

Situation Overview

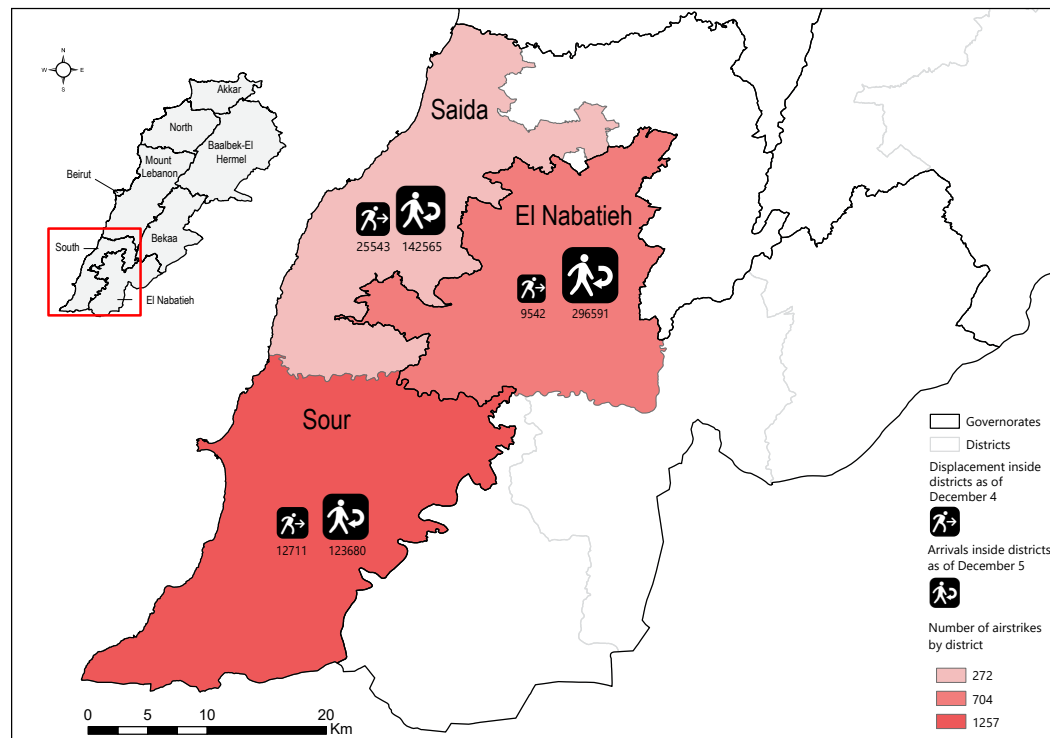
Nabatieh, Saida and Sour districts

09/12/2024 | Lebanon

Key Messages

- Nearly all key informants (KIs) reported a mixed pattern of return. While some households had returned permanently, others remained displaced due to ongoing safety concerns and infrastructure damage. In Nabatieh, households with young children or elderly members were particularly likely to delay their return.
- Returning households faced significant challenges, including severe water shortages, unreliable electricity, and widespread infrastructure damage. Access to healthcare, shelter, and essential services was further hindered, with people with disabilities experiencing heightened vulnerability due to the damage to facilities designed to meet their specific needs.
- The most urgent needs identified across districts included food, education, mental health support, and the rehabilitation of water and sanitation systems. In Nabatieh, the rebuilding of homes and shops was seen as critical, while KIs in Tyre emphasized the urgent need to improve water access and repair damaged facilities.
- Key humanitarian priorities identified included shelter rehabilitation, livelihood recovery, and targeted support for vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and persons with disabilities. These efforts aim to improve access to education, sustainable livelihoods, and essential infrastructure. KIs underscored the importance of strong coordination among community leaders, municipalities, and international actors to effectively address these needs.

Map 1: Assessment Coverage



Assessment Overview

The recent conflict in Lebanon has triggered a significant humanitarian crisis, displacing over 899,725 individuals from their homes as of late November 2024. Following the November 27 ceasefire, an estimated 578,641 of the displaced population have begun returning to their places of origin ([IOM, Displacement Tracker Round 66](#), 5/12/2024).

To better understand the situation on the ground, REACH conducted a rapid community-based key informant (KI) assessment in three heavily affected districts: Saida, Tyre, and Nabatieh. These districts were chosen due to their high levels of conflict exposure and the significant displacement and return of populations (IOM, as above; ACLED, [conflict exposure data](#)). For this assessment, 2-3 KIs per district were selected from local NGOs with in-depth community knowledge and extensive experience in addressing humanitarian needs.

