



اتحاد الجمعيات الإغاثية و التنمية
Union of Relief & Development Associations

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Introduction

Lebanon Amid Crises: From Soaring Inflation and War Fallout to Collapsing Buildings and Roads

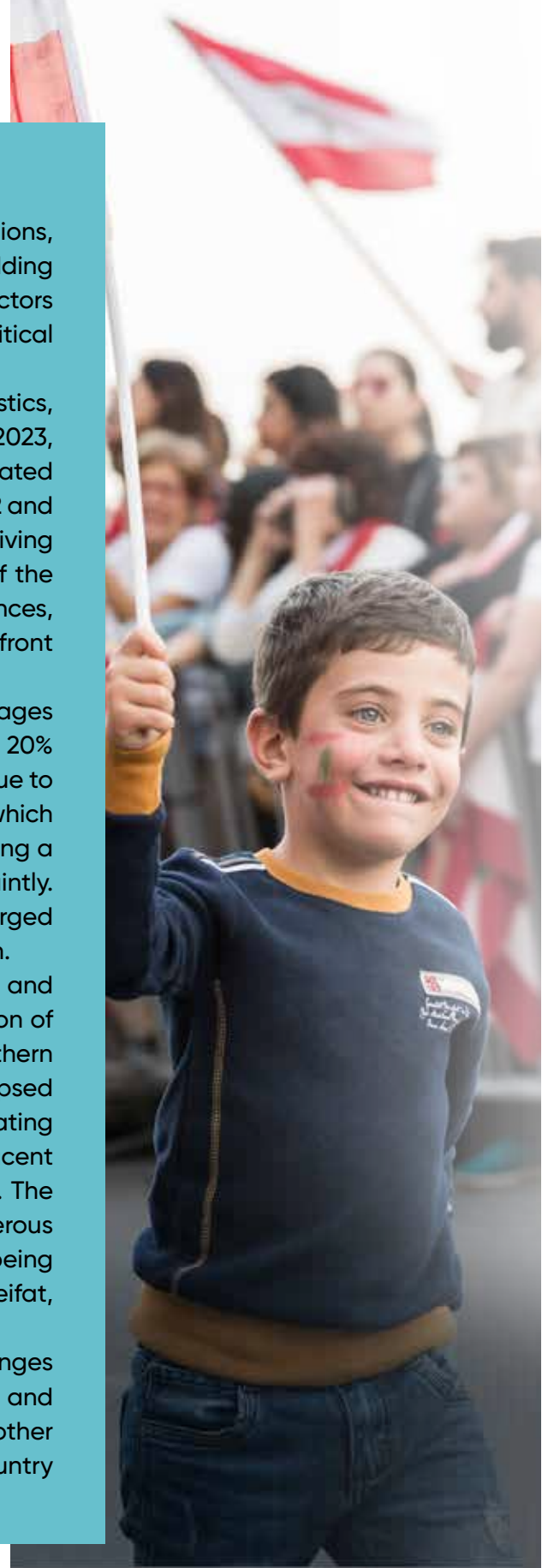
In the face of Lebanon's challenging economic and political conditions, we present to you our monthly newsletter for February 2024, shedding light on the most significant developments and activities of URDA sectors despite the challenges facing the nation and its people in this critical period.

According to a study by the Central Administration of Statistics, Lebanon's annual inflation rate reached about 221.3 percent in 2023, while the Research and Consultancy Foundation in Lebanon indicated that the inflation rate reached 204 percent between December 2022 and December 2023. These indicators not only reflect the continuing living and economic crisis in Lebanon but also signal the deterioration of the financial and economic system, which may lead to dire consequences, especially with the recent developments on the southern Lebanese front with Palestine.

The latest statistics on the extent of destruction in border villages indicate that 30% of residential units have been partially damaged, 20% have been destroyed, and 15% have been rendered uninhabitable due to damage. Moreover, the shelling has extended to the city of Saida, which is 70 kilometers away from the Lebanese-Palestinian border, signaling a war that the Lebanese people are beginning to hear its drums faintly. Many Lebanese officials have warned of the imminent war and urged citizens to stockpile food and medicine and rationalize consumption.

What has shocked citizens in recent days is the high rate of building and road collapses. The latest collapse occurred on an additional section of the main road in the town of Sfirah in the highlands of Dinnieh in northern Lebanon. Additionally, another part of the road support walls collapsed due to water rains, causing road closures in many villages, and isolating their inhabitants from their surroundings. Furthermore, several adjacent buildings to the road have developed cracks and were evacuated. The Lebanese Real Estate Authority has warned of the danger of numerous buildings that are cracked and prone to collapse, with the latest being the collapse of two buildings in the areas of Basateen and Shuweifat, resulting in fatalities and injuries.

