforce water regulations.
7. **Adopt Area-Based Approaches:** Use Drought Vulnerability Index to guide prioritization and regional targeting.

The full Water Scarcity and Drought Preparedness & Response Paper 2025, including annexes, can be found here.

For more information, please contact the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) at lebbeia@unhcr.org.