LEBANON
Response Plan

Guidance Note
Mitigation of Environmental Risks of Inactive Informal Settlements

I. Overview

Informal settlements are often established on bare lands[1], including areas previously used for agriculture. Due to their ad-hoc formation, including the presence of informal WASH infrastructure, and the makeshift nature of the shelters, these sites, particularly those located in environmentally sensitive areas, can pose significant environmental and public health risks if left vacant or inactive without proper and safe clearance.

II. Objective

The objective of this note is to establish a **unified technical framework** for the clearance of informal settlements in Lebanon, while clarifying the respective **roles and responsibilities** of the Shelter, WaSH, and Social Stability sectors, landlords, and local authorities. The framework focuses on three main areas:

1. **Site risk classification**: Categorize sites based on varying levels of risk to focus clearance efforts on those posing the most serious environmental and public health concerns, particularly settlements located near water sources or in areas with high contamination risks (to be coordinated with the Ministry of Environment).

2. **Dismantlement of shelter and WASH structures**: Safely dismantle shelters, latrines, septic tanks, drainage systems, and other water and sanitation infrastructure to eliminate potential health and environmental hazards.

3. **Rubble removal**: Ensure the safe collection, transportation, and disposal of construction debris, shelter/ WASH remnants, and other waste materials in accordance with environmental standards and municipal waste management systems.

III. Definitions

- **Site clearance:** The process of clearing an inactive informal settlement, including the dismantlement of Shelters, WASH facilities, and removal of rubble/ debris, while ensuring environmental and safety standards are met.
- **Private land:** Land owned by an individual or legal entity, where the use of the land (including hosting of informal settlements) is subject to the agreement or permission of the landowner.
- **Public land:** Land owned by the state or a public authority, where usage and management are regulated by relevant government bodies.
- **Active sites:** Informal settlements that are currently inhabited by households.
- **Inactive sites:** Informal settlements that are no longer inhabited, either fully vacated or abandoned.

[1] The majority of sites are established on private land, with some located on public land.

IV. Roles and Responsibilities

The table below outlines the roles and responsibilities of the five main stakeholders involved in site clearance activities. It does not specify the roles of the Ministry of Social Affairs or the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, whose primary function will be to review and clear the full guidance note. Any coordination with these ministries on the implementation of the activities listed below will take place at the subnational level.[2]

Stakeholder	1. Site Risk Classification	2. Dismantlement of Shelter and WASH Structures	3. Rubble Removal
Shelter Sector	- Lead identification of vacated sites (fully/partially).	- Develop guidance on safe dismantling of shelter structures.	- Contribute to contextualizing the existing guidance on safe removal and disposal of debris/ rubble.
	- Analyze data based on severity of environmental risks to develop risk classification matrix.	- Develop a joint technical assessment to determine the scope of work and clearly define the division of responsibilities among the involved sectors.	- Assist rubble removal entities with the collection and removal of debris/ rubble - limited to sites identified through the classification matrix as posing the highest public health and environmental risks.
	- Develop geosplit based on classification matrix and available funding.	- Conduct a joint technical assessment with WASH to high-risk sites.	
	- Share site classification matrix with the relevant sectors and authorities (MoSA and MOIM)	- Support the dismantling of shelter structures - limited to sites identified through the classification matrix as posing the highest public health and environmental risks.	
WaSH Sector	- Provide data on WASH infrastructure type and condition, risks of contamination, or hazards.	- Develop guidance on safe dismantlement of wash facilities to mitigate health and environmental risks.	- Assist rubble removal entities with the collection and removal of WASH-related rubble (concrete pits, tanks, latrine slabs), unless the authorities/landowners express their interest in keeping the facilities on their land through an official communication submitted to local authorities - limited to sites identified through the classification matrix as posing the highest public health and

[2] MOIM is responsible, through its coordinators, for managing relations with Governors, security authorities and municipalities ensuring effective follow up, ensuring access to clear sites. MoSA will be responsible for coordinating with relevant stakeholders, including landlords, municipalities, neighboring communities, and sector leads, to mitigate risks and ensure that site clearance activities are implemented in line with the established guidance.

