



# ACTED Lebanon - April 2014

Response to the Syrian Crisis



**ACTED**



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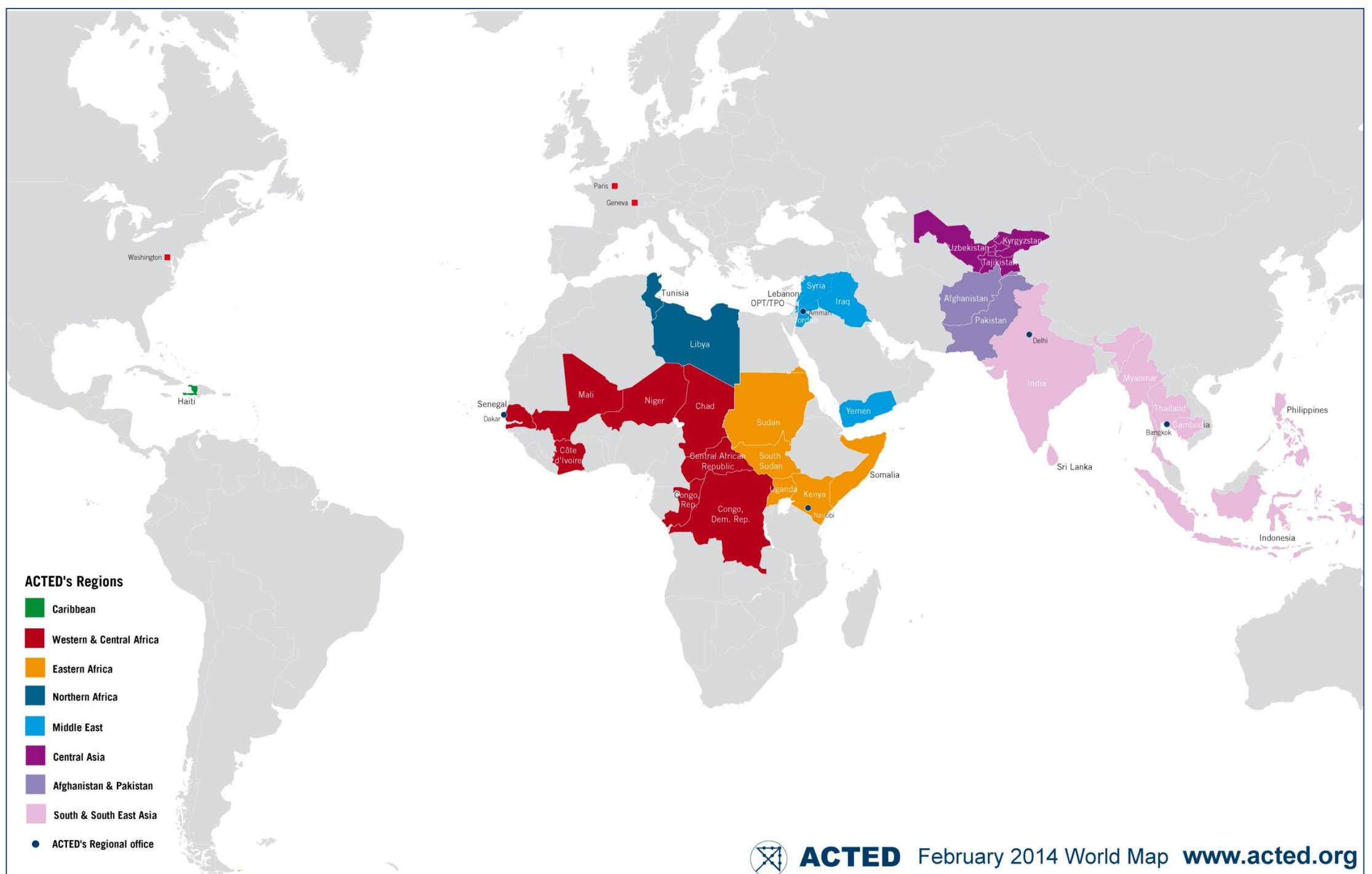
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# ACTED

ACTED is a non-governmental organization with headquarters in Paris, founded in 1993. Independent, private and not-for-profit, ACTED respects a strict political and religious impartiality and operates according to principles of non-discrimination and transparency. Our vision is to establish a link between emergency, rehabilitation and development, and our interventions seek to cover the multiple aspects of humanitarian and development crises through a multidisciplinary approach which is both global and local, and adapted to each context. ACTED's LRRD approach - Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development – is a key pillar of ACTED's global programming.

