

# Flash Report

## Government **Disaster** Preparedness Challenges and Opportunities in the **Lebanese** Government's **Crisis Response Plan**

November 2023



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The Lebanon Crisis Analytics Team (LCAT) provides reactive and in-depth context analysis to inform the aid community in Lebanon. The information and analysis contained in this report is therefore strictly to inform humanitarian and development actors and associated policymaking on Lebanon.

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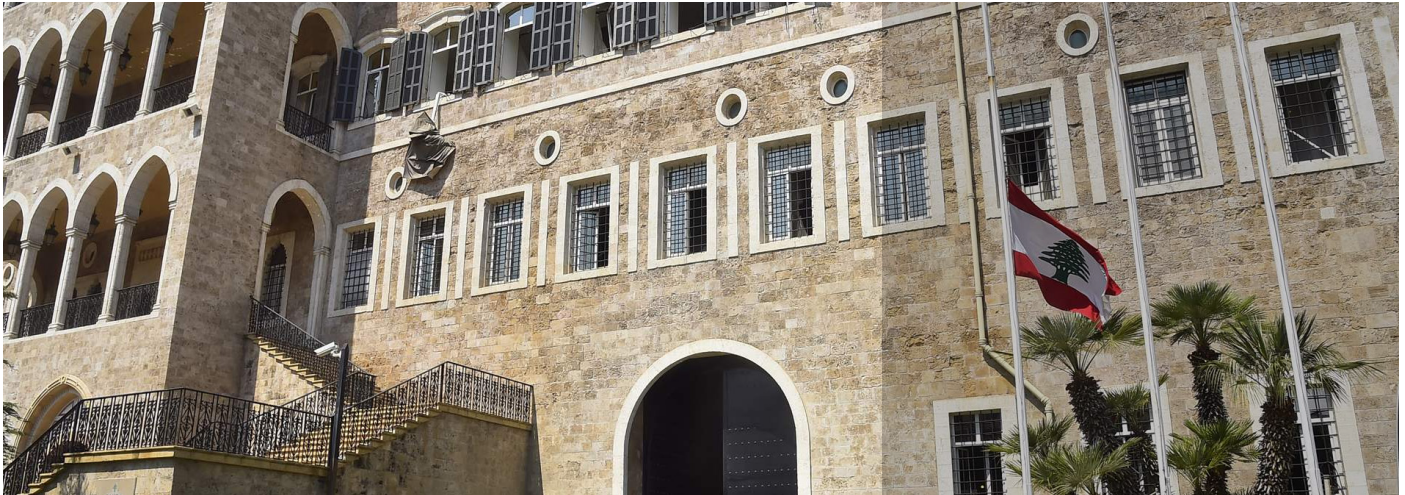
Credit: Sadik Gilec

## Executive summary:

Since late October, Lebanese media has reported on a government response plan designed to prepare the country for a significant escalation of the conflict in southern Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah. Simultaneously, ministries and other state bodies have drawn up their own contingency response plans which complement the overall response plan. Speculation about the plans' funding requirements and sources have taken center stage in the media, obscuring the document's content and, more broadly, the state's operational capacity to coordinate a meaningful humanitarian response to a major humanitarian crisis.

While gaps in the government plan necessitate that the UN-led humanitarian sectors play a robust role, the overall coordination approach at sub-national levels has been relatively effective, at least for small-scale interventions implemented to date. This positive takeaway reflects the lessons learned from the 2006 Lebanon War and 2020 Beirut Port explosion, both of which have been integrated into the current plan. However, it remains unclear to what extent this government-led coordination structure could cope with a humanitarian disaster on the scale of 2006.

This flash report aims to synthesize the government plan's scope, identify challenges to its successful implementation, and determine which, if any, opportunities the government's response presents to aid actors. The analysis is based on a close reading of the government plan, combined with public officials' statements and a series of key informant interviews with government, private sector, and humanitarian sector stakeholders. The report is intended to aid humanitarian and development actors in better understanding the opportunities and limitations of the government's preparedness plan, in order to coordinate better responses.



## Key takeaways for aid actors:

- Local authorities have taken a much more active role in response coordination compared to previous crises. The government's preparedness plan broadly achieves its stated goal of coordinating a response in close collaboration with the UN and other humanitarian actors, while enabling municipalities and governorates to lead the process through the Disaster Risk Management Unit and Disaster Risk Reduction Unit.
- Improved government coordination capacity is in no small part thanks to UN-led disaster contingency planning exercises in response to potential natural disasters or public health crises such as earthquakes or a large-scale cholera epidemic. The Beirut port explosion in 2020 also offered a grim "dry run" of a larger shock affecting the health system.
- Many bottlenecks are not fully addressed in the government's plan, notably securing the continuous supply of critical foodstuffs and fuel. The government's apparent reluctance to accommodate Syrian refugees in public shelters could also become a hurdle for aid actors if large numbers of Syrian refugees are displaced. Meanwhile, current cash assistance programs are not shock-responsive, mainly because a centralized, deduplicated database of cash recipients does not currently exist.
- Fuel is an essential logistical cog for Lebanon. Nationwide gasoline and diesel stocks would last an estimated 40 days without being replenished. In the event of a supply shock caused by a naval blockade or other external factor, public and private sector contingency plans prioritize fuel distribution for hospitals, bakeries, telecommunications companies, Civil Defense transportation, and ambulances. Humanitarian actors would benefit from greater transparency on the government's strategies for securing these commodities.



