



اتحاد الجمعيات الإغاثية و التنمية  
Union of Relief & Development Associations

ISSUE #0004  
JANUARY 2024

# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

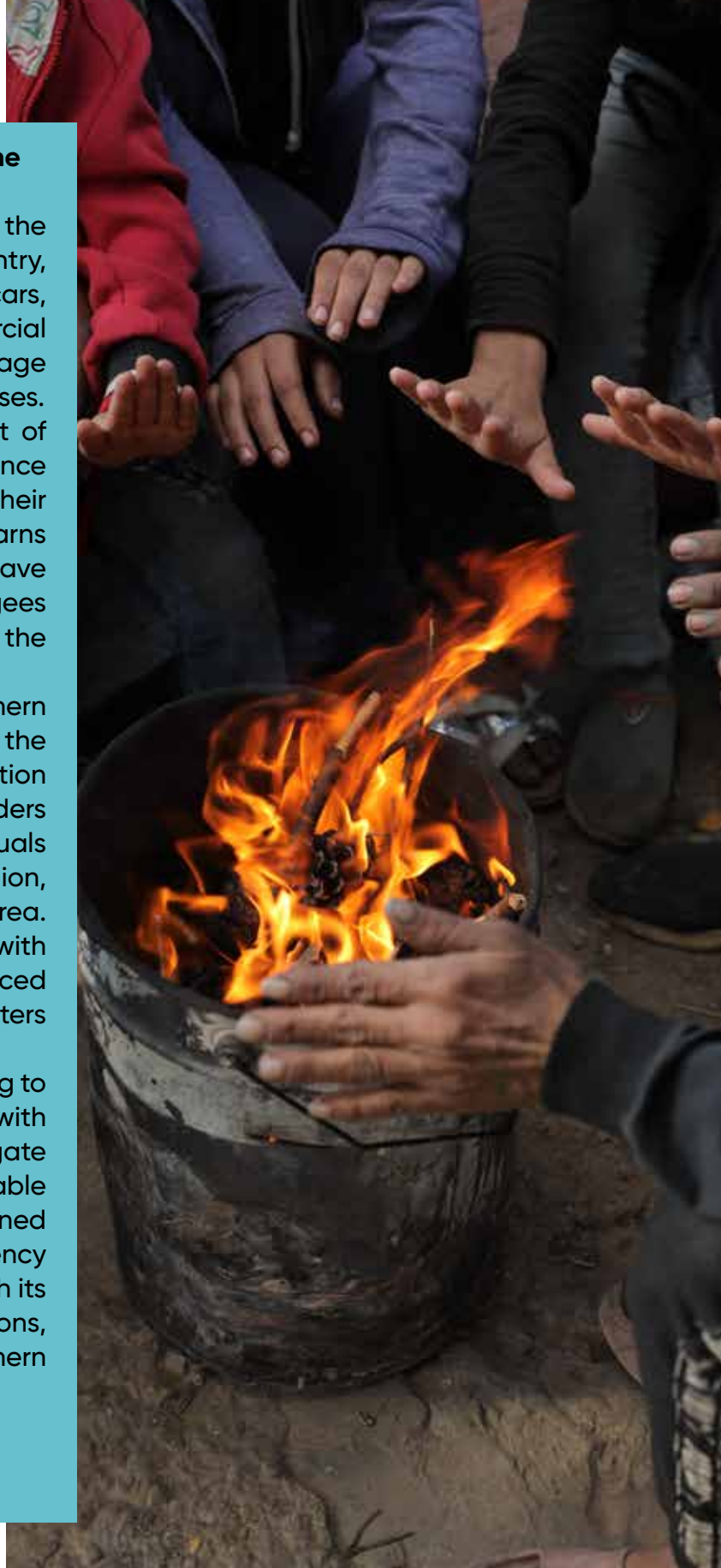
## Introduction

### **Lebanon is at the heart of the storm, with the drums of war beating in the South**

A familiar scene unfolds in Lebanon during the winter season, as water inundates the country, submerging citizens' properties, including cars, houses, and infiltrating water into commercial establishments, causing significant damage and devastating financial and economic losses. Refugee camps have also borne the brunt of these rainy storms that have hit Lebanon since the beginning of the new year, and their continuation for several more weeks forewarns of a catastrophe on various fronts. Torrents have swept away several camps for Syrian refugees in North Lebanon's Akkar region and in the Bekaa and Aarsal areas.