It is clear that the coming months will be harsh and filled with challenges and difficulties, necessitating a ringing alarm for donor agencies and institutions to increase aid to the Lebanese people and residents of other nationalities to alleviate the burden of the alarming situation the country is going through on all fronts.



URDA in Relief Field: Providing Urgent Assistance to Needy Families in Lebanon during February 2024

URDA continues its efforts to provide urgent relief to Lebanese, Syrians, and Palestinians throughout Lebanon. Relief teams are actively covering the country, starting from the south, passing through Saïda to Arsal, then moving to the western Bekaa and turning north towards Tripoli, Akkar, finally reaching Mount Lebanon. With a focus on alleviating the burdens faced by impoverished families and meeting their needs, URDA teams distribute aid to those affected by harsh weather conditions. This year has seen the highest levels of rainfall and frost in the past five years.



During February, aid distribution included:

Meat	Bread	Hot Meals	Food Parcels
80 portions (2 kg each)	1200 bundles	910 meals	1455 portions

Winter clothing ,Jackets) (Shoes, Blankets	Mattresses	Winter Blankets	Heating Fuel	Heaters
800 Portion	300 Mattresses	1,085 Blankets	3,250 gallons of fuel (10 liters per gallon)	100 Heaters

The Charity Kitchen: An Innovative Partnership between Livelihoods and Relief Sectors

URDA continues to implement its strategic plan for 2024, focusing on enhancing community development, providing employment opportunities, and delivering in-kind assistance to those in need. In this context, the Charity Kitchen was established as a prominent step to enhance cooperation between the livelihoods and relief sectors, aiming to promote integration and coordinate efforts to support the community and empower families to obtain a sustainable source of income through integration into the labor market.

The latest initiative resulting from this collaboration is the establishment of the Charity Kitchen in the Saida, which has the capacity to produce and distribute 350 hot meals daily to needy families in the city and displaced centers from southern Lebanon. The kitchen team comprises 6 professional chefs working on meal preparation based on healthy principles, in collaboration with 6 staff members in distribution and cleaning. During the month of February, 500 hot meals were distributed to needy families in the city.

It is worth mentioning that the Charity Kitchen will be operated to produce meals during the upcoming holy month of Ramadan as part of this year's Ramadan projects, with the aim of covering the south and other areas in Lebanon. URDA is working on establishing and operating new kitchens in other areas to expand its scope of work and meet the growing needs.

URDA continues to work with all its capabilities to enhance cooperation with international and local entities to provide support and distribute hot meals, aiming to improve living conditions for families in need.



Achievements of URDA's Education Sector: A New Milestone in the Successful Educational Journey

The education sector continues to make strides in its educational journey, with a comprehensive assessment of educational projects yielding outstanding results and showcasing the academic and scientific progress of targeted students facing various challenges in accessing formal education. URDA's accredited programs (ECE, BLN & YBLN) aim to bridge the gap between formal and informal education, enabling students to integrate into Lebanese official schools, reduce dropout rates, and increase educational opportunities for marginalized communities.



- 224 students and 72 young women between the ages of 4 and 41 benefited from the education sector's programs.

- Notable evaluation indicators include:

1. Transition to formal education: 87.1% of sector graduates transitioned to official schools, highlighting the effectiveness of academic support and bridging the gap between formal and informal education.

2. Reduction of dropout rates: Achieving a 100% rate in preventing school dropout demonstrates the comprehensive educational curriculum, including academic support and the impact of psychological and social sessions provided.

3. Teacher training enhancement: Efforts in teacher training led to an increase in student test scores from 61.3% to 90.7%, and improved attendance rates for trained teachers by 63.2%, emphasizing the value of professional development initiatives.

4. Early childhood education success: Early childhood students showed an 83.2% improvement in basic reading, writing, and numeracy skills, demonstrating the effectiveness of early educational interventions.

5. Impact of psychological and social support: Providing psychological and social support resulted in a 62.6% decrease in aggressive behavior among students, highlighting the importance of addressing emotional well-being alongside academic education.

6. Community participation and inclusivity: The initiative was positively received by communities, increasing access to education, and enhancing social and cultural fabric for targeted communities.

7. Sustainability and long-term impact: Educational projects laid the foundation for sustainable educational models through community integration, capacity building, and gradual transition to formal education systems.