# Overview of the NPRP:

Amid gradually escalating clashes along the Lebanon-Israel border, the Government of Lebanon reviewed its National Short and Medium-term Preparedness and Response Plan (hereafter shortened to NPRP).<sup>1</sup> Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati assigned the Ministry of Environment to coordinate with international organizations and the national committee led by the High Relief Council with the Disaster Risk Management Unit (DRM) for secretariat support. The NPRP was presented to the Lebanese Parliament on October 31, and subsequently redrafted following input from humanitarian stakeholders led by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Humanitarian Coordinator, and humanitarian sector lead agencies. The plan builds on the framework of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) and previous government disaster preparedness initiatives within the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) contingency and response plan.<sup>2</sup> The NPRP contains a coordination framework to prepare for a conflict similar to the 2006 Lebanon War, potentially lasting some 45 days, displacing 1 million Lebanese, and assumes a total naval and aerial blockade of the country.<sup>3</sup> The 36-page NPRP published in October has served as a coordinating framework to help assign national and sub-national government-led efforts involving Lebanese ministries and state bodies. This vertical form of organization stretches from national-level institutions including the LAF, down to local municipalities in potentially affected regions, and is intended to structure their coordination with the humanitarian community.

Individual ministries, including those of Health, Social Affairs, and Telecommunications, in addition to state-owned enterprises (telecommunications operators and the Port of Beirut) and governorates, have all drawn up and started enacting their own specific plans, but the NPRP remains the overarching framework for planning a coordinated crisis response.<sup>4</sup> The plan broadly reflects the same governance structure laid out in the LCRP, according to which government ministries co-lead 10 disaster-relevant humanitarian sectors represented in the National Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) committee: food security, shelter, basic assistance, logistics, healthcare, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), protection, social, stability, nutrition, and education.<sup>5</sup>

The NPRP draft seen by LCAT summarizes a national response articulated around 10 key sectors for the emergency preparedness and response, emphasizing the state's responsibility to Lebanese nationals but stipulating that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) have a key role in contingency planning for Palestinian and Syrian refugees.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since October 8, the day after Hamas attacked Israeli towns bordering the Gaza Strip – prompting Israel's military campaign in Gaza – Hezbollah and its allies have launched approximately 275 operations against Israeli military targets and shot several salvos of rockets toward Israeli towns. Israel has conducted over 275 airstrikes in southern Lebanon and regularly fires on border areas with artillery, including incendiary rounds that have started large forest fires. As of November 23, 15 Lebanese civilians have been killed by Israeli fire, and 55,491 have been displaced.

International Organization for Migration, [Mobility Snapshot - Round 12- 23-11-2023](#)

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, [Lebanon Crisis Response Plan](#) May 2, 2023

<sup>3</sup> Lebanese Council of Ministers, National Emergency Plan, October 31, 2023, p. 3

<sup>4</sup> LCAT reviewed planning documents from the Health Ministry and the Beirut and Mount Lebanon Water Establishment and spoke with a Telecoms Ministry official on their specific plan.

NNA, [فروتسكا عرضت مع الأبيض خطة الطوارئ الصحية وأكدت استمرار دعم القطاع الصحي](#) October 26, 2023;

El Nashra, [حجار ناقش خطة الطوارئ وتأمين الاعتمادات لتنفيذها: لن نميز أحداً وإي منطقة ولا يوجد غير وحدتنا وتضامننا](#) November 6, 2023;

ISP Today, [Preparing for the Unpredictable: Lebanon's Emergency Telecommunications Plan](#) October 26, 2023;

<sup>5</sup> "The LCRP Steering Committee is co-chaired by the Minister of Social Affairs and the United Nations Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and includes participation at Minister level from line ministries, as well as at Head of Agency/Representative level from humanitarian and stabilization partners across the UN, national and international NGOs, and donors."

UNHCR, [Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2022-2023](#) February 16, 2022

Tayyar, [القرم عن خطة الطوارئ: الهدف ليس تخويف الناس](#) October 26, 2023;

Al Modon, [خطة طوارئ في مرفأ بيروت](#) November 3, 2023;

