



Report on Difficulties Faced by Relief Operations in South Lebanon

Recovery Phase: Month One

Prepared by the Coordination Unit
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One month after the ceasefire which allowed relief operations in South Lebanon to begin, various difficulties and obstacles to distribution and service provision have arisen. This report is based on observations of the Coordination Unit teams and interviews conducted with relief volunteers and staff of local and international NGOs.

The main difficulties are the following:

Government Support and Political Challenges:

In South Lebanon, the High Relief Committee continues to use the same hierarchy of distribution, regional governor then municipality (passing through district officials and municipal unions in some cases), that was proven ineffective during the operations in Beirut last month. This is in addition to a general atmosphere in the local media about lack of transparency and accusations of corruption against HRC officials. This report does not support the accusations, they are mentioned due to their impact on the political framework of the relief operations.

There is a **general perception of unfairness** by the local population. Relief operations are perceived to be controlled by high ranking politicians who only deliver aid to their own constituencies, leading to high levels of tension in some towns and villages.

Governmental support for relief actors is lacking and nonexistent in some cases. There are no government-provided facilities to be used by the relief communities, such as providing space and resources, or providing data and communications facilities or special rates for the relief community.

Local and international NGOs have to rely on their **own resources** not just for their own communication or logistics, but for the general communications network and logistical framework for service provision. Organizations with no proper facilities are using the Tyr Rest House as a common space (one positive aspect being that coordination among them is facilitated by their proximity).



Other resources, such as **maps** and other information on the regions affected were not provided by governmental sources. Actors on the field have to develop their own tools including maps, which is being covered by UNHIC.

UN Response:

In general, the **response of the UN** has been much slower than NGOs and INGOs, creating some gaps and duplications, in addition to lack of resources that would otherwise have prevented some obstacles in the first month of the recovery phase.

On the other hand, the UN, through OCHA/HIC is providing all available resources to the relief community, such as helping out with maps and partnerships with local networks on the field. The main **UN humanitarian agencies** on the field are WFP, UNHCR, and UNICEF.

The **distribution system** implemented by the HRC is also used by the **World Food Program** (WFP). It can easily lead to the use of aid for electoral interests, since the aid is controlled by the municipalities on the local level without systematic monitoring mechanisms on the part of the government nor international agencies.

Lack of monitoring and control of the distribution of relief on the local level, with the exception of logistical support provided by local networks, is adding to the impact of corruption of some local authorities.

Relationship with Local Community:

The antagonistic relationship of the international community with **Hezbollah** has led to a major "**blind spot**" on actual needs and situation of villages and towns. UN agencies are not mandated to coordinate with Hezbollah's social organizations, thus creating a major impediment in the distribution of relief items and other recovery actions. Hezbollah has the largest social network in the area and has conducted thorough mappings and assessments, especially on damage. Information on Hezbollah's activities comes through 3rd party local civil society organizations in the region.

Local NGOs, CBOS, and **relief networks** have, in general, better links with the **local communities**, although some tensions are prevalent due to the political nature of the relief coordinated officially by the government through the HRC.

NGO observers stress on the **local population's priority** concerning food and shelter. The majority of the population is fixing their homes and/or businesses and agricultural land. This reduces local involvement, such as volunteers, in other reconstruction



activities, with an impact on the rehabilitation of the social infrastructure, such as schools and health facilities. Lack of involvement of the concerned ministries and the "outsourcing" of rehabilitation to other governments adds to the complexities.

Private Sector Involvement:

In general, the **private sector** sees the relief community as lucrative clients, especially since UN agencies have all the money to spend on logistical requirements that are seen as a luxury by the local networks and organizations.

The prevalence of UN agencies in Tyr, for example, has led to an **increase in rental costs** and even of minor logistical resources such as stationary. This directly impacts NGOs and relief networks, especially from the local side, hindering their ability to function, especially since they usually do not have resources available for overhead, compared with UN agencies and some INGOs.

This is in addition to the **high increase in the cost of construction materials**. For example, a square meter of glass costs \$9 in Beirut and is now around \$23 in the region of Srifa. This is mainly due to the monopoly of the market by very few retailers.

Other Issues:

Mine clearing and mine awareness actions are also slow, especially the former. Considering the high concentration of unexploded ordnance (especially cluster bombs), the lives of the local population and relief workers is at high risk. The month has seen more than 50 civilian victims of UXOs and several incidences of injuries and fatalities in mine clearing teams, especially from the Lebanese Army.

Transportation and communications networks are working. The majority of the main roads and bridges have been fixed or detoured, and transportation of materials has improved. In addition, the phone networks, cellular and landlines, are back to a workable condition.

The **electricity** network is seeing rehabilitation, but slowly. This affects the provision of **water**, since electricity is needed for the pumps and distribution systems.