

Current Health Event

Winterization Health Issues

January 7, A heavy storm swept through the country, with speedy winds, drops in temperature, heavy rain and snow on low altitudes, delaying flights and closing off roads in the mountains. Adding challenge for the over a million Syrian refugees living in tents in the country's north and northeast.

The storm caused 3 casualties and cardiac arrests were reported as the result of cold and low temperatures.

Editorial note:

Over a million people of concern are dispersed in more than 1,700 locations throughout Lebanon, with the majority subject to the harsher winter climate of the North and Bekaa Valley. The storm has had negative impact on displaced Syrians, with the lack of heating and proper shelter, rain has flooded in a number of rooms in the gatherings and had damaged Informal Settlements ISS, Bekaa being the most affected area.

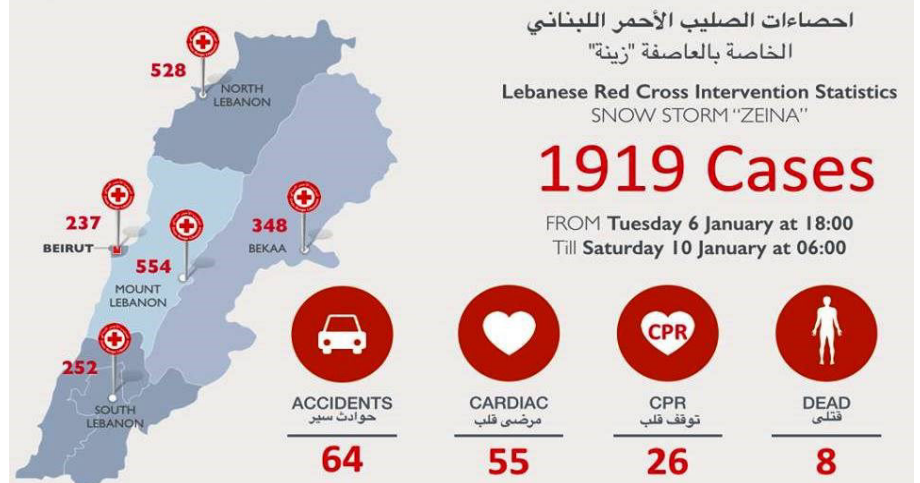
The cold weather risks include an increase in pneumonia and other respiratory infections. In addition, there is the ever present risk of waterborne diseases, which can spread rapidly through the ISSs.

Special care will need to be taken with pregnant women and newborn infants.

Regional Response Plan (RRP) partners are providing winterization assistance to more than 600,000 people. This constitutes nearly 60% of refugees and other persons of concern in Lebanon.

Priority groups targeted for assistance include those who live in sub-standard shelters, those who live in areas with severe climatic conditions,

Figure: Lebanese Red Cross statistics during storm 6 - 10 January 2015.



Source: Lebanese Red Cross

and the most vulnerable.

WHO is supporting the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) preparedness with the following activities:

* Strengthening EWARS and routine surveillance and by adding specifically SARI/Influenza Like Illnesses, which are highly prevalent and contiguous on of the notifiable diseases;

* Supply medications including drugs for chronic diseases and illnesses, which may be affected by cold weather as well as lifesaving drugs, antibiotics and bronchodilators.

Health partners are scaling up surveillance and response capacity to detect winter-borne illnesses including influenza, respiratory diseases and mitigate the impact of chronic low temperatures.

Partners are working together to agree on common vulnerability criteria and the identification of refugees most in need and coordinating to distribute winterization assistance (cash support, sealing-off kits, blankets, heating stoves, fuel vouchers).

Cumulative Notifiable diseases in Lebanon (Syrian)				
Disease	2013 Cumul	2014 Cumul*	Nov	Dec
Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
Polio	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Acute Flaccid Paralysis	33(7)	24(9)	4(0)	0(0)
Measles	1760 (232)	230(104)	0(0)	0(0)
Mumps	14(2)	475(80)	85(15)	0(0)
Pertussis	59(9)	83(25)	3(0)	0(0)
Rabies	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Rubella	27(1)	17(11)	0(0)	0(0)
Tetanus	4(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Viral Hep B	141(8)	203(29)	16(4)	1(0)
Water/Food Borne Diseases				
Brucellosis	189(12)	235(35)	11(1)	0(0)
Cholera	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Hydatid cyst	13(3)	13(2)	0(0)	0(0)
Typhoid				
Fever	407(21)	285(23)	39(6)	0(0)
Viral Hep A	1551 (220)	2162(777)	325 (166)	0(0)
Other Diseases				
Leishmaniasis	1033 (1032)	477(460)	1(0)	0(0)
Meningitis	204(24)	198(29)	8(1)	0(0)
Viral Hep C	103(4)	85(5)	8(2)	2(0)

Source: Ministry of Public Health, Lebanon as on 05/12/2014