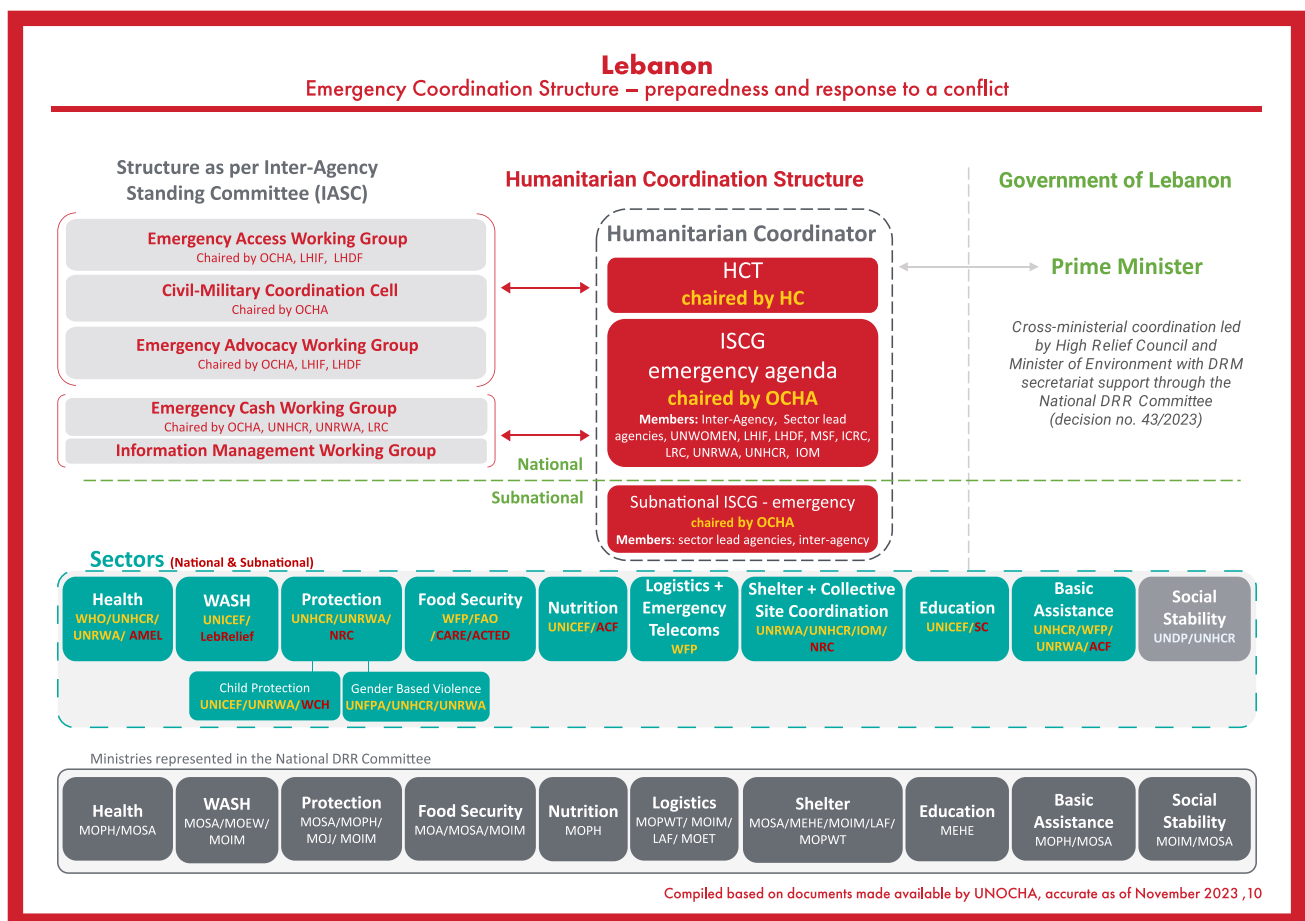
NNA, [خضر خلال مناقشة خطة استجابة وطنية لمحاظة بعلبك الهرمل: نتحضر للأسوأ وتتمنى وقف العدوان](#) November 3, 2023;

<sup>6</sup> Lebanese Council of Ministers, National Emergency Plan, October 31, 2023, p. 4



The document reiterates the applicability of a three-tier alert system, previously established by the National Committee for the Coordination of Threats from Disasters and National Crises.<sup>7</sup> Subnational authorities (governorates or municipal unions) may trigger these alert levels, activating either the Disaster Risk Management Unit (DRM), operating at the national and governorate levels) or the Disaster Risk Reduction Unit (DRR), operating at the municipal or municipal union level). At the time of writing, four such units were active: the DRR in Tyre, the DRM in Baalbek-Hermel, the DRR in Hasbaya, and the DRM in Nabatieh. The highest number of internally displaced persons (IDP) in South Lebanon are located in these regions, although it should be noted that many other districts are also hosting IDPs.<sup>8</sup>

This flash report analyzes the NPRP and affiliated response efforts by examining the authorities and actions of humanitarian sectors, DRM/DRR, and municipalities, specifically focusing on health, shelter, WASH, telecommunications, and protection sectors. The report also considers the private sector's capacity to secure foodstuff supplies and fuel, funding challenges, and takeaways for aid actors with a focus on humanitarian organizations. This flash report is based on a close analysis of the NPRP itself, public comments by state officials and parliamentarians, as well as key informant interviews (KIIs) with relevant stakeholders across government, private, and humanitarian sectors.



<sup>7</sup> The warning system activates operations rooms starting with those situated in municipalities and municipal unions in affected areas, then operations rooms at the governorate level, and finally at the national, or advanced level by ministerial decree issued by the prime minister. National operations rooms would only be activated in the event of an aggressive attack hitting Lebanon resulting in massive casualties, injuries, and widespread displacement from the South and Beirut to all governorates.

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF employee, KII, November 21, 2023



Credit: AFP

## Health Services:

The NPRP places health services at the forefront of its organizational efforts, calling for the surveying of medical supplies and equipment and preparing to establish field hospitals, among other tasks.<sup>9</sup> Approximately 4,400 Lebanese were hospitalized during the 2006 Lebanon War, while five governmental hospitals were damaged.<sup>10</sup> The Ministry of Public Health has developed its own contingency plan, which divides the country between high-risk, medium-risk, and low-risk regions – based on the intensity of Israeli bombardment in the 2006 War – with southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and southern Beirut suburbs classified as highest risk.<sup>11</sup> Hospitals in low-risk parts of Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and Metn are expected to receive patients from the high-risk southern suburbs of Lebanon's capital, while hospitals in Jezzine, Seblin, and Sidon are expected to receive patients from high-risk southern regions.<sup>12</sup> The ministry's plan calls for regional hospitals and the Red Cross/Crescent, Civil Defense, LAF, and Ministry of Interior and Municipalities to coordinate the transport of patients.<sup>13</sup> In a November 2 media interview, caretaker Minister of Public Health Firas Abbiad said a nationwide assessment designated which hospitals are well-equipped, moderately equipped, and weak.<sup>14</sup> About 40 hospitals are assessed as ready to receive up to 4,000 patients at once.<sup>15</sup>