			environmental risks and prioritizing public lands.
	- Ensure the immediate one-time-off-desludging of sites previously supported by the sector that were vacated to reduce health and environmental risks.	- Develop technical assessment to determine scope of work.	
	- Develop geosplit based on classification matrix and available funding.	- Conduct a joint technical assessment with Shelter to high-risk sites.	
	- Share site classification matrix with sectors and authorities.	- Support the dismantlement of WASH facilities (latrines, septic tanks, water tanks, pipe networks), unless the authorities/landowners express their interest in keeping the facilities on their land through an official communication submitted to local authorities - limited to sites identified through the classification matrix as posing the highest public health and environmental risks and prioritizing public lands.	
Social Stability Sector	- Analyze potential tensions linked to site vacating (landlord–tenant disputes, horizontal communal tensions, vertical tensions with local authorities).	- Monitor social impact of clearance (e.g., host–community perceptions, risk of tensions).	- Support local coordination mechanisms where needed to prevent vertical tensions with local authorities.
	- Provide conflict sensitivity guidance to mitigate local tensions.	- Engage communities to maintain trust and transparency.	- Map recipient municipalities of equipment/machinery support that could be utilized for rubble removal.
Landlords	- Provide access for site verification and assessment.	- Dismantle shelter structures and WASH facilities.	- Remove shelter and WASH debris/ rubble and dispose in dumping sites identified by the local authorities, in alignment with the sector set guidelines.
Local Authorities	- Validate land ownership for sites without proper documentation, where possible.	- Provide municipal approval to conduct dismantlement work, if required.	- Designate official dumping/disposal sites in coordination with the respective Governors and relevant ministries.

	- Facilitate access for verification and assessments (MOIM Coordinators).	- Assign focal point to monitor the dismantlement of shelter and WASH structures, if required.	- Approve/ coordinate the use of and access to designated dumping sites.
		- Support coordination/ provision of equipment with Ministry of Public Works and Transport or other potential sources (e.g, Union of Municipalities)	- Assign focal points to supervise/coordinate debris removal and transportation.

V. Site Risk Classification

It is expected that some informal settlements will be **fully vacated**, while others will be **partially vacated**. The sections below outline the site risk classification approach applicable to each scenario. The risk dimension below and their presented criteria are designed to identify potential **environmental and public health hazards**, enabling the categorization of sites by risk level and guiding the prioritization and urgency of clearance and mitigation interventions.

Fully vacated informal settlements: sites that were fully vacated will be the primary focus to be cleared; Among these sites, environmental risk categorization will be guided by **two distinct but complementary risk dimensions**, as outlined below.

1. Soil and Water Contamination Risks

The assessment of potential soil and water contamination will be guided by the following three criteria:

1. **Risk of contamination (Score 3):** Sites with inadequate sanitation infrastructure (e.g. open pits), posing a direct risk of soil and groundwater contamination. Analysis to be conducted by the WASH Sector using available data.
2. **Proximity to water bodies (Score 2):** Sites located within **30–50 meters** of rivers, streams, lakes, or other water bodies, where risks of contamination or flooding are elevated. Analysis to be conducted using the latest IAMP data.
3. **Flood-prone location (Score 1):** Sites situated in areas identified as flood-prone, where seasonal or sudden flooding may exacerbate contamination risks. Analysis to be conducted using the Flood Hazard Map produced by CNRS.

A site may receive a single score if only one criterion applies, or cumulative scores where multiple criteria are present.

2. Environmental and Safety Risks Related to Debris and Rubble

To capture risks associated with residual construction materials left after site inactivation, a separate criterion will be applied based on indicative rubble volume estimates. Rubble volumes will be estimated using proxy calculations informed by site size and shelter typology. Sites will be scored as follows:

- **Less than 5 m^3:** Score 0
- **5–20 m^3:** Score 1
- **20–40 m^3:** Score 2
- **40–80 m^3:** Score 3

- **80–100 m^3:** Score 4
- **100–120 m^3:** Score 5
- **More than 120 m^3:** Score 6

Overall Environmental Risk Classification
Risk severity for each of the two dimensions will be categorized as Low (Scores 1–2), Medium (Scores 3–4), or High (Scores 5–6). The two risk scores will then be compared, and the higher of the two will be retained as the overall environmental risk classification for each inactive site.

