

Minutes of Meeting Lebanon Response Plan Partners' Update Meeting

Meeting Location	Remotely Via Zoom	Meeting Date	12 May 2024
Chairperson(s)	-Sophia Glazunova, Senior Inter-Agency Coordinator (UNHCR) -Elena Ferrari, Senior Inter-Agency Coordinator (UNDP) -Jolly Shah, Head of Coordination (OCHA) -Camilla Jelbart, Senior Response Advisor (RCO)	Meeting Time	10:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m.
Minutes Prepared by	Jana Nasr, Senior Inter-Agency Coordination Assistant (UNHCR)	Meeting Duration	2.00 hrs.
Participants	190+ partners have participated from the Government of Lebanon (GoL), UN Agencies, and NGOs.		
Agenda	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opening Remarks 2. Latest Trends: Protection and Gender <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection • Gender: Women's Livelihoods in the Context of a Multifaceted Crisis • Gender: Women Economic Empowerment and Gender Statistics 3. Health & WaSH Joint Presentation 4. Response to Escalation of Hostilities in the South 5. LHF First Standard Allocation Updates 		

1. Opening Remarks

Sophia Glazunova, Senior Inter-Agency Coordinator (UNHCR)
Elena Ferrari, Senior Inter-Agency Coordinator (UNDP)
Jolly Shah, Deputy Head of Office (OCHA)
Camilla Jelbart, Senior Response Advisor (RCO)

In their opening remarks, the LRP Co-Chairs welcomed the participants and presented the agenda. They explained that the Lebanon Response Plan (LRP) has not yet been endorsed, but preparations for a steering committee meeting, that would oversee the implementation of the LRP, ensuring alignment with national priorities and enhancing coordination among stakeholders are ongoing. The need for improved coordination at the sub-national level was highlighted, encouraging colleagues to address challenges specific to different regions and ensure that local needs are adequately represented in the response.

2. Latest Trends: Protection and Gender

Protection

Sophie Etzold, Protection Sector Coordinator (UNHCR)
Inci Gulsun Inal, Child Protection Coordinator (UNICEF)

Sophie Etzold and Inci Gulsun Inal highlighted child protection, gender-based violence (GBV) and overall protection trends and emphasized the importance of enhancing collaboration and decision-making across sectors to improve humanitarian response efforts:

- The restricted protection space is maintained in Quarter 2 (Q2) specifically for Syrian nationals through enforcement of administrative measures by municipalities.
- Anti-Syrian discourse in the country is resulting in intercommunal tensions, instances of violence, and a restrictive institutional approach.

- There is an increased escalation of National Call Center (NCC) calls by the Syrian community on safety and security incidents (March: 818, April: 2,372, May: 2,684 and 1,391 in June).
- Collective evictions have increased in Q2 after April security incidents. New trends include entire villages affected, noting that legal residency is not a safeguard to prevent eviction. The impact is substantial, affecting not only the Syrian community but also other groups, including migrants, who are experiencing increased fear and distress.
- Child labor and the worst forms of child labor cases across regions have noticeably increased due to summer school break, noting a high demand for agricultural labor during the harvesting season.
- Children affected by armed conflict almost doubled in Lebanon compared to last year, including 54% increase in the recruitment and use children, and 55% increase in the grave violations committed against children.
- The Child Protection sector is advocating for release of children from detention and strengthening child-friendly justice system.
- Mental health concerns and psychological distress are prevalent, particularly as children are exposed to harmful environments that hinder their positive development.
- Ongoing concerns about the correlation between socioeconomic challenges and the protection environment are leading to shifts in gender dynamics, resulting in increased conflicts and intimate partner violence, primarily emotional and physical abuse.
- Women and girls are increasingly exploited and extorted in agricultural and other work settings, often as a means to avoid eviction and manage rental costs.
- There is a rise in reported incidents of gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual and verbal harassment, as women and girls face greater exposure in public and work spaces. Concurrently, some are confined to their homes due to movement restrictions, limiting access to essential services.
- Funding shortages for Child Protection (CP) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) programs are adversely affecting service delivery.

Gender: Women's Livelihoods in the Context of a Multifaceted Crisis

Yousra Taleb, Livelihoods Sector Coordinator (UNDP)

Yousra Taleb presented an analysis of the impact of the ongoing crisis on women's livelihoods, focusing on the compounded challenges they face.