Funding is likely to be sourced from a combination of state and international sources. Health sector costs for the 2006 war totalled between USD 3 million and 4 million, while the plan forecasts these expenses to be two to three times larger in the event of a new war.<sup>16</sup> The Ministry of Public Health is already seeking support from international organizations for hospitalization costs. USD 11 million has been allocated in state funds to the Ministry of Public Health, while approximately USD 9 million will be made available from a pre-existing World Bank loan for the COVID-19 response.<sup>17</sup> International organizations are also expected to take the strain off public hospitals by providing direct health services, including mobile clinics.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Lebanese Council of Ministers, National Emergency Plan, October 31, 2023, p. 13

<sup>10</sup> Relief Web, [Background: Facts and figures about 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war](#) July 12, 2007;

Relief Web, [Lebanon: Despite war damage, hospitals meet patients' needs](#) September 4, 2006

<sup>11</sup> NNA, [لقاء بيروتي - وزارتي بحث في تشكيل لجنة طوارئ في العاصمة لمواجهة تداعيات الحرب وتأكيد الوحدة الوطنية](#) November 2, 2023

<sup>12</sup> Al Akhbar, [خطة طوارئ صحية رابعة... على الورق](#) October 21, 2023

<sup>13</sup> NNA, [لقاء بيروتي - وزارتي بحث في تشكيل لجنة طوارئ في العاصمة لمواجهة تداعيات الحرب وتأكيد الوحدة الوطنية](#) November 2, 2023

<sup>14</sup> Al-Jazeera, [حصار وتهجير قسري... تفاصيل خطة لبنانية لمواجهة عدوان إسرائيلي محتمل](#) November 2, 2023

<sup>15</sup> Ibid / Al Akhbar, [خطة طوارئ صحية رابعة... على الورق](#) October 21, 2023

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Public Health, PHEOC Activation in Response to National Security Threats, October-November 2023

<sup>17</sup> Ibid; Al Akhbar, [120 مليون دولار غير متوافرة لتمويل خطة الطوارئ](#) November 15, 2023

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Health advisor, KII, November 2023



The Ministry of Public Health identifies the supply of chronic and acute medications needed for war trauma victims as a key area requiring support from international organizations.<sup>19</sup> The NPRP estimates that healthcare sector chronic and acute medication stocks are sufficient for one to two months.<sup>20</sup> The Syndicate of Pharmaceutical Importers provided a larger figure, saying that hospitals have stocks sufficient for one to 1.5 months, while importing companies have between another three to four months worth in reserve.<sup>21</sup> Regarding medication support, the Ministry of Public Health aims for a clear line of communication with international organizations to identify the most needed medications and to avoid stocking up unnecessarily on less-needed ones.<sup>22</sup>

Coordination with private hospitals also plays a large role within the NPRP framework, as highlighted by Abbiad.<sup>23</sup> The country's healthcare system is dominated by the private sector, with 157 private hospitals versus 29 public ones.<sup>24</sup> The head of the syndicate of private hospitals said that hospitals are hampered by shortages of doctors and nurses.<sup>25</sup> A practicing doctor and parliamentarian said the critical issue with contingency planning is not staffing levels. Rather, it is necessary to ensure a consistent supply of critical material and supplies.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Health advisor, KII, November 2023

<sup>20</sup> Lebanon Presidency of the Council of Ministers, National Short and Medium-term Preparedness and Response Plan, November 2023

<sup>21</sup> NNA, [نقابة مستوردي الأدوية دعت المواطنين إلى عدم التهافت على تخزين الدواء](#), October 25, 2023

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Health advisor, KII, November 2023

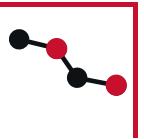
<sup>23</sup> NNA, [عربيد في لقاء شارك فيه وزير التربية والصحة: نحن اليوم في إقتصاد مأزوم ينتقل إلى إقتصاد حرب والمطلوب أن نوجد صفوفنا لتقطيع المرحلة - الحلبي: البلد](#), October 23, 2023

<sup>24</sup> The Executive, [Lebanon's fight against infectious diseases](#) May 3, 2023

<sup>25</sup> L'Orient Today, [How are Lebanese hospitals preparing for potential war?](#) October 27, 2023

<sup>26</sup> Member of Parliament and medical doctor, KII, November 2023





# Shelter:

The NPRP calls on relevant state entities to prepare public shelters for up to 200,000 internally displaced Lebanese persons, with the other 800,000 forecasted to seek private accommodation with hosts.<sup>27</sup> This mirrors trends from the 2006 war, when 600,000 displaced Lebanese stayed with host families and 150,000 sought shelter in public buildings.<sup>28</sup> Lebanese state planning for shelters foresees using public school buildings, 79 in total, to serve as potential shelters in a wider conflict.<sup>29</sup> These schools are not equipped to host families, with insufficient basic facilities such as beds, showers, toilets, and kitchens.<sup>30</sup> Schools near the border have been ordered to close since October 10, with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education planning for nationwide remote classes in the event of a wider conflict. Of the 55,491 people displaced by fighting along the border since early October, 1,055 are sheltering in 12 different public buildings such as schools.<sup>31</sup>

