

Lebanon started feeling the effects of a heavy storm on Sunday 6 January 2019. Heavy rain, high winds and colder temperatures were reported all over Lebanon. Some regions were affected by either flooding, strong winds, erosion or snowfall. This situation reports highlights the impact of the storm on Syrian refugees, the response that followed and preparations for the upcoming storm on Sunday 13 January.

AFFECTED POPULATION

850
Settlements are at risk of extreme weather¹

70,000 Refugees at risk **39,900** of them are children²

574 Sites affected
 22,595 Refugees affected

90% Urgent distribution needs covered*

* Given the scale of the emergency UNHCR and partners prioritized assistance to the most affected



Effects of the storm continue even if extreme weather is not as likely for next week. Torrential rain and heavy snowfall started on Sunday night, and continued until Wednesday affecting 574 informal settlements, and a limited number of collective sites and residential/substandard shelters². Next week, the forecast is predicting thunderstorms, strong winds (65km/h) and some rain is expected to start on Sunday, mainly in Mount Lebanon. Around 10 cm of snow is also anticipated in Aarsal and some in Ras Ballabek by Monday. On Wednesday, a strong but short storm is predicted with winds gusting at 70km/h and 4mm rain every three hours. While the weather conditions may not be as severe as during the previous storm, they will impact already weakened ground in informal settlements.

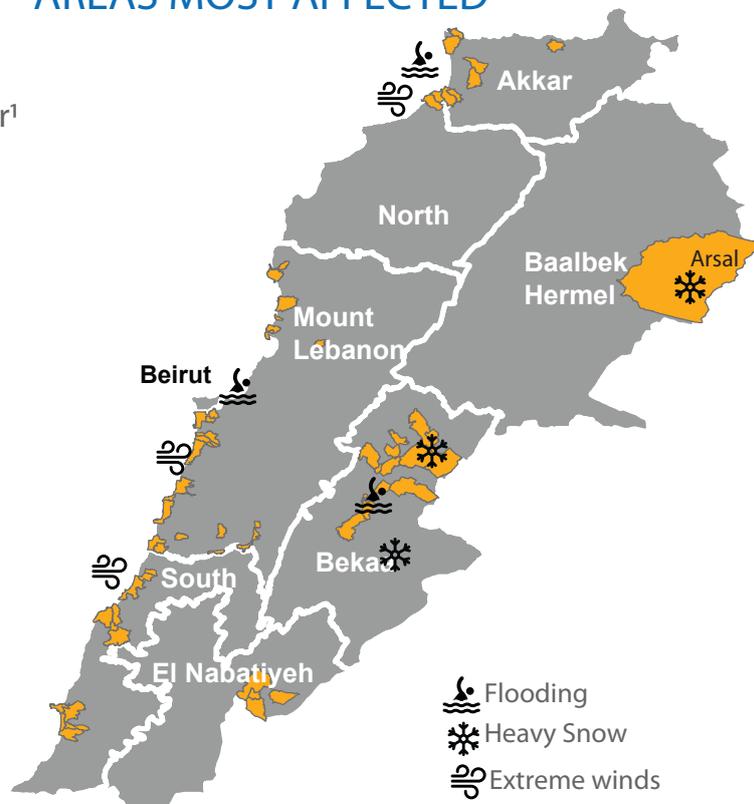
471 Settlements **33,000** Refugees

Prioritized for next storm

For the coming week, refugees living in municipalities prioritized by Inter-Agency emergency mechanisms and at risk according to flood and weather analysis are estimated at **33,000** individuals. Available stocks are sufficient to respond to the continued emergency and can cover up to 50,000 people. Emphasis will be put on hygiene, dignity and baby kits that were not distributed in all regions so far (e.g. Bekaa). Clothes and boots for adults and children are lacking and there are ongoing efforts to collect these items.

Dewatering and shelter interventions ahead of and during the next storm remain top priorities.