In less than twenty years, ACTED has grown to become the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest French NGO. With over 4,000 national and international staff, and an annual budget of over 120 million EUR, ACTED is now reaching over 6 million beneficiaries per year. Through implementing over 340 projects per year across 30 countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America, ACTED has built a strong operational capacity and is able to effectively and rapidly mobilize human and financial resources to implement complex programmes to high standards.



ACTED strives to share experiences and expertise with other actors working in the aid sector with whom we share common values. ACTED is a member of Alliance2015, a partnership of eight like-minded non-governmental organizations engaged in humanitarian and development activities. ACTED is also a member of the Voice, the European network representing 83 European, non-governmental organizations active in humanitarian aid worldwide, as well as Coordination Sud, the French network for relief agencies. ACTED is involved in civil society efforts to participate in the humanitarian reforms process, and as such is an active member of ICVA (International Council of Voluntary Agencies) in Geneva. Finally, as a HAP (Humanitarian Accountability Partnership) member, ACTED is committed to achieving the highest standards of accountability towards beneficiaries and target communities.



# ACTED in the MENA Region

ACTED has been working in the MENA region since 2003, in response to the humanitarian crisis in Iraq and recurring emergencies in the occupied Palestinian Territories (PT). Since that time, ACTED has also responded to emergencies in Lebanon, Libya, and in Yemen. ACTED's MENA presence expanded significantly in response to the opportunities for political reform brought by the Arab Spring in 2011, and following the onset of the Syrian crisis in 2012.

As of March 2014, **ACTED is assisting over 200,000 conflict-affected persons** in Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon, providing emergency relief to Internally Displaced People (IDP), refugee and host communities. Assistance is provided across a variety of sectors including water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), shelter, camp management, cash assistance, food, protection, education and non-food items. ACTED has approximately 600 staff currently meeting the emergency needs of vulnerable populations affected by the Syrian crisis.

Through the REACH initiative, implemented in partnership with IMPACT Initiatives and UNOSAT, ACTED is also **contributing to response planning and coordination** across the region through a variety of assessment, information management and mapping initiatives.



In addition to meeting humanitarian needs throughout countries affected by the Syrian crisis, ACTED is **working to strengthen civil society**, which builds upon on the larger MENA-region civil society program, supporting youth society organisations in five countries, through technical capacity-building, networking opportunities, and improved dialogue between civil society and local government. Benefitting from institutional expertise built through this type of intervention, ACTED intends to build synergies between its humanitarian and development programs, extending their geographic and demographic outreach and impact.

Throughout the Syrian crisis, ACTED is also **contributing to inter-agency coordination**, both at the sector and inter-sector level. At regional level, ACTED is a board member of the Syria INGO Regional Forum (SIRF) and is an NGO representative on the RRP and CRS committees. In Jordan, ACTED is notably chairing the Northern Jordan Area Coordination forum, focusing on programming in host communities, as well as representing INGOs in the Host Community Task Force. In Iraq, ACTED is co-chairing the NFI working group and is the lead of the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA). Lebanon, ACTED is a core group member for the Cash, WASH and Social Cohesion Working Groups, as well as NGO co-lead for the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) process.