Shelter planning is a joint effort across state ministries, including the Ministry of Social Affairs playing a coordinating role and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, which has identified potential shelters. Implementation is carried out at a sub-national level, including by municipalities and DRM or DRR units.<sup>32</sup> The Ministry of Social Affairs has been distributing shelter kits, including materials like blankets, first aid kits, and lighting equipment for shelters already operating in southern Lebanon, but is hampered by a lack of resources. Efforts by the international aid community have been essential to responding to the need for non-food items, a response welcomed by the ministry.<sup>33</sup> The state's plans do not provide clear aims for stockpiling food, drinking water, and fuel for potential shelters. Representatives of foodstuffs and fuel importers say they have not been contacted by the Lebanese state regarding potential stockpiling of goods for potential wider use of shelters.<sup>34</sup>

In the plan, UNRWA and UNHCR, the two main UN agencies coordinating efforts for Palestinian and Syrian refugees, are responsible for displaced refugees.<sup>35</sup> In an October 23 press interview, caretaker Minister of Social Affairs Hector Hajjar, the NPRPs point-person for shelter planning, said that public shelters would not be able to accommodate Syrian refugees, proposing a plan to create two camps near the Syrian border for Syrian refugees.<sup>36</sup> In a November 9 flash appeal for aid, UNRWA called for funding to help prepare for the possible mass displacement of Palestinian refugees from southern Lebanon.<sup>37</sup> According to the NPRP, UNRWA identified 16 schools that can serve as potential shelters for refugees.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Lebanese Council of Ministers, National Emergency Plan, October 31, 2023, p. 3-4

<sup>28</sup> UNHCR, [UNHCR Activities in Lebanon 12 Jul - 31 Aug 2006](#) August 31, 2006

<sup>29</sup> Lebanon Presidency of the Council of Ministers, National Short and Medium-term Preparedness and Response Plan, November 2023, November 2023

<sup>30</sup> Mercy Corps staff, KII, November 2023

<sup>31</sup> IOM, [DTM Lebanon Mobility Overview - Round 12 \(23 November 2023\) | Displacement Tracking Matrix](#) November 2, 2023

<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs official, KII, November 2023

<sup>33</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs official, KII, November 2023

<sup>34</sup> Representative of Fuel Importers Syndicate, KII, November 2023;

Representative of Foodstuff Importers Syndicate, KII, November 2023

<sup>35</sup> Lebanese Council of Ministers, National Emergency Plan, October 31, 2023, p. 3-4

<sup>36</sup> Alaraby Aljadeed, [وزير الشؤون الاجتماعية اللبناني "العربي الجديد": إنشاء مخيم للاجئين السوريين في حال الحرب](#) October 23, 2023

<sup>37</sup> Relief Web, [UNRWA Updated oPt Flash Appeal \(November 2023\)](#), November 9, 2023

<sup>38</sup> Lebanon Presidency of the Council of Ministers, National Short and Medium-term Preparedness and Response Plan, November 2023



Credit: AP

## Water, Health and Sanitation (WASH):

Lebanon suffered a deadly outbreak of cholera in late 2022, highlighting the degradation of the country's water treatment and sewage infrastructure, and vulnerability to public health crises. The NPRP seeks to secure the provision of water for sanitation to the greater population and to IDPs in public shelters.<sup>39</sup> Central to this effort is the stated aim of stockpiling 2 million liters of diesel for public water establishments to maintain operations.<sup>40</sup> The plan foresees challenges in distributing fuel and calls for fuel to be stored near public water establishment facilities.<sup>41</sup> Lebanon's state-run water establishments have already been suffering from a lack of electricity for pumps, with the Beirut and Mount Lebanon Water Establishment – which serviced nearly 3 million customers as of 2020 – consuming approximately 800,000 liters of diesel each month to fuel back-up electrical generators.<sup>42</sup> Most of the water provided by these establishments is unsafe for consumption and the NPRP calls for the provision of potable water to public shelters.<sup>43</sup>

The South Lebanon Water Establishment (SLWE), falling under the purview of the Ministry of Energy and Water, has enacted its emergency plan, with efforts underway to inspect the quality and provision of water to public shelters for displaced persons in the south.<sup>44</sup> Israeli shelling in South Lebanon damaged a water storage tank in Yarine, a solar panel array for pumping water in Teir Harfa, and a water station in Wadi Salooki, leading to localized water shortages.<sup>45</sup> The South Lebanon SLWE announced that it had coordinated with Lebanon's state electricity company Électricité du Liban (EdL) to provide electricity to water facilities.<sup>46</sup> The Beirut and Mount Lebanon Water Establishment (BMLWE) has also drawn up a contingency plan and sought assistance from international organizations for securing diesel fuel – the establishment needs between 150,000 to 200,000 liters each week – and other critical supplies.<sup>47</sup> The establishment has highlighted the need for supplies to repair water transmission lines, from pipes to specialized equipment needed by technicians, of which the cash-strapped institution is in short supply.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Lebanese Council of Ministers, National Emergency Plan, October 31, 2023, p. 21-22

<sup>40</sup> Lebanese Council of Ministers, National Emergency Plan, October 31, 2023, p. 23

<sup>41</sup> Lebanese Council of Ministers, National Emergency Plan, October 31, 2023, p. 23

<sup>42</sup> L'Orient Today, [Water infrastructure on the brink: Amid ongoing electricity crisis, Lebanese communities struggle with water cuts](#) February 16, 2023