AREAS MOST AFFECTED



Most Affected Municipalities: Bar Elias, Dalhamiyeh, Faour, Ghazze, Hawsh Harimeh, Joubjannine, Kadriyeh, Madine Sinayiyeh, Majdal Anjar, Marj, Nasriyeh, Omariyeh, Qabelias, Saadnayel, Taanayel. Zahle Tyre, Borj Ech-Chemali, Batoulay, Deir Qanoun El-Aain, Mazraat Sarada, Aamra, Khiyam Marjaayoun, Ghaziyé, Khirbet Ed-Douair Saïda/Bissariyeh, Sarafand, Deir Qanoun El Aain, Babliyé, Darb Es-Sim, Miyé ou Miyé, Majidiyé Hasbaiya, Jal al Baher Gathering in Tyre District, Rashidieh Camp in Tyre District. Sammaqiyeh, Zouq bhannine, Ouadi El-Jamous, Kouachra, Bebnine, Sammouniye and Mahamaret, Aarqa and Cheikh Zannad, Damour, Jiye, Almane, Hasrout, Zarout, Amatour, Ketermaya, Rmeilet, Bisri, Ouata Sillam, Tarbaja, Safra, Bqq El dine, Boqaatet Achkout, Chouiefat, Kaldeh, Aamchit, Hasrayel, Al Fidar, Sabra, Haret Hreik, Jnah

CURRENT AVAILABLE STOCKS TO COVER 50,000

9,358 Weatherproofing kits **11,657** Mattresses **51,487** Blankets

Full list of available stocks on page 2

Refugees impacted by the storm are also the most vulnerable living in the most precarious settlements. Heavy rainfall was experienced in all areas of Lebanon but refugees living in informal settlements were the most affected, particularly in the Bekaa. Baalbek-El Hermel, followed by the Bekaa and Akkar, are also the areas with the largest shares of households residing in non-permanent structures. 104 sites were heavily affected out of 574 prioritized in the initial phases of the response. The South and El Nabatiyeh Governorates were not as strongly impacted by the storm, in part because 94 per cent of refugees are living in residential and non-residential buildings and not informal settlements².

1) source: IAMP58, Windy.com Weather forecast, CNRS flood hazard: analysis showed 70,000 refugees living in around 850 informal settlements could be at risk of either flooding, heavy snow or extreme cold.
2) Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees -VASyR 2018: 57% of population in informal settlements are below 18 years old.



For those families below poverty line of US\$ 3.84 per person per day living in informal settlements recovery from Norma storm will be immensely challenging. This is compounded by a decline in the share of households living in residential buildings compared to 2017, with a shift toward non-residential structures across almost all governorates. The sites where refugees are able to negotiate space are increasingly located in unsuitable locations (non-residential, non-cultivable) where rents are more affordable for families, notably after evictions. Efforts by humanitarian actors to provide basic WASH and shelter support in the absence of alternative locations or more durable structures remain a limited protection against extreme weather episodes. Many of the affected informal settlements were located in flood-plains making response more difficult.

As natural hazards cannot be prevented, it is critical to reduce the exposure and vulnerability of refugees living in non-permanent structures by relocating flood-prone tents to higher levels and using better quality material resilient to extreme weather. Site improvements will be further discussed with relevant municipalities and central authorities following the storms. Donor support will be required when authorizations are granted.



©UNHCR/ Diego Ibarra Sanchez
Informal settlement in Dalhamieh, central Bekaa

Inter-Agency Coordination was immediately triggered and is ongoing. Intensive emergency efforts were coordinated by MoSA and UNHCR, with support from MoIM, numerous international and national partners as well as hosting communities and refugee volunteers. Contact was maintained with local authorities in affected municipalities and the Disaster Risk Management unit in Beirut.

On site rapid needs assessments, preceded by phone surveys, were conducted in over 1,600 informal settlements. Informal settlements were prioritized as well as impacted Lebanese families. In Aarsal, shelter damages are being assessed and results will be shared with relevant partners for follow up.

Relocation was identified as the best available option for families that were determined to be in sites where water evacuation was not successful. The majority of refugees were able to find their own solutions, such as moving in with relatives or friends. For a total of 1,129 refugees alternative accommodation was found in schools, mosques and community centres. However, some refugees preferred to stay in sites that were fully flooded, citing fears of not being able to return or wanting to wait for water levels to recede. Some of the 700 refugees who relocated from Semmaqiye and 429 from a site in Barelias have started to return to their homes.