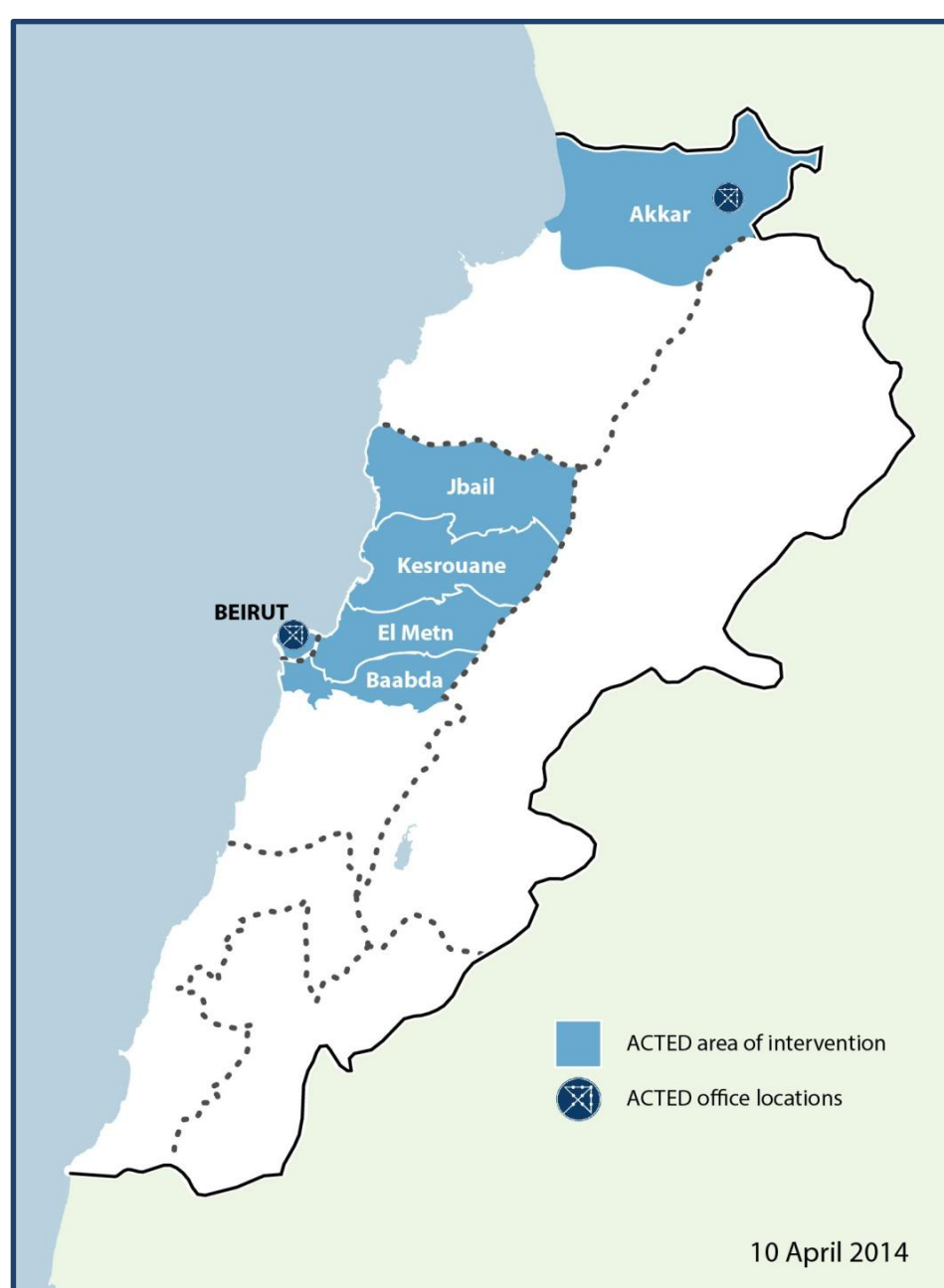




# ACTED in Lebanon

**ACTED has been present and registered in Lebanon since 2006**, where initial interventions focused on mitigating the impact of the recent crisis in South Lebanon (Nabatiyeh), as well as supporting Palestinian refugees displaced out of Nahr el Barad.

In response to the influx of refugees from neighbouring Syria, after initial support to the VASyR (Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees) through the REACH initiative, ACTED initiated WASH, Shelter and Cash/NFI interventions to **support crisis-affected populations in Mount Lebanon** (Baabda, Metn, Keserwane and Jbeil districts) and Beirut in September 2013. This area was targeted due to clear gaps in coverage by other humanitarian actors, which was especially concerning as Mount Lebanon has the fastest growing refugee population in Lebanon, and is about to become the second largest refugee-hosting region in the country after Bekaa. ACTED's household-level emergency support interventions are designed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, and so target both registered and unregistered Syrian refugees, as well as vulnerable Lebanese families and various minority groups, including Palestinians.