- The In-Focus briefing on Women's Livelihoods in the Context of a Multifaceted Crisis has been developed in partnership with the Government of Canada.
- Recognizing the repercussions of the crisis on women, the document collates recent information and data on women's employment and economic empowerment. The document also highlights key challenges and aims to provide recommendations that can shape future responses.
- Women encounter several barriers to accessing essential resources such as food, healthcare, and financial services. These barriers are exacerbated by social and cultural norms that limit women's mobility and decision-making power.
 - **Economic Constraints:** Limited financial resources restrict women's ability to afford essential goods and services, such as nutritious food, healthcare, and education for their children.
 - **Healthcare Access:** Barriers to accessing healthcare include a lack of affordable services, long distances to healthcare facilities, and insufficient healthcare infrastructure. Women often face additional challenges due to a lack of female healthcare providers, cultural stigmas around certain medical issues, and a lack of understanding or acceptance of women's health needs.

- **Social and Cultural Norms:** These norms often restrict women's mobility and participation in public life, limiting their ability to seek employment, attend educational programs, or access financial services. In many cases, women may require permission from male family members to engage in activities outside the home, further restricting their autonomy and access to resources.
- **Legal and Institutional Barriers:** Discriminatory laws and policies can prevent women from owning property, inheriting assets, or accessing credit and financial services. This limits their economic opportunities and ability to invest in their livelihoods.
- **Violence and Safety Concerns:** Gender-based violence, both within the home and in public spaces, poses a significant barrier to women's access to resources. Fear of violence can deter women from seeking employment, attending school, or accessing healthcare and social services.
- There is a scarcity of economic opportunities for women, especially as traditional income sources have been disrupted.
- It's important to implement targeted interventions to create new opportunities, such as vocational training and microfinance initiatives tailored to women's needs.
- Strengthening social support systems is crucial, including enhancing community networks and services that offer psychosocial support, childcare, and legal assistance to women affected by the crisis.
- The In-Focus on Women's Livelihoods in the Context of a Multifaceted Crisis can be found [here](#).

Gender: Women Economic Empowerment and Gender Statistics

Aida Orgocka, Consultant (UN Women) p

Aida Orgocka provided an overview of the Lebanon Gender Statistical Profile 2024, discussed ongoing initiatives aimed at promoting women's economic empowerment:

- The objectives of the Gender Statistical profile are to:
 - Reveal differential challenges women and girls in Lebanon face across different policy areas;
 - Offer an intersectional perspective to data to reflect diversity and dimensions of exclusion;
 - Highlight potential biases that may be inherent when measuring different aspects such as labor force participation, or using units of analysis such as households; and
 - Serve the purpose of monitoring Lebanon's progress on gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Details on data sources and disaggregation, areas covered, and findings can be found on slides 20 to 23 [here](#).
- The Lebanon Gender Statistical Profile 2024 can be found [here](#).

3. Health & WaSH Joint Presentation

Dr. Shajib Hossain, Health Sector Coordinator (WHO)

Maher El Tawil, Health Sector Coordinator (Amel)

Dr. Shajib Hossain and Maher El Tawil provided a situation update on epidemic prone diseases, health risks, and vulnerable areas:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly strained the healthcare system, significantly impacting its ability to manage critical healthcare needs. This has led to resource shortages at a time of heightened demand for medical services.
- Poor water, sanitation, and hygiene (WaSH) conditions have led to outbreaks of communicable and waterborne diseases. Common risk factors for water-borne diseases are listed on slide 28 [here](#).

- From January to June 2024, there were 1,613 cumulative Hepatitis This marks an increase compared to the same period in 2023, which saw 1,357 cases.
- From January to June 2024, some 337 cases of acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) were recorded. Of these, 284 cases were screened using rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs), which identified 11 positive results.
- RDTs serve as a screening tool and are not confirmatory; therefore, all samples are sent to reference laboratories for culture and sequencing to confirm any cholera cases. To date, no confirmed cholera cases have been identified through culture.
- Risks and vulnerable areas are mapped on slide 27 [here](#) and details on preparedness for a potential cholera outbreak are outlined in slide 29.
- While it is challenging to ensure equitable access to healthcare services, particularly for vulnerable populations such as displaced populations, low-income families, and individuals in remote areas, there are ongoing efforts to expand healthcare coverage and improve the quality of care.
- Recent initiatives under the health sector include vaccination campaigns, maternal and child health programs, and mental health support services. These activities play a critical role in improving overall health outcomes.
- Partnerships with international health organizations, NGOs, and local health authorities are crucial for resource mobilization, technical support, capacity building, and addressing public health issues.

