Snow, Rain and Storm hit the Middle East

Adverse weather including snow, rain storms and strong winds swept across the Middle East in mid-December causing deaths, mainly due to traffic accidents, extensive material damage and disruption to ports and airports. According to media reports, 11 people were killed in Egypt in traffic accidents associated with the bad weather, while seven died as a factory building in Alexandria collapsed. The port in Alexandria was closed and flights were turned away from Egypt’s main international airport in Cairo.

In Lebanon, two people reportedly died following winds of up to 100 kilometres per hour and security forces and civil defence teams remained on high alert to attend to any emergency. The Jal al-Baher refugee camp for Palestinians along the southern city of Tyre suffered as 61 homes were damaged and deemed unfit for housing. UNRWA and NGOs provided food and non-food items to approximately 250 families in Jal al-Bahr using locally available resources.

Homes of Palestinian refugees living in camps in Gaza also suffered serious damage from the stormy weather which hit the region over two days. Local civil defence crews dealt with more than 60 emergency cases, media reported.

Syria’s capital Damascus was hit by a snowstorm which disrupted traffic; however the rain in the north-east brought some relief from a drought which has gripped the country for the past four years.

Snowfall in Jordan led to 412 road accidents which left 52 injured, according to media reports, and the Civil Defence Department (CDD) in the Ajloun Governorate evacuated 40 people who were snowbound. Meanwhile, the National Electric Power Company said limited power cuts occurred in Irbid and Karak after strong winds snapped electrical poles and cables.

In Israel, heavy rains and wind gusts of up to 120 kilometres per hour sunk a ship off the Ashdod coast, delayed flights, closed seaports, flooded streets and caused power outages throughout the country. Thirty people were reportedly treated for weather-related injuries.

24 Countries helped Israel put out deadly Wildfire

The wildfire that erupted 2 December and raged for 82 hours in the Carmel Forest in