ACTED is also present in Akkar, Lebanon's northernmost and poorest district. In addition to being the poorest district in Lebanon prior to the crisis, Akkar has also experienced a 44% rise in population since Syrian refugees began entering into Lebanon in 2012. In response to the increased pressure on community infrastructure and basic services caused by the refugee influx, **ACTED's interventions in Akkar have focused primarily on supporting local communities and improving social cohesion** in hosting areas. Working with local authorities as well as civil society actors, ACTED has implemented a number of projects aimed at enhancing community resilience to the increasing and protracted refugee influx, through improved infrastructure and service provision.

Overall, since the launch of its emergency response operations in September 2013, with support from UNHCR, the Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department of the European Commission (ECHO) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), ACTED Lebanon has established a team of over 85 national and international staff members, and provided emergency support to over 60,000 vulnerable, conflict affected refugee and host community members.



# ACTED's Host Community Support Strategy

To be relevant in the Lebanese context, humanitarian responses must consider both the country's pre-crisis situation, and the impact of the protracted nature of the Syrian crisis on local populations. ACTED's host community support strategy therefore aims to ensure both the provision of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable Lebanese and refugee households, and the improvement of host communities' coping capacity and resilience to the heavy burdens arising from the refugee influx.

Given challenges faced by host communities in Lebanon, and the complex nature of the ongoing crisis, the following principles form the cornerstone of ACTED's interventions:

- **Linking relief, rehabilitation and development** will allow for supporting Lebanese and refugees while also providing a long term approach to humanitarian assistance. As Lebanon is already facing significant waste management and urban planning challenges, this linkage will notably result in a focus on the environmental impact of humanitarian interventions.
- **Needs-based approaches for targeting**, both at the geographic and household level, will ensure cost efficient and effective coverage of the most vulnerable, irrespective of their formal status. This will be achieved by identifying and focusing on those most vulnerable, those most affected by the burden of supporting displaced Syrians and the sectors where trends are worsening. Specific interventions will cater to the needs of groups identified as particularly vulnerable or at risk, including notably women and youth.
- Host community interventions require a **composite, multi-stakeholder response involving government, local authorities, humanitarians, research institutions, civil society actors and community leaders**. Of particular importance is the engagement of both local municipalities, who are in the first line for the delivery of services to crisis-affected populations, and of Lebanese civil society organizations that, already incorporated within local networks and communities, have an in-depth understanding of local dynamics.

Considering the impact of the crisis across Lebanese society, ACTED's holistic approach comprises **three specific levels of assistance provision**, which are concurrent and complementary.

- Targeted **household level assistance** ensures that vulnerable households' basic needs are met and that they live in conditions meeting minimum living standards.
- **Community level support** increases the capacity and willingness of host communities and civil society actors to cope with the challenges caused by the refugee influx.
- **Local authority level support** enables municipalities and local governments to maintain or improve basic service provision despite the population increase resulting from the influx, and so minimizes pressure placed on local resources and capacities.





# Integrated Household-level Assistance

In the absence of formal camp structures in Lebanon, most refugees are scattered into the host communities, particularly in urban areas of the Mount Lebanon and Beirut. In these areas, accommodation is often costly, especially for vulnerable refugee households whose limited resources are quickly diminishing as the crisis and their displacement lengthen, and who are unable to access income-generating opportunities. As a result, many families are forced to seek shelter in sub-standard accommodation without adequate facilities, or to share overcrowded spaces with multiple other families, both of which result in health and sanitation risks. As pressure on the housing market increases, growing numbers of refugee families are being forced to reduce their living standards, and move into collective shelters, unfinished buildings, or parking lots, where they lack adequate protection from either outsiders or the elements. Growing levels of inflation and job competition are also affecting host communities, many of whom already suffered from socioeconomic vulnerability before the crisis. These families often share refugee households' challenges in terms of sub-standard housing conditions and lack of financial resources, which in turn limits their access to essential items (hygiene products, heating fuel, etc.).



ACTED responds to the challenges facing vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian households through a **multi-sectoral assistance package** adjusted based on their specific needs, and in line with RRP6 objectives, priorities and activities. Vulnerable households most in need of assistance are identified through a three-pronged approach:

- First, ACTED identifies the most vulnerable municipalities based on refugee numbers (as per UNHCR ProGRES database), socio-economic conditions, and coverage by humanitarian actors. In target areas, ACTED approaches local authorities to ensure their buy-in and cooperation, and establishes a network of key informants from the local community (health centres, civil society actors, etc).
- In target areas, ACTED then conducts a household-level baseline assessment of registered Syrian refugees with high vulnerability scores (as per UNHCR's database). Similarly, vulnerable households from other target groups (unregistered refugees or host communities) are identified through consultations with local key informants or referrals from other humanitarian actors, and assessed with a similar baseline. To date, ACTED has identified and assessed over 2,800 vulnerable households throughout target areas of Beirut and Mount Lebanon.
- Finally, baseline assessment findings are analysed and households are ranked according to their vulnerability, based on the vulnerability and targeting criteria adopted through VASyR and other inter-agency efforts.