Note: *For sites with equal scores, site size will be used as the determining factor, with larger sites given higher priority. Additionally, public lands offered free of charge - to be verified through field visits - may be prioritized over informal settlements located on rented private land where landowners benefit financially.*

Partially vacated informal settlements: Sites that are partially vacated will be deprioritized for full site clearance. However, these sites will be supported through the provision of guidance on community mobilization to address potential hazards. Additionally, the Shelter and WaSH sectors will assist by sharing information on safe practices for removing debris and elements left behind by families who have relocated, ensuring the site's gradual clearance and minimizing potential health and safety risks for remaining residents.

VI. IAMP Data Analysis

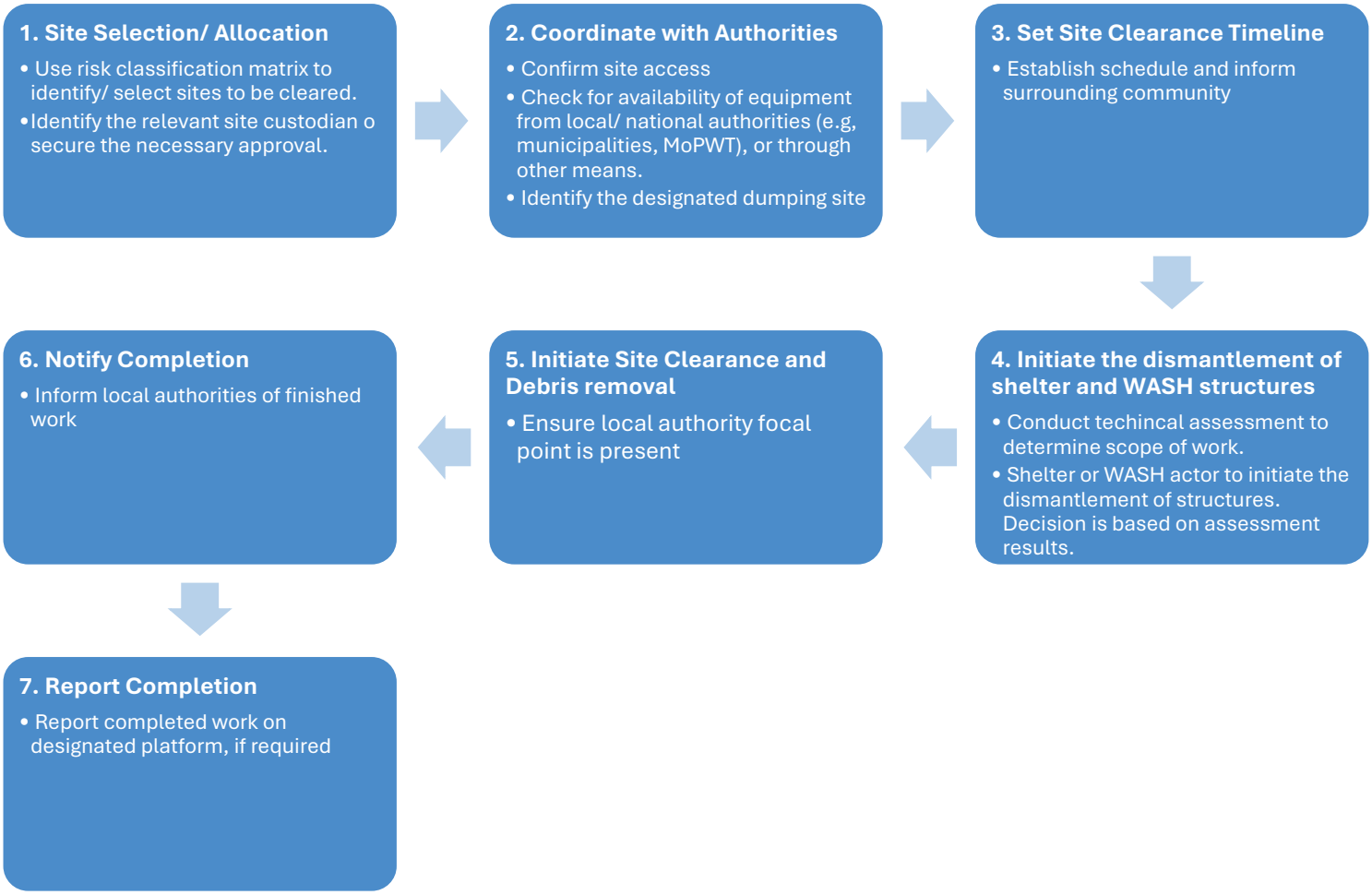
[LINK TO ONLINE DASHBOARD]