Jakub Pajak, WaSH Sector Coordinator (UNICEF)

Jakub Pajak discussed the ongoing projects in the WaSH sector, highlighted key challenges and solutions, and linked WaSH interventions to broader public health outcomes:

- Around US\$35 million annually is required to deliver adequate, up-to-standard WaSH services and facilities to displaced Syrians in informal settlements (ISs). Permanent infrastructure is not allowed implying limited options to reduce the cost of operation.
- The WaSH sector supports the displaced Syrians in ISs to the extent possible. However, some services provision in less vulnerable areas had to be discontinued, and the level of services was compromised.
- In 2023, safe water was trucked into 43% of ISs (2,381) sites providing access to 179,445 residents. Additionally, wastewater was removed from 3,562 informal settlements, totaling 400,000 cubic meters.
- Improved water and sanitation services reduce the incidence of waterborne diseases and enhance overall community health. However, the impact of WaSH services availability is cross-sectoral, affecting health, and sanitation but also contributing to improved educational outcomes, economic stability, and overall quality of life.
- Key challenges include water scarcity, contamination risks, and inadequate sanitation infrastructure in densely populated areas. Innovative solutions are being implemented, including water conservation techniques, rainwater harvesting, and community-based sanitation projects.
- Community engagement and education are significant in promoting good hygiene practices. This includes campaigns to raise awareness about handwashing, safe water storage, and waste management.
- Suspension of WaSH services in informal settlements can lead to intra-Lebanese tensions, disputes over water quality, and concerns about access to safe drinking water.
- The sector highlights the need for diversified funding to ensure access to WaSH services in informal settlements for 2025 and beyond, address the 2024 funding gap, and support both stabilization and developmental efforts while continuing to address public health and protection concerns.

4. Response to Escalation of Hostilities in the South

Galiya Gubaeva, Head of Tyre Field Office (UNHCR)

Khouloud Mahdi, Humanitarian Affairs Officer (OCHA)

Galiya Gubaeva and Khouloud Mahdi provided a comprehensive overview of the escalation of hostilities in South Lebanon:

- The number of displaced people is almost stable and two collective sites closed as people returned to their villages (1 in Hasbaya and 1 in Bekaa).
- Both Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and host communities are experiencing escalating fatigue, heightening the risk of intra-Lebanese tensions.
- IDPs are grappling with extended displacement and uncertain living conditions, while host communities are beginning to feel the pressure on local resources and, in some instances, competition for jobs.
- Response measures currently include setting up temporary shelters, distributing emergency relief supplies, and coordinating with local authorities and international partners to streamline aid distribution, avoid duplication of efforts, and ensure that assistance reaches those most in need, especially women, children, and the elderly.
- The urgent need for a rapid response to prevent further deterioration of the situation is emphasized, with a particular focus on considering long-term implications and addressing critical humanitarian needs such as shelter, food, medical care, and psychosocial support for displaced populations.
- The safety of humanitarian workers and difficulties in accessing conflict-affected areas have been raising significant security concerns. Current efforts are directed towards securing safe passage for aid deliveries and ensuring the protection of civilians.
- Figures on people targeted, people reached, funding requirements, and funding received in Q1 2024 are highlighted on slide 39 [here](#), and cash assistance is detailed on slide 40.

5. LHF First Standard Allocation Updates

Craig Anderson, LHF Fund Manager (OCHA)

Yendi Ghossein, LHF Deputy Fund Manager (OCHA)

Craig Anderson and Yendi Ghossein provided updates on the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF) allocation:

- Current priorities emphasize multi-sectoral submissions and integrated service packages.
- Recent allocations have focused on Food Security and Agriculture, Health, and WaSH.
- Despite the challenges, the importance of ensuring that multi-sectoral projects effectively address the comprehensive needs of the affected populations was highlighted.
- Opportunities to fund initiatives that build preparedness and resilience are being explored.
- Comprehensive monitoring and accountability mechanisms are rigorously applied to track fund usage, evaluate the impact of funded projects, and ensure transparency.
- Steps are being taken to build the capacity of local partners, which includes delivering trainings in project management, financial reporting, and monitoring and evaluation. This aims to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of humanitarian interventions.
- Engagement with local partners, including NGOs, community-based organizations, and local governments is critical to LHF's strategy. These partnerships help ensure that aid is delivered effectively and is responsive to the specific needs of the communities.
- Future plans involve expanding the donor base, exploring new funding opportunities, and strengthening collaboration with other humanitarian funding mechanisms.
- There is a commitment to maintaining flexibility and responsiveness to emerging needs and crises, ensuring that the fund can adapt to changing circumstances and provide timely support where it is most needed.