**Households with high levels of vulnerability are prioritised for interventions.** Based on the needs initially identified, ACTED teams conduct further technical assessments where necessary.



# Integrated Household-level Assistance

## Basic WASH and Shelter Rehabilitations

ACTED's household level assessments have shown that approximately 70% of vulnerable households in Mount Lebanon and Beirut are living in sub-standard conditions due to inadequate weatherproofing or WASH infrastructure (latrines, piping, sinks, etc.). To ensure that target vulnerable families' accommodation meets acceptable living standards, ACTED employs a **tailored approach to shelter rehabilitation based on the specific needs of each household**. This includes comprehensive rehabilitations overseen by ACTED's team of engineers, focused on repairs such as doors, ceilings and windows, and the installation of WASH infrastructure. In collective shelters, local residents are mobilized and involved in the rehabilitation, to promote good management of improved facilities beyond ACTED's intervention. Where shelters are not fully weatherproof or secure, but do not require substantial rehabilitation, ACTED provides standard weatherproofing (or 'sealing-off') kits that allow for self-repair by target beneficiaries.



## Cash and NFI support

The protracted stay of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is resulting in an increasing depletion of their financial resources. Continuing inflation combined with reduced income-generating opportunities is pushing increasing numbers of Lebanese families into poverty. To ensure that vulnerable families are able to meet their basic needs in terms of rent payment and essential domestic items, **ACTED provides household-level cash assistance**. Through a variety of cash transfer and voucher modalities (conditional, unconditional, or NFI vouchers), this support aims at preventing cases of eviction and increasing families' access to essential items such as hygiene products and fuel for winter.

## Mainstreaming Hygiene Practices and Water Quality

Vulnerable households living in sub-standard or overcrowded conditions, and with limited income to maintain good hygiene practices, face increased health and sanitation risks. In response to these threats, **improving water quality and the spread of effective hygiene practices** is central to all actions undertaken by ACTED at the household level. Every household targeted through the aforementioned activities participates in hygiene promotion sessions aimed at raising awareness of personal and environmental hygiene, food and water storage and management, and waste management. Hygiene promotion sessions are also conducted in the wider community, targeting children in schools, as well as through community clean-up campaigns. In addition, a range of chemical and bacteriological water quality tests are conducted across ACTED's area of interventions to ensure that water consumed by target households is of an acceptable standard. If not, water filtration units are provided to ensure the safety of drinking water.

## Winterization

As many refugees left Syria with limited, if any, personal belongings, many did not have appropriate materials or financial resources to protect themselves during the winter months. To address this need, ACTED provided cash assistance to over 6,500 vulnerable refugees for the purchase of items such as gas stoves and thermal blankets, as well as fuel for the duration of the winter.



# Community-Level Interventions and Support to Local Authorities

With the crisis in Syria set to continue for the foreseeable future, and in the absence of a strategy endorsed by all local stakeholders enabling the opening of camps, large numbers of Syrian refugees are likely to continue residing among Lebanese host communities. This increased population size is placing acute pressure on basic infrastructure and service delivery throughout the country, and therefore affecting social cohesion in an already divided context. It is therefore essential that measures are taken to enable host communities and local authorities to continue accommodating increasing numbers of displaced families. In response, ACTED has launched a number of initiatives and interventions designed to **mitigate the impact of the refugee presence on host communities, promote social cohesion, and contribute to bridging the gap between humanitarian assistance programs and development interventions.**



The influx of Syrian refugees has meant there has also been an increasing pressure on Lebanon's education facilities. With approximately 80% of Syrian children not currently enrolled in school, it is essential that schools are able to receive more students. Many schools have long-standing rehabilitation needs, and key barriers preventing schools from enrolling more students are a lack of classroom space, adequate WASH facilities, and safe outdoor play areas. ACTED has implemented **several school rehabilitation projects** in the Akkar region, which include the repair of school roofs and structural cracks, the provision of heaters and the expansion of classroom space to accommodate for more students.