<sup>43</sup> Lebanese Council of Ministers, National Emergency Plan, October 31, 2023, p. 22

<sup>44</sup> El Nashra, [مؤسسة مياه الجنوب بدأت تنفيذ خطة الطوارئ لمواجهة تداعيات الاعتداءات على القرى الحدودية](#) October 25, 2023

<sup>45</sup> L'Orient Today, [From pride to ruin: Israel destroys self-financed solar panels in southern Lebanon village](#) November 22, 2023;

El Nashra, [مؤسسة مياه الجنوب: منشآتنا تعرضت لقصف إسرائيل ونسعى مع المعنيين لإصلاح الأعطال](#) November 3, 2023

<sup>46</sup> El Nashra, [مؤسسة مياه الجنوب: منشآتنا تعرضت لقصف إسرائيل ونسعى مع المعنيين لإصلاح الأعطال](#) November 3, 2023

<sup>47</sup> Beirut and Mount Lebanon Water Establishment official, KII, November 2023

<sup>48</sup> Ibid



Credit: Reuters

## Telecommunications:

The NPRP does not provide a detailed telecommunications contingency plan. It mentions the need to secure telecommunications and tasks state-operated oil storage facilities with stockpiling fuel for the telecommunications network.<sup>49</sup> The Ministry of Telecommunications, state-run Ogero telecom company, and MTC and Alfa providers have prepared their own emergency plans.<sup>50</sup> During the 2006 War, Israeli airstrikes hit fixed and mobile line telecommunication networks in Lebanon, destroying 13 transmission stations, but did not knock out the country's overall communications network.<sup>51</sup> During the current conflict in Gaza, Israeli military action has led to intermittent outages of telecommunications in the Palestinian enclave.<sup>52</sup> Recent Israeli shelling of South Lebanon damaged a telecommunications tower in Mhaibib,<sup>53</sup> though an official at the Ministry of Telecommunications said damage to the tower and elsewhere was very limited.<sup>54</sup>

Caretaker Minister of Telecommunications Johnny Corm announced that Ogero, Alfa, and MTC are attempting to secure diesel stocks, preserve data, form remote network control rooms, and meet market demand for recharge cards, which are needed to purchase mobile phone credit for calls, texts, and mobile internet and data.<sup>55</sup> An official at the Ministry of Telecommunications said that fuel stockpiling and procurement of technical equipment for repairs of transmission centers were the most urgent priorities.<sup>56</sup> Enough diesel has been stockpiled for one month of operations (approximately 1.5 million liters) by Ogero, the state-run telecommunications firm,<sup>57</sup> and tenders were underway to procure any needed technical equipment.<sup>58</sup> Ogero noted that its plan assumes a risk of network disruption, adding that in case of such outages, priority will be given to securing services for the Red Cross, Civil Defense services, rescue teams, firefighters, and medical and healthcare facilities.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Lebanese Council of Ministers, National Emergency Plan, October 31, 2023, p. 20 and 25

<sup>50</sup> ISP Today, [Preparing for the Unpredictable: Lebanon's Emergency Telecommunications Plan in media interview](#) October 26, 2023; Tayyar, [القرم عن خطة الطوارئ: الهدف ليس تخويف الناس](#) October 26, 2023

<sup>51</sup> Relief Web, [Setting the stage for long term reconstruction: The national early recovery process](#) August 29, 2006

<sup>52</sup> PBS, [Gaza's telecom services go down for 3rd time since start of Israel-Hamas war](#) November 5, 2023

<sup>53</sup> NNA, [توقف إرسال شبكة "ألفا" في ميس الجبل بسبب القصف المعادي على محيبي امس](#) November 19, 2023

<sup>54</sup> Ministry of Telecommunications official, KII, November 2023;

<sup>55</sup> L'Orient Today, [After Ogero, Alfa and Touch submit 'contingency plan' amid fears of war against Lebanon](#) October 26, 2023

<sup>56</sup> Ministry of Telecommunications official, KII, November 2023;

<sup>57</sup> Ministry of Telecommunications official, KII, November 2023;

<sup>58</sup> Ministry of Telecommunications official, KII, November 2023;

<sup>59</sup> L'Orient Today, [Ogero announces measures for continuity of services 'in the event of war against Lebanon'](#) October 25, 2023



Credit: Reuters

## Securing foodstuff and fuel:

Weak supply chains for essential commodities such as wheat and fuel could pose serious challenges to the humanitarian response in Lebanon, and therefore merit careful attention by aid actors. The NPRP devotes several slides to resource stockpiling, calling for coordination with Lebanon's already crisis-hit private sector, mainly its importers, to secure fuel and foodstuffs.<sup>60</sup> The Prime Minister's Office is leading the stockpiling strategy alongside the Ministry of Finance, in coordination with the Ministry of Environment. Discussions have centered on procurement processes, clearances, and supply chains, but few details have been made public. Regarding wheat, a crucial import for Lebanese food security, it appears likely that the government will heavily rely on a WFP-brokered renegotiation of the ongoing World Bank loan, a precedent for which was previously established in the wake of the Beirut blast.<sup>61</sup> Caretaker Minister of Economy Amin Salam and importers have stated that there are enough foodstuff supplies for three months, while fuel importers say they have enough in reserve for 40 days, meeting the NPRP's requirements.<sup>62</sup> Salam also said stocks of wheat and flour are also sufficient.<sup>63</sup> Business sector representatives have raised concerns about the ability of the private sector to properly plan beyond the immediate term.<sup>64</sup>