On another note, the situation in southern Lebanon is becoming more perilous, as the International Organization for Migration reported that the escalation across the borders has led to the displacement of 76,018 individuals within the south, including the border region, Beirut, and the nearby Baabda area. Approximately 81% are currently residing with relatives, and only two percent of displaced individuals are in 14 collective shelters distributed in the south of the country.

In this context, URDA's field teams are working to the best of their ability and coordinating with local and international authorities to mitigate the challenges faced by the most vulnerable groups in Lebanon. They call on all concerned parties to intervene and support the emergency relief projects implemented by URDA through its teams deployed in various Lebanese regions, whether in refugee camps or in southern Lebanon.



## URDA Relief Sector Aids Displaced Lebanese Families: Hundreds of Food Parcels Distributed

In its ongoing efforts, URDA's relief sector is providing crucial food support to displaced Lebanese families from the south.

The sector distributed 538 ready-to-eat food packages in areas such as Aaqbiyeh, Babliyeh, and Tyre. Additionally, 221 food aid packages were given to displaced Lebanese families in the Kfardanis area of Bekaa. This assistance addresses the immediate needs of families facing challenging conditions. URDA plans to continue its support, coordinating the distribution of food, hygiene items, and other essentials in the coming month to meet the ongoing needs of Lebanese families during this difficult period.

The International Organization for Migration highlights that about 80% of displaced individuals are staying with host families, 17% have rented houses, and 1% have returned to secondary residences. Roughly 2% (1100 displaced individuals) reside in 14 collective shelters. These shelters are distributed across Tyre, Hasbaya, Rashaya, and Sidon, accommodating a total of 1101 displaced individuals. Notably, 37% of the displaced are children, 34% are females, and 29% are males.



## Relief Sector Efforts Address Challenges with Hope and Determination

More than 10,000 beneficiaries from winter projects during January

In the midst of the challenging economic and social conditions in Lebanon, the Relief Sector's efforts continue with a spirit of hope and determination. The Relief Sector at URDA contributes to the #Break\_The\_Ice campaign to provide support and improve living conditions for marginalized groups in the country.

These efforts are part of the collaboration between donor agencies, partner humanitarian organizations, and emergency relief teams. A comprehensive range of winter assistance was distributed in various regions. In the Beqaa region, 200 food parcels and 150 hot meals were distributed, in addition to sleep kits and fuel assistance, benefiting a total of 4,500 individuals.

In Arsal, 200 food parcels and additional relief items were provided, covering various needs and reaching 3,000 people. Emphasis was also placed on the North and Beqaa regions, with a total of 1,750 beneficiaries, including the distribution of food, clothing, hot meals, and sleep essentials. In a compassionate initiative, the Relief Sector provided exceptional assistance by distributing fuel and firewood to support basic needs.

These efforts express optimism and mutual support in the Lebanese society, which unites to overcome challenging circumstances. Through this collective effort, the Relief Sector remains a vital force in providing hope and support to those in need, embodying strength and unity in the face of difficulties.



### URDA Team's Exceptional Humanitarian Effort in Gaza

URDA continues its support for Gaza with a twelve-truck convoy that entered through the Rafah crossing last month, carrying relief supplies, medical aid, and sleeping provisions. The team faced challenges but remained dedicated to ensuring the mission's success.

Gaza's plight exceeds imagination, and URDA's response projects continue to make a significant impact, filled with compelling stories. To share these experiences, we interviewed URDA's Executive Director, Ms. Jihan Al-Kaisi, who oversaw the convoy's journey to Gaza.



[Click on the photo to watch the full Interview](#)



## The URDA contributes to detecting water pollution with antibiotic-resistant bacteria in Akkar



Short Communication

### Multidrug-resistant pathogens contaminate river water used in irrigation in disenfranchised communities

Marwan Osman<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>, Dina Daaboul<sup>5,6</sup>, Anahita Ghorbani Tajani<sup>7</sup>, Khaled El Omari<sup>8,9</sup>, Bledar Bisha<sup>1</sup>, Jouman Hassan<sup>10</sup>, Casey L. Cazer<sup>11</sup>, Kathryn J. Fiorella<sup>12</sup>, Nabil Karah<sup>1</sup>, Aula Abbara<sup>1</sup>, Monzer Hamze<sup>1</sup>, Kevin J. Cummings<sup>13</sup>, Thierry Naas<sup>14,15</sup>, Issmat I. Kassem<sup>16</sup>

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**Acknowledgments:** We would like to thank the Union of Relief and Development Associations (URDA) and Abdul Rahman Darwish for their invaluable support in the field work. We are particularly grateful to Tony Serhal, Ahmad Hamze, and Ahmad Kamaliedine for their expertise and contribution in identifying the geographical characteristics of this river. Moreover, we would like to thank Dalal Kasir, Nesrine Hassoune, Nour Osman, Souad Fayad, Aya Yas-sine, and Rayane Salma for their technical support.

