Introduction:

The situation analysis report was based on the expertise, data and available reports among the Union of Relief and Development Associations (URDA) team members in emergency response, specifically cases of disasters and crisis management at the refugees shelter sites across Lebanon for the seventh consecutive year since the Syrian crisis started. URDA has been providing emergency response services in several cases, especially those that are a result of the consequences of Winter season which burden refugees heavily since most of them struggle to secure Basic Needs when it comes to proper shelter and the extreme poverty rate they live in with no food security.

According to UNHCR reports, 69% of Syrian refugee families live under the poverty line in Lebanon while more than 51% live under the minimum expenditure rate which is 2.90 US Dollars per day which is considered to be progress from last year. Specifically looking into the cases of children with disabilities, 80% are members of families living under the poverty line¹.

About the Storm:

Lebanon is still under the effect of the “Norma” Snow storm that started Saturday evening the 5th of January 2019 which is expected to continue until Thursday with expected decrease in its severity by Friday and a continuation in its low temperatures for several days after. The weather forecasts predicted that the weather will be cloudy with wind exceeding 90 KM/H raising sea waves to an altitude of 5 Meters Northern Lebanon.

It also mentioned heavy rainfall with thunder storms causing flooding in several areas, in addition to snow fall at 1,000m height levels form the sea, with a decrease in fall and temperatures at night at 700 m height and less in internally located areas.¹

Sever losses have accompanied the arrival of the snowstorm since the very beginning, where roads have been blocked due to the accumulation of snow and the forming of ice, which lead to isolating and the forming of siege around the damaged areas especially those where Syrian refugees reside. Syrian refugees have been forced to stay within their heavily damaged tents that are formed of plastic and fabric sheets due to the siege caused by the snow.

According to UNHCR reports, Syrian refugees are living in shelters that are under the appropriate living line, where a dramatic drop in shelter conditions has been witnessed among the families. 34% of the families live in temporary household units, which sets an increase from 26% from 2017.²

For this reason, URDA is publishing this Situation Analysis report concerning the status of refugees and their needs during the Winter season, seeking to display the dangers, clarify the needs and place proposed relief projects in cases where emergency response is required.

UNHCR reports state that there are 950,334 Syrian refuges in Lebanon by the end of 2018 located across Lebanon according to the following: 35.8% in Beqaa, 26.1% in Northern Lebanon, 26.1% in Beirut and its suburbs and 12% Southern Lebanon.³

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¹ https://www.beirutairport.gov.lb/_weather.php
³ https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71
First: Dangers of Winter Season on Syrian Refugees:

• Spread of seasonal communicable diseases that affect the children and newborns specifically with death rates recorded last year because of the cold.
• The flooding of exposed sewage drains into the tents due to the rain fall which accelerates the spreading of diseases such as Cholera and Hepatitis B.
• Snowstorms cause a significant decrease in temperatures, recording temperatures under Zero Degree Celsius with extreme dangers on the lives of refugees, especially infants. The dangers increase with the absence of heating means and prevention from the cold, the road blockages and the ceasing of transportation of all basic need services and the freezing of water in storage tanks and thus water cuts as a result. It’s to be noted that last Winter extreme low temperatures were recorded with expectations being similar and worse for this year.
• The isolation of rural villages, inability to reach any medical facilities or a Doctor in most cases, the suspension of schools in all areas due to ceasing of transportation means and the difficulty in reaching out and communicating with refugees to secure supplies and needs increasing risks of diseases and hunger.
• The scarcity or complete absence of heating diesel due to the difficulty in gaining access to it, the increase of its price or due to the shortage in heating supplies. In this case, refugees seek to secure alternative means for warmth that are considered to be as unsafe such as burning papers or plastics causing cases of suffocation, fires or unpredictable disasters.

For this reason, URDA is seeking to operate its medical and relief committees during the snowstorm, to be one of the first humanitarian NGOs to reach into the storm in Aarsal, Beqaa, Akkar and Shibaa since weather forecasts have recorded extreme decreases in temperature in these rural areas.¹

¹- https://www.accuweather.com/ar/lb/irsal/227237/current-weather/227237
Second: Urgent Winter needs in Refugee Shelter Sites:

Based on what has been mentioned before and the reports from the field teams operating the relief and medical committees, we present the urgently needed relief supplies:

1- Shelter Needs:
the tents of refugees are in need of constant rehabilitation due to the weather conditions they are subjected to whether during the Summer or Winter. The rehabilitation process is in need of wood, plastic sheets and isolation.

2- Heating Needs:
dealing with decreased temperatures and providing tents with the needed heat resources requires continuous availability of heating diesel for each family, in addition to the heaters and supporting the refugees with winter clothing and blankets.

3- Food Security Needs:
with the increase of hunger rates and the difficulty of securing Food aid during times of snow fall and storms, families must be provided with Winter storages. According to UNHCR reports, one third of Syrian refugee families (34%) are in a state of Food insecurity ranging from extreme to mild, while having food insecurity highly related to extreme poverty rates¹.

4- Healthcare Needs:
one of the best means to support refugees at the medical level is to support medical facilities with all medicinal and staff needs with an increase in awareness campaigns. URDA seeks to operate and provide seasonal medication in 4 medical facilities in Aarsal Medical Center, the Medical Village in Beqaa and Al-Rawdah Dispensary in Beirut.

We hope that in collaboration with donors and all concerned Relief Organizations we will be able to secure the needed funds to overcome the negative effects left by this storm and alleviate the burdens of those affected.