Supermarkets and groceries in Lebanon maintain stocks of basic food supplies that can last from two to three weeks, including grains, sugar and cooking oil, while importers' inventories could last between two to three months, with an exact figure difficult to determine.<sup>65</sup> Following a brief spate of panic buying after Israeli shelling started in south Lebanon on October 8, business conditions have returned to normal.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>60</sup> National Emergency Plan, Lebanese cabinet, October 31, 2023, p. 15 (foodstuff) and p. 25 (fuel)

<sup>61</sup> United Nations official, KII, November 2023

<sup>62</sup> Representative of the Syndicate of Fuel Importers, KII, November 2023;

Representative of the Foodstuffs Importers, KII, November 2023;

NNA, [Mikati Follows Up On Latest Developments With Iranian Ambassador, Chairs Food Security Meeting Salam: Food Supplies In Lebanon Sufficient For 3 Months](#) November 8, 2023;

El Nashra, [بحصلي: الغذاء مؤمن لـ3 أشهر على الأقل في حال فرض حصار بركي وبحري ويمكننا الصمود في الحرب](#) October 26, 2023;

Al Modon, [المحروقات المتوافرة في لبنان تكفي نحو 45 يوما](#) November 2, 2023

<sup>63</sup> Lebanon24, [Continuing meetings to solidify the government's emergency plan](#) November 9, 2023

<sup>64</sup> El Nashra, [نقيب الصبادة: لبنان لا يتحمل الحرب ولا جهوزية لدينا](#) November 9, 2023;

Kataeb, [القطاعات الاقتصادية مشلولة... وهذه هي الحلقة الأضعف في خطة الطوارئ](#) November 6, 2023

<sup>65</sup> Supermarket Owners Syndicate official, KII, November 2023;

Foodstuff Importers Syndicate official, KII, November 2023

<sup>66</sup> Ibid



In the event of an expanded conflict and a sustained period of panic buying, foodstuff stocks would likely be depleted quickly. If Lebanon, an import-dependent country, is subject to a naval and air blockade, it may not be possible to adequately replenish those stocks.<sup>67</sup> The NPRP notes that over 2 million people in Lebanon are beneficiaries of food aid from Lebanese state programs, UN agencies, and humanitarian partners. This aid could be scaled up to 3 million people, or 52% of the estimated population of the country, but would require emergency assistance.<sup>68</sup> The NPRP highlighted food security for public shelters in a wider conflict as a key challenge.<sup>69</sup>

Fuel is an essential logistical cog for Lebanon, with the country's residents and vital sectors reliant on diesel for back-up electricity generators due to EdL's inability to provide a consistent supply of electricity. The NPRP notes that providing fuel for hospitals is a key challenge and the Ministry of Public Health is coordinating with UN agencies on a diesel contingency plan.<sup>70</sup> The Ministry of Energy and Water planning prioritizes securing fuel for hospitals, bakeries, telecoms, Civil Defense transportation, and ambulances.<sup>71</sup> The Syndicate of Fuel Importers said that it has at least 40 days of gasoline and diesel in stock at its storage terminals, based on the current consumption rate of 7 million liters of fuel per day.<sup>72</sup> As the state-operated Tripoli and Zahrani fuel import facilities lack funds, the Ministry of Energy and Water coordinated with private sector importers to secure 10 million liters of diesel to cover about 40 days' worth of consumption by governmental hospitals, water establishments and the telecoms sector, according to a fuel importer.<sup>73</sup> Fuel importers have also drawn up their own lists of prioritized customers, with key sectors such as bakeries and private hospitals deemed the most important.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Foodstuff Importers Syndicate official, KII, November 2023

<sup>68</sup> Lebanon Presidency of the Council of Ministers, National Short and Medium-term Preparedness and Response Plan, November 2023

<sup>69</sup> Ibid

<sup>70</sup> Lebanon Presidency of the Council of Ministers, National Short and Medium-term Preparedness and Response Plan, November 2023

<sup>71</sup> National Emergency Plan, Lebanese cabinet, October 31, 2023, p. 22

<sup>72</sup> Representative of the Syndicate of Fuel Importers, KII, November 2023

<sup>73</sup> Representative of the Syndicate of Fuel Importers, KII, November 2023

<sup>74</sup> Representative of the Syndicate of Fuel Importers, KII, November 2023

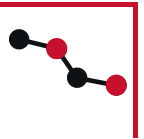


Credit: Joseph Eid/AFP

## **Takeaways for humanitarian actors:**

History has demonstrated that, in times of natural or manmade disaster, the Government of Lebanon tends to take a relatively light-handed coordinating approach to managing humanitarian responses, while leaning heavily on the robust humanitarian architecture that has been in place in the country for decades. After the 2006 war, for example, donor-funded support through UN agencies and other NGOs was integral to rebuilding the south and providing first response. In 2023, the government's low capacities and insolvent state finances necessitate this approach more than ever. Despite this historical precedent and low central government capacity, local government authorities have this time taken a much more active coordination role than during previous crises. In this context, stakeholders from public, private, and humanitarian sectors generally agree that the government's preparedness plan achieves its stated goal of coordinating a response in close collaboration with the UN and other humanitarian actors, while enabling municipalities and governorates to lead the process through the DRM and DRR. This improved coordination capacity is in no small part thanks to UN-led disaster contingency planning exercises in response to potential natural disasters or public health crises such as earthquakes or a large-scale cholera epidemic. The Beirut port explosion in 2020 also offered a grim "dry run" of a larger shock affecting the health system.