For the sites that were partially flooded, most refugees stayed in their homes or temporarily relocated to stay with relatives or friends. Dewatering and desludging were organized where possible. Drainage kits, identified as essential to the response, were distributed as widely as possible. The distribution of core relief items and shelter kits is ongoing. Details on distributions are being tracked and shared to avoid duplication.

Referrals were received from inter-agency channels, protection monitoring, refugee outreach volunteers, the call centre, hotlines, and onsite assessments, and were coordinated through the Inter-Agency emergency response mechanisms.

These will be further reinforced for the second storm. Core relief items were distributed (see table below). There were no reports of lost documents. Priority was given to protection referrals.

ASSISTANCE SUMMARY

	Distributed	Available In Stock
Weatherproofing Kits	482	9,358
Drainage Kits	145	421
Mattresses	2,255	11,657
Blankets	9,136	51,487
Jerry cans	633	8,532
Solar lanterns	95	1,754
Kitchen sets	42	1,984
Fuel Cards	116	4,039
Winter Clothes	109	5,641
Hygiene Kits	117	318
Baby Kits	96	154
Dignity Kits	0	1,264

9,688 refugees assisted

10 sites water pumped and ongoing as needed.

117 families provided with emergency cash assistance.

1,129 refugees temporarily relocated.

Most areas were accessible for assessment and response except Yammoune and Barqa in the Bekaa. Teams reported heavy snow on top of tents and at doorsteps in a number of informal settlements, restricting movement in Aarsal. Floods are envisaged once the snow (60 to 80 cms) melts. This will be monitored regularly. Some hard-to-reach refugees in informal settlements could be at risk and cut off from food sources if another storm begins. Contracted shops in Aarsal remained open, operational and stocked.



With the decrease in humanitarian funding resulting in stricter targeting, those not included in pre-emptive shelter assistance in the short term are likely to require heavier interventions in the longer term due to the inevitable deterioration of temporary shelter materials. The ad-hoc nature of informal settlements leaves them particularly exposed to floods. Without proper site improvements, residents are under-equipped to respond to such emergencies.

Interventions will continue to be needed following the initial emergency.

Mobilization is required to respond to sites which suffered from water leakage, for example 91 sites in Mount Lebanon. Across all four regions referrals for damage or flooding to residential or non-residential shelters were received, which were not able to be prioritized due to the time needed to conduct rehabilitation or minor repairs. These families were however referred for core relief items distributions to compensate for losses and will be prioritized for rehabilitation and minor repairs following the crisis.

Priority for refugees are shelter kits, fuel, and cash assistance.

Partners involved in the response:

MoSA, MoIM, MoSDA, municipalities, mayors, governor's offices, LAF, UNICEF, UNDP, WFP, UNRWA, Save the Children, GVC, LRC, SOS, WVI, DAF, Anera, ACF, MSF, SALAM LADC, SI, SAWA group, Damma organization, CISP, AVSI, NRC, ICRC, PU-AMI, LRC-DMU, IRC, SHEILD, INTERSOS, TdHL, ACF Spain, Medair, Concern WW, Solidarites, PU-AMI, Leb-relief, Caritas Lebanon, PCPM, Makzhoumi Foundation, HIMAYA, URDA, LWR, and Dorcas.



REVIEW AND PREPAREDNESS



Standard operating procedures (SOPs) and preparedness measures facilitated a coordinated response.

The regional emergency SOPs were activated across the four regions of Lebanon and allowed for quick engagement and timely response to affected populations' urgent needs. With these structures in place rapid phone assessments were able to be conducted throughout the country and proved effective to assess the scope of the damage, identify most affected areas, and to prioritize and respond to the most urgent needs.



Preparation for the winter included assistance provided to mitigate impact of severe weather on refugees.