Since September 2013, **ACTED implemented or launched the implementation of 20 Community Support Projects** totalling over USD 5M and targeting over 1.2 million refugee and local beneficiaries in Mount Lebanon and Akkar. Developed in line with the Government of Lebanon's strategies and the priorities identified through consultations with local communities and authorities, these projects have placed an emphasis on improving solid waste and wastewater management, as well as access to drinking water and income-generating opportunities. Through these interventions, ACTED has developed a **robust approach to identifying vulnerable communities most severely affected** by the large-scale population influx. Community Support Projects implemented or recently launched include the provision of waste collection trucks and municipal bins, the provision of training and equipment to support fire-fighting, the installation of water pumps and generators, rehabilitation and expansion of water supply networks and infrastructure, and the installation of food processing infrastructure to improve livelihood opportunities. ACTED has recently launched 3 new projects for 2014, focusing on the provision of drinking water and access to income generation.





# REACH

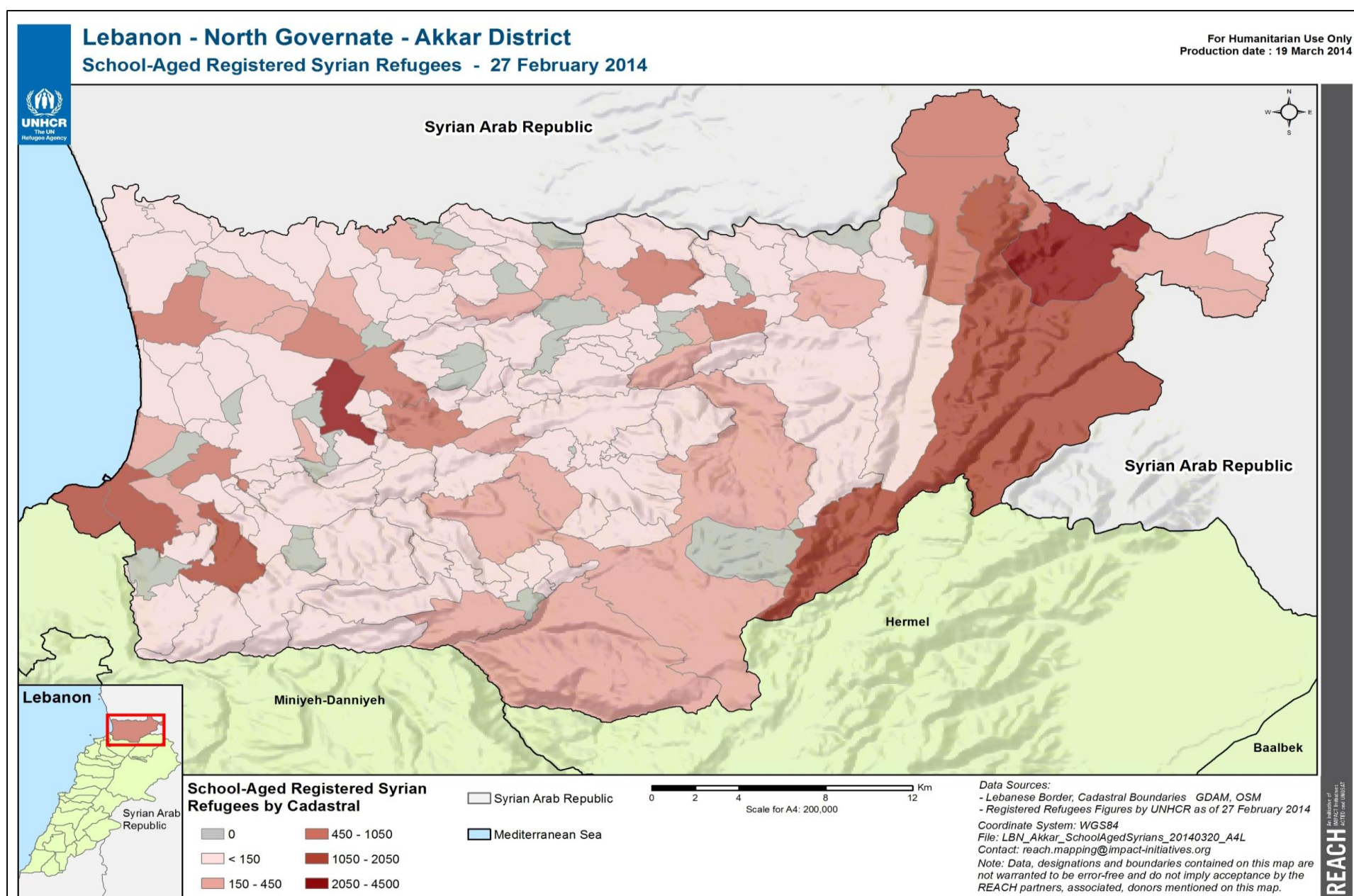
## Information Management Services to Support more Effective Humanitarian Action