However, there is a danger of overburdening Lebanon's already heavily utilized humanitarian coordination architecture. Since the Syrian refugee crisis began in 2011, the LCRP has been the bedrock of Lebanon's humanitarian response. After the 2020 port explosion, the Emergency Response Plan (ERP) emerged as an alternative framework. Ongoing discussions seek to merge the two frameworks into a Lebanon Response Plan (LRP) which would become effective in early 2024.



Contingency plans in response to the displacement crisis in the south risk creating a new, parallel layer of coordination, which threatens to blunt humanitarian responses or – perhaps more concerningly – render the overarching framework irrelevant. In many cases, UN agencies and NGOs have moved ahead with their own response plans following requests from sub-national authorities such as municipal unions and governors, who have articulated their needs by triggering the DRM or DRR, raising questions about whether any national coordination framework is fit for purpose. In most cases, these responses have gone ahead in line with the national plan. However, debates over whether to trigger the UN cluster system, the default UN response to disasters, to replace the existing sector system, risk making the framework collapse under its own weight.

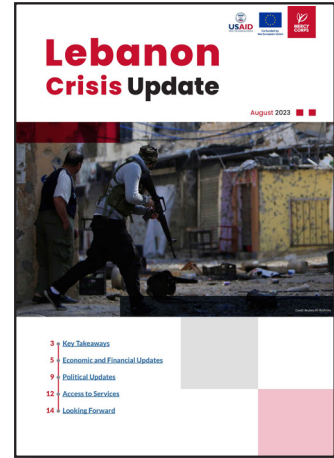
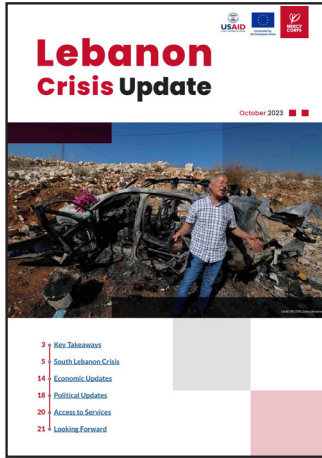
Apart from coordination issues, other bottlenecks are hampering the humanitarian community's rollout of the government plan. The government's reluctance to accommodate Syrian refugees in public shelters is a sticking point for aid actors attempting to provide shelter to IDPs regardless of nationality. Similarly, the government's reluctance to collect or release IDP data disaggregated by nationality imposes planning limitations for humanitarian actors. Meanwhile, existing national social protection systems are unable to provide shock-responsive mechanisms to the current emergency. The lack of a centralized and deduplicated database of cash recipients limits aid actors' ability to expand their cash operations both horizontally (in terms of coverage) and vertically (in terms of transfer value). However, if scenarios described in the government's NPRP were to manifest, these would likely not be the most serious bottlenecks. In the event of a naval and airspace blockade on a par with 2006, the most immediate and pressing concern would be securing a continuous supply of critical foodstuffs and fuel.

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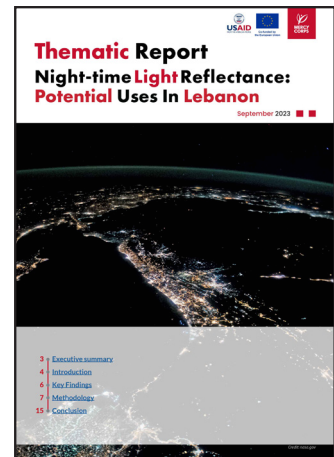
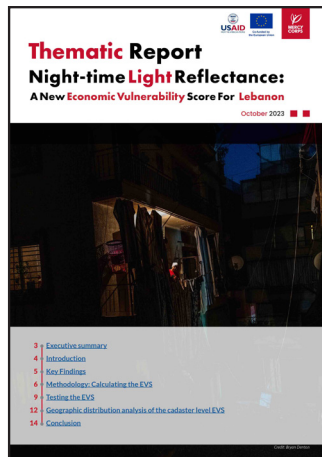
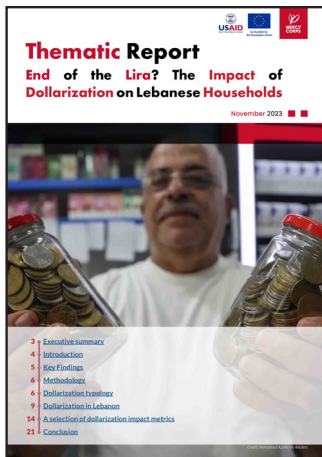
<sup>75</sup> Currently, two programmes exist for providing Lebanese recipients with cash assistance: the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) and the National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP). However, each programme has its own database of recipients, resulting in duplication and making it more difficult for aid actors to scale up their cash assistance response during times of crisis. This leaves aid organizations using cash transfers reliant on comparing data collected at the DRM/DRR level with the ESSN and NPTP.



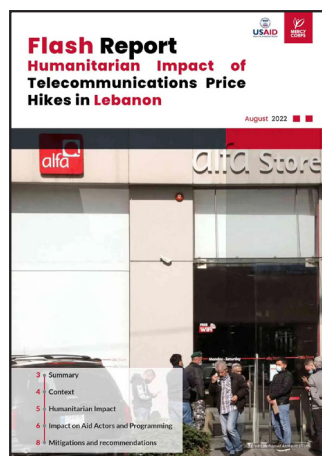
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