### References

- [1] Essack SY. Environment: the neglected component of the One Health triad. *Lancet Planet Health* 2018;2:e238–e2e9. doi:10.1016/S2542-5196(18)30124-4.

In a collaboration based on solidarity and social responsibility, URDA participated in a joint scientific study with several universities on water pollution with antibiotic-resistant bacteria in camps and villages in Akkar. The results of this study were published in the *Journal of Global Antimicrobial Resistance*, a prestigious international platform for publishing scientific research in the field of antibiotic resistance. The research team analyzed water samples from various regions in Akkar to assess the level of contamination with antibiotic-resistant bacteria in drinking water and daily use. Commenting on the results, researchers praised the role of URDA in facilitating this study and providing the necessary data to understand the challenges facing water supplies in the region. In light of URDA's commitment to sustainable development and improving living conditions, this study is part of the organization's efforts to identify environmental problems and provide effective solutions.

In this context, URDA emphasizes its commitment to working with international partners to improve environmental conditions and encourages more investment in infrastructure to ensure clean water supplies for local communities and guarantee individuals' rights to access pure and safe water.

Study link attached <https://shorturl.at/rBD28>



## URDA Rehabilitates Charity Kitchen in Saida to Empower Women and Provide Hot Meals During Upcoming Ramadan

The Shelter Sector team at URDA has successfully rehabilitated a charity kitchen in the Saida region of southern Lebanon. The project involves the participation of widowed women, aiming to empower them and enhance their roles in the community. The initiative includes the provision of daily hot meals, with official production expected to commence in the upcoming month of Ramadan.

The project ensures a fully equipped kitchen with the latest appliances and equipment, adhering to health standards and professional recommendations. The focus is on promoting effective women's participation and providing employment opportunities, ultimately achieving financial independence, and elevating their involvement in community-building initiatives.



### The education sector is committed to providing sustainable and equitable educational opportunities for students with special needs

As part of ongoing efforts to improve the educational situation in Lebanon, the education sector at URDA implemented a series of projects during the month of January 2024. These projects specifically focused on supporting students with special needs, highlighting the education sector's commitment to providing sustainable and equitable educational opportunities for all segments of society. One prominent project executed by URDA was the monitoring and evaluation of sponsored students in the regions of Bekaa, Arsal, and Akkar. This program was enhanced to ensure that students benefiting from support receive the necessary care and

support to progress academically.

Another project involved equipping and purchasing all necessary medical equipment for students with special needs, including sessions for physical therapy and providing special educational games to improve student interaction and enhance their skills.

As part of supporting students during the winter season, URDA distributed winter clothing to students, with a specific focus on students with special needs.



## Conflict Resolution and Counseling: URDA's Legal Protection Sector Plays an Active Role in Easing Social Tensions

Amidst the ongoing social tensions affecting Lebanese society, the Legal Protection Sector at URDA takes steps towards conflict resolution and providing legal counseling. These concerted efforts reflect an effective response to the social tensions between Lebanese citizens and refugees, stemming from the negative impacts of the economic and financial crisis.

Due to its limited and diverse population, Lebanon faces complex social and religious challenges. Therefore, legal protection efforts have been necessary to alleviate social pressures and tensions.

The project "Tracking Community Perceptions of Social Tensions" was initiated as a crucial step in the framework of social awareness and promoting peaceful coexistence.

Awareness sessions and lectures on coexistence were conducted in various regions, along with providing support and legal solutions in personal status matters, legal documents, residency issues, as well as consultations on workers' rights, eviction procedures, and divorce and child custody-related disputes.

During the month of January, the legal department provided eighteen legal consultations, demonstrating a committed effort to offer necessary support in calming the social situation and reducing tension in Lebanon.