In addition to KI interviews, three families - one from each district - were consulted to gather personal stories and insights, offering a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of returning IDPs. All interviews were conducted between 8 and 9 of December. The findings are indicative and should be interpreted as approximate.

Nabatieh district

All three KIs consistently reported that the return process was slow and cautious, with most families returning temporarily to assess the conditions of their homes and access services. They highlighted **safety concerns, extensive destruction, and the lack of essential services** as significant barriers to permanent returns, particularly in heavily affected areas like Yahmur and Aaitroun.

The living conditions of returning IDPs varied significantly, with those who lost their homes being in the most vulnerable position. KIs noted that **many of these individuals were living in schools, shelters, or with extended family, often in conditions lacking adequate heating and infrastructure for winter.** Two KIs emphasized that those who stayed during the conflict faced heightened challenges such as shortages and rising prices of food, unreliable electricity, and water shortages. In addition, they experienced prolonged disruptions, while displaced individuals often had better access to basic necessities in their places of refuge.

KIs identified key humanitarian priorities, including **food aid, rebuilding essential infrastructure, and restoring livelihoods**, with cash assistance being the preferred modality. They also stressed the importance of improved coordination between local actors, humanitarian organizations, and international efforts to address overlapping needs effectively.

“Safety concerns and the lack of essential services remain the biggest barriers to permanent returns, especially in heavily damaged areas.”

– NGO worker, Nabatieh district

“Many families rely on temporary shelters or shared housing, but the absence of heating and basic infrastructure makes daily life extremely challenging.”

– NGO worker, Nabatieh district

Sour district

KIs in Sour reported a mix of temporary and permanent returns, with many families reluctant to return permanently due to damaged infrastructure, limited services, and ongoing safety concerns. Two out of three KIs highlighted the fragile ceasefire, economic hardships, and extensive shelter damage as the main barriers to return. Additionally, two KIs noted that access to housing and basic services were the primary motivators for those choosing to return.

Returning families were often reported to reside in partially damaged homes or temporary shelters, conditions that pose significant protection risks. Vulnerable groups, including women, children, and persons with disabilities, faced greater difficulties in accessing food, water, healthcare, and livelihoods due to conflict-related disruptions and exacerbated barriers. All KIs agreed that the return of displaced populations has put additional strain on already damaged infrastructure and services.

KIs in Sour emphasized the need for humanitarian actors to **prioritize emergency service delivery, infrastructure reconstruction, and strengthened community engagement** to effectively address the challenges in the area.

“Vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and persons with disabilities, face heightened challenges due to specific needs like education, care-giving, and the ability to reach essential services.”

– NGO worker, Tyre district

“Families are returning more often than individuals, with female-headed households and the elderly often remaining in displacement locations for safety and support.”

– NGO worker, Tyre district

Saida district

In Saida, KIs reported that families primarily chose to return to be in their own homes and recover their sources of income. However, infrastructure damage and limited access to essential services have hindered permanent returns. Many families opted for temporary returns to meet livelihood obligations, driven by economic pressures, while ongoing challenges continue to prevent long-term resettlement.

All Saida KIs reported that many returnees were **living in damaged homes, with relatives, or in overcrowded collective shelters while awaiting rebuilding support from municipalities and NGOs.** Vulnerable groups, including women, children, and persons with disabilities, faced heightened challenges in accessing basic services, with gender-based violence (GBV) being a significant concern.

Regarding humanitarian priorities in Saida, KIs identified immediate needs such as **food security, GBV support, temporary shelter, and cash assistance**, while emphasizing long-term needs, including **infrastructure rehabilitation and livelihood restoration.**

“Residents faced ongoing conflict-related dangers and struggle with disrupted services.”