Recognizing the need for improved coordination and management of information about the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, REACH established in 2014, with UNHCR, an Information Management unit in Qobayat, Akkar District. The Information Unit (IM) provides a central hub where all data useful for aid actors can be collated, processed, analyzed, visualized and disseminated. This hub is designed to be a common resource for all operational actors engaged in the different sector of the humanitarian response to the needs of Syrian refugees in Akkar. Recent hub activities included baseline surveys of all public schools, informal tented settlements, and villages in Akkar. The IM hub comprises a dedicated Geographic Information System (GIS) capacity and maps are among the information products developed and shared by the hub.

To facilitate evidence-based planning by aid actors and in turn timely delivery of appropriate humanitarian assistance, REACH and ACTED supported the development of a nation-wide Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA), launched in February 2014. This inter-agency initiative will identify the priority needs of target populations across sectors of humanitarian assistance and geographic areas, including the needs of populations targeted by the 2014 Syrian Regional Response Plan, including Syrian refugees, Lebanese host communities and returnees, and Palestinian returnees.

Additionally, REACH partnered with OCHA to implement a nationwide socio-economic vulnerability assessment. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, the assessment seeks to identify and provide aid actors with information on community-level needs and vulnerabilities caused or exacerbated by the impact of the Syrian crisis, and which have the potential to further create tensions and dispute. For this purpose, the assessment will cover a range of community-level indicators related to demographic and socio-economic factors, available resources, and municipal infrastructure. The initial phase of the project focuses on 90 vulnerable communities to be selected in cadasters most affected by the Syrian crisis.

REACH is a joint initiative of two international non-governmental organizations - ACTED and IMPACT Initiatives - and the UN Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT). REACH was created in 2010 to facilitate the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. All REACH activities are conducted in support to and within the framework of inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. For more information visit: [www.reach-initiative.org](http://www.reach-initiative.org). You can also write to us directly at: [lebanon@reach-initiative.org](mailto:lebanon@reach-initiative.org) and follow us @REACH\_info





## Future Prospects

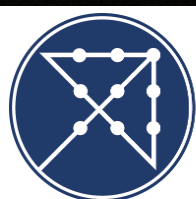
As the situation in Syria is expected to remain unstable for the foreseeable future, Lebanon can expect to receive a continued influx of refugees in 2014. ACTED will **continue to provide integrated household-level assistance** in target areas to ensure vulnerable refugee and host community members are able to meet their basic needs as their displacement extends. In response to refugees' shrinking financial resources and reducing coping capacity caused by their protracted stay in Lebanon, and **the lack of job opportunities, livelihood and income-generating activities will be a priority focus** for ACTED in the coming months.

**Long-term, sustainable projects supporting local communities** will be implemented in partnership with local authorities and civil society actors to ensure that communities are able to continue coping with the ongoing refugee influx. Such projects will be built **using conflict-sensitive approaches**, with the aim of reducing potential threats to social cohesion associated with the large-scale presence of refugees in vulnerable host communities.

In addition to contributing towards more effective refugee targeting through the second phase of the multi-sector needs assessment, REACH will **continue to provide support to wider humanitarian planning** through the provision of maps, assessments, and information management services. The Akkar Information Management unit will serve as a pilot for assessment and IM initiatives that could be replicated on a larger-scale. Finally, based on needs identified and requests from sector working groups, detailed country-wide sector-specific assessments are expected to be a focus of REACH in the coming months.







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