## URDA's Sponsorship Sector: Comprehensive Care Through Precise Field Surveys

In its ongoing efforts to provide care and support to the most vulnerable, URDA's sponsorship sector conducts field surveys before implementing projects and providing financial sponsorships. This process begins with the establishment of stringent criteria governing the selection process. Clear and objective standards are adopted to ensure that support is directed to the most economically and socially disadvantaged families and individuals. These criteria may include factors such as orphanhood or difficult living conditions.

Specialized teams, equipped for field surveys, conduct thorough inspections of potential cases. Comprehensive information is gathered about the economic and social situation of the family and individual. The assessment focuses on evaluating the basic needs of the child, encompassing areas such as health, education, and psychosocial support.





Once the data is collected, it undergoes careful analysis to pinpoint cases in urgent need of support.

URDA's commitment is to provide continuous support to orphans and needy families, alleviating their burdens and improving their quality of life. In January 2024, the sponsorship teams distributed cash assistance to 573 direct beneficiaries, including 31 families representing different nationalities, such as Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian, across various regions in Lebanon.

### Ebdaa Center Builds Bridges for Talents: Educational Projects and Handicrafts & Arts Exhibition

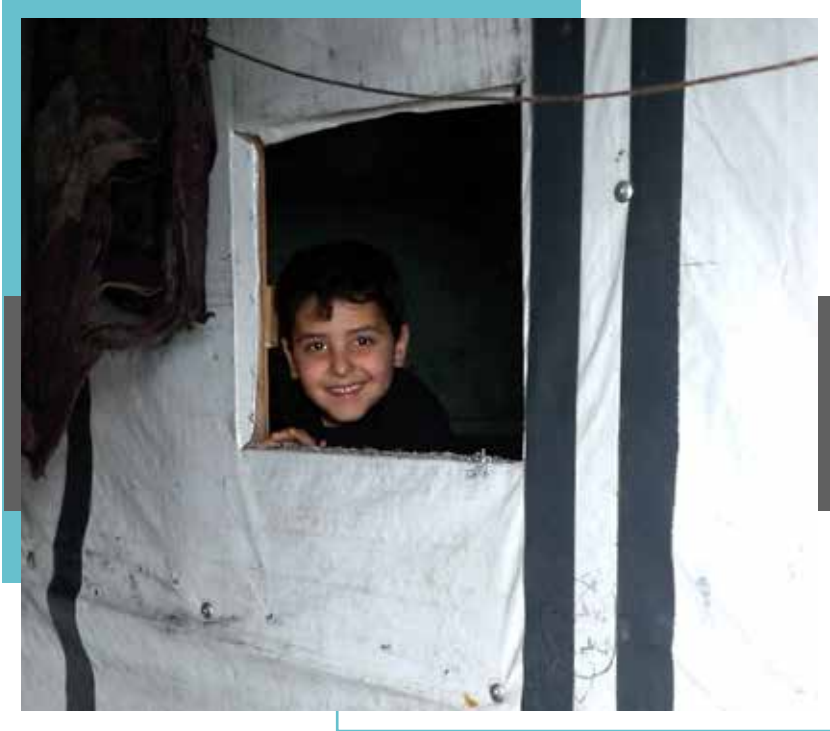
Ebdaa Center in Bekaa continues its distinguished journey in supporting and developing talents by implementing projects that focus on exploring and enhancing creative skills through specialized scientific curricula. These projects have begun to bear fruit, with many outstanding individuals participating in competitions through various media and social platforms.

In continuation of the spirit of creativity and excellence, the Ebdaa Center organized an exhibition showcasing products crafted by a team of distinguished women in the field of handicrafts. They market their products online and participate in exhibitions. The exhibition also features a gallery displaying drawings by students participating in the "Integrated Sketch" project, aiming to highlight their talents and showcase their artistic creativity.



### Captured Childhood: A Refugee's Window to the World

At first glance, it seems like a child joyfully posing in front of a historical monument. In reality, this cheerful face represents one of 286,000 refugee children in Lebanon, living in cramped tents without a proper view of the outside world. Their makeshift home, a mere 16 square meters, offers little protection from the elements. This poignant image unveils the challenging reality of refugee life.



### The International Thank You Day

January 11 marks the International Thank You Day, a day dedicated to expressing gratitude and appreciation, a sentiment that transcends cultures worldwide. Therefore, on behalf of URDA, we say thank you in every language to the workers, employees, volunteers, teachers, donors, and partners for their efforts and dedication in supporting those in need and improving their lives. We appreciate every effort that contributes to building a better community for everyone.