VII. Resource Mobilization

In recognition of the importance of addressing environmental and public health risks in line with Strategic Objective 4 of the Lebanon Response Plan (LRP), both the Shelter and WASH sectors have incorporated **site clearance activities** into their LRP 2026 strategies. Both sectors will seek to mobilize resources through targeted advocacy with donors whose mandates include environmental and sustainability priorities.

VIII. Site Clearance Process

The process below outlines the full site clearance cycle for humanitarian actors with funding, from selection based on the risk classification matrix to reporting on completion. When implementing site clearance activities, coordination with local authorities and MoSA/MoIM coordinators at the sub-national level is required.



IX. Technical Guidance Documents to Be Developed

In collaboration with key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), Social Stability sector (SoSt), WaSH sector and the Debris Task Force, the following technical guidance documents are proposed to be developed through the establishment of dedicated technical committees or task forces:

1. **Safe dismantlement of Shelter Structures:** Providing steps for safely dismantling shelter structures and handling debris/ rubble – Shelter sector.
2. **Dismantlement Protocol of WASH Facilities:** Providing steps for safely dismantling WASH infrastructure to prevent/ mitigate health risks – WaSH sector.
3. **Solid Waste and Debris Management Guidelines:** Providing guidance on the safe collection, removal, and disposal of debris/rubble and solid waste, as well as mapping the stakeholders responsible for these actions to minimize environmental impact. The guidance should also include exploring opportunities for recycling and reuse of materials wherever feasible, to reduce waste volumes and promote environmentally sustainable practices – Solid Waste Task Force and the Rubble Task Force.
4. **Community Engagement and Communication Plan for Partially Vacated Sites:** Develop a communication strategy to inform site residents about safe site clearance practices, including the proper handling of waste and sanitation risks associated with discarded

toilets/latrines. This will empower communities to safely manage debris and maintain hygienic conditions – Shelter, WASH and Social Stability Sectors.

X. Conflict Sensitivity Considerations

When clearing inactive informal settlements, conflict-sensitive approaches are essential to maintaining social stability and facilitating a smooth completion of work. To do so, we must ensure:

1. **Community Engagement & Participation**
   - Conduct community consultations to understand community preferences, concerns, and dynamics.
   - Establish mechanisms for prompt feedback and dialogue with implementing entities.
   - Use labor-for-work strategies to engage both refugees and host community members in site clearance tasks.
2. **Transparency and Communication**
   - Provide clear, timely information to all stakeholders about site clearance activities, timelines, and goals.
   - Share plans for rubble removal and dismantling of WaSH facilities to prevent misinformation and misperceptions
3. **Fair Distribution of Resources**
   - Ensure any materials or assets recovered from cleared sites (e.g., rubble, usable remains) are redistributed in a manner perceived as equitable.
   - Avoid favoritism or fueling competition over recovered resources.
4. **Environmental and Health Considerations**
   - Minimize environmental damage during the removal of rubble and dismantlement of WaSH facilities.
   - Address health and sanitation needs during the process and ensure alternative sanitary spaces are provided.

XI. Monitoring and Reporting

The Shelter and WaSH sectors will develop a set of monitoring indicators to track the progress and impact of site clearance efforts undertaken by actors receiving funding for this activity. These indicators will be integrated into the ActivityInfo database to ensure accurate and transparent reporting of interventions by the humanitarian community. Monitoring will be carried out at the site level, capturing essential data to track interventions such as shelter dismantling, waste management, and sanitation infrastructure removal. This approach will facilitate timely reporting and ensure that site clearance efforts are effectively monitored and aligned with sectoral standards.

List of technical Annexes to be attached to this Guidance note:

- **Annex 1: Safe dismantlement of Shelter Structures**
- **Annex 2: Dismantlement Protocol of WASH Facilities**
- **Annex 3: Solid Waste and Debris Management Guidelines**