8. Collaborative success: Partnerships with non-governmental organizations, government agencies, and educational institutions played a pivotal role in enhancing the credibility of URDA's education sector projects and encouraging continuous innovation.

9. Continuous adaptation and improvement: The ability of educational projects to adapt, evident through digital resource integration and curriculum design, contributed to continuous success and future growth opportunities.



✦ The projects included the distribution of 224 stationery sets, 224 Arabic language books, and 224 English language books for targeted students, while 72 young women received 72 stationery sets and 72 hygiene kits.

Thus, the education sector reaffirms that the flag of knowledge will continue to fly high, and education is a fundamental right for every child, regardless of nationality, color, or ethnicity.

A monitoring tour of the sponsorship sector targets supporting affected families in the Bekaa and Arsal

The sponsorship sector team conducted an impactful monitoring tour of 213 families in the Bekaa and Arsal regions, aiming to support the most vulnerable families and secure their basic needs. During this tour, 300 financial sponsorships were delivered to the families of sponsored children, providing assistance to them amidst the challenging economic conditions they are facing.

The tour was distinguished by gift distribution to the sponsored children, including food parcels, meat portions, candies, and toys, creating an atmosphere of joy and happiness among the children and team members alike.

These initiatives are part of the periodic efforts made by the sponsorship sector to support needy families and provide services to help them face daily challenges.



A Delegation from URDA Visits Mayor of Saida: Collaborative Effort to Support Environmental Development in the Region

In a step reflecting a firm commitment to environmental and social collaboration, Mayor Dr. Hazem Badee of Saida welcomed a delegation from URDA in an official visit on Wednesday, January 31, 2024. The delegation was led by the Vice President of URDA's Board of Directors, along with a representative from the Livelihoods sector and a representative from URDA's office in Saida. One of the key points of discussion during the meeting was the focus on a joint project between the Municipality of Saida and URDA, involving the cleaning of several areas and streets in the city, as well as the collection, sorting, and recycling of waste. This project is scheduled to continue for a month, starting from February of the current year. In conclusion of the meeting, both parties exchanged commitments to undertake other joint projects in the future, reflecting the ongoing collaboration between them to support and develop humanitarian and environmental projects in the region.



URDA participates in Brussels consultations to support the future of Syria and Lebanon

URDA participated in the preparatory consultations for the 8th Brussels Conference, held in Beirut on February 19-20, 2024, to support the future of Syria and the region. The conference was organized by the European Union with the participation of active international countries, in addition to official representation from the Lebanese government, local civil society organizations, and international donor agencies.

Discussions focused on supporting sustainable development in Lebanon and its residents to ensure a better life for community members and find solutions to societal crises. URDA emphasized the need to find a solution to the Syrian crisis so that the Syrian people can once again live in peace and stability.



URDA Participates in Global Conference in Washington: The Power & Politics of Localization

Invited by George Washington University, the Union of Relief and Development Associations (URDA) in Lebanon was represented by its Executive Director, Ms. Jihankaisi humanitarian at the international research conference in Washington last Thursday and Friday, February 23 & 24, 2024, under the theme "The Power and Politics of Localization."

During her presentation, Ms. El Kaissi delivered a distinguished research paper in coordination with Care and Global women Institute focusing on supporting efforts and funding to prevent exploitation and sexual abuse in humanitarian projects. Her speech was based on URDA's experience in implementing projects led by and benefiting women. Her research sheds light on the valuable insights gained by URDA in this sensitive field, with a particular emphasis on strategies to combat exploitation and sexual abuse in all of its specialized projects.

Such conferences provide a unique platform for URDA to interact and exchange experiences with experts, researchers, and humanitarians from around the world. It reflects URDA's commitment to excellence and innovation in serving the community, achieving sustainable development, and fostering positive change.



Smile of Kamar: A Picture Story Revealing the Power of Human Touch in Refugee Camps

In a moment that highlights the power of human touch, amidst all the projects and monthly aid provided by URDA, it is the simple moments that leave a profound impact.

Kamar, the four-year-old girl, managed to express her joy with a smile on her face and a sparkle in her eyes, as soon as she received winter gloves from one of our colleagues during a relief activity.

While the gesture may seem ordinary and happens in many field visits, Kamar lives in a camp located 1550 meters above sea level, enduring the harshest cold and snowstorms. This was the first time she wore winter gloves and a hat.

This story reminds us of the amount of tenderness and warmth that a touch of giving can provide, highlighting the importance of human interaction in alleviating the suffering of refugees and improving their quality of life. How many similar stories remain buried in the swamps of pain and deprivation, waiting for someone to hear and convey them to the world as a whole.