167,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugee households as well as 9,369 Palestine refugees families from Syria and Lebanon received winter cash assistance by December to increase their capacity to cope. A one-off lump sum of USD 375 was provided per refugee family. In addition, 63,935 children under 15 received additional support in the form of a one-time cash transfer of USD 40/child to cover clothing expenses; families that were discontinued from multipurpose cash assistance and/or food assistance in autumn 2018 were prioritized. Also, winter kits were provided for children.

By November, shelter partners had assessed the condition of almost all tents within informal settlements in Lebanon. Weatherproofing assistance was distributed to nearly 134,000 refugees residing across 3,200 informal settlements that were found to be in need. Also, around 258 informal settlements, where almost 5,260 refugee households reside, were targeted with site improvement activities such as gravelling and digging of drainage channels to evacuate rain water. These helped reduce the number of sites affected by the storm. In December, drainage kits were distributed to informal settlements near the Litani river. More preventive measures could have been taken with additional funds.



Contingency stocks and prepositioning enabled a faster and more efficient response.

Stocks, including shelter and winter kits, core relief item, WASH-related items and others, are prepositioned in partners' warehouses and other strategic locations in the four regions. Stocks are updated and shared on a regular basis. A number of agencies have long term agreements with providers in place for key supplies, to be delivered in short delays if needed.



Communicating with communities improved response delivery.

In an effort to mitigate the consequences of the storm and to ensure safety and stability of refugees, different channels were used to provide warnings about extreme weather, communicate and respond to needs. More specifically, the call centre, refugee outreach volunteers, Facebook groups and SMS. For example, an SMS was sent to refugees on 2 January about a possible risk of the Litani River flooding and ways to protect their shelters prior to the storm.



(C) UNHCR/ Ayman Raad
Snow in Aarsaal

Ongoing and planned actions to mitigate the impact of renewed severe weather conditions

The following measures are being taken based on lessons learned and building on practices from the first storm following feedback from agencies, affected communities and discussions with state institutions.



Enhancing communication. SMS messages will continue to be sent to refugees to enable them to better prepare themselves for the upcoming storm. One general SMS was sent to all refugees in addition to regional-level SMS messages related to protection against water/snow in tents and settlements on 11 January. Communication will be ongoing with refugees on risks, options to relocate and their ability to return to their sites and will be enhanced through all networks.



Strengthen & broaden coordination. This will include Disaster Risk Management, local authorities, Union of Municipalities, and Civil Defense through continued regular meetings, information sharing and referrals. Immediate feedback and tracking of the response in the Basic Assistance sector is important to avoid duplication of communication/referral and to allow wider coverage of the affected refugees. Response partners to use the unified assessment/ reporting tool, such as the Rapid Needs Assessment and increase stand-by team. A preparatory message will be circulated ahead of the second storm in this regard.

Support early warning. Early warning weather forecasts to be shared among relevant response actors.



Replenishment of contingency stocks to ensure adequate level of stock in the right locations.

As available shelter stock (not intended for emergencies) was used up during the Norma response, this stock will have to be replenished to ensure enough kits are available for winterization activities planned for 2019. Contingency stock information and warehouse locations to be updated on Activity Info on regular basis.



Identify alternative temporary shelters for potential relocation of affected families in case of evacuation or emergencies

(in coordination with municipalities/MoSA). Advocacy and increased efforts to use other public facilities than schools to shelter families. Schools should be a last resort. This is ongoing ahead of the next storm. For example, Aarsaal municipality has identified accommodation for up to 1,500 individuals if needed. Discussions are being held with central authorities and municipalities to address refugees' fears of not being able to return to their settlements after relocation.



Provide drainage kits in the four regions

as they have proven effective to help residents of informal settlements to clean trenches surrounding their settlements and create drainage channels to evacuate rainwater as well as increase dewatering capacity for locations with severe flooding (e.g. through municipalities and governors' offices by identifying local contractors with bigger pumps.)



Take advantage of better weather conditions for preparedness

to desludge and provide water to the most at-risk informal settlements. Continue dewatering to reduce the volume of standing water as much as possible before next rainy period.



Support protection-centred reporting

by providing breakdowns of person with specific needs, referred and assisted cases.