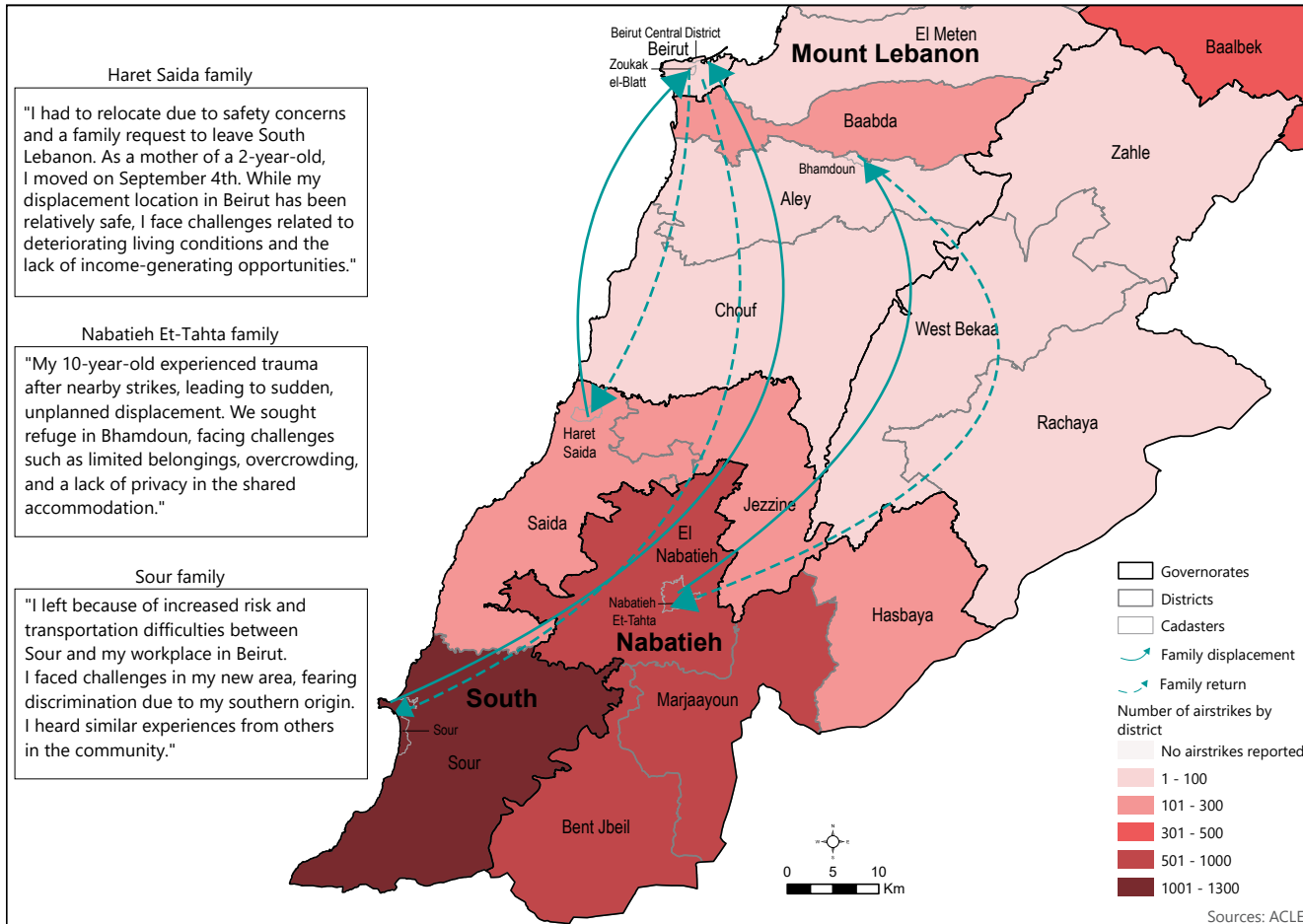
– NGO worker, Saida district

“Returnees face significant challenges accessing water, electricity, healthcare, and food. Women, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable groups require specialized support.”

– NGO worker, Saida district

Stories from families who returned

Map 2: Displacement routes



A family from Saida, was forced to flee on September 4 due to heightened safety concerns. They described their **displacement experience as unjust, humiliating, and deeply distressing**, stating they would have preferred to sleep on the road rather than be displaced again. The family chose not to disclose specific challenges they faced during their displacement.

Upon returning to their original home in Saida on November 27, the family encountered a myriad of challenges. These included **irregular electricity, food scarcity due to limited income and damaged infrastructure, and an inability to access healthcare facilities or obtain essential medications**. To cope, the family resorted to procuring supplies from Beirut, but this imposed a significant financial burden due to higher prices and transportation costs.

A family from Sour, was forced to flee their home on September 2 due to the escalating conflict. Seeking safety, they relocated to Beirut and rented an apartment, where they encountered challenges such as **the fear of revealing their southern origin and facing discrimination because of it**. After the conflict subsided, the family returned to their damaged home in Sour on November 30. They now face numerous obstacles, including **damaged infrastructure, limited access to basic services**, and the daunting task of rebuilding their lives. Despite these challenges, the family remains hopeful for the future and plans to stay in Sour.

A family from Nabatieh, was forced to flee their home on September 24 due to their son's trauma caused by the escalating conflict. During their two-month displacement in Bhamdoun, where they rented an apartment with their extended family, they faced issues such as **overcrowding and lack of privacy**. Upon returning home on November 28, they encountered additional difficulties, including **property damage, limited access to basic services such as healthcare, water, and electricity, and ongoing security concerns**. Despite these challenges, the family is determined to remain in Nabatieh and is seeking assistance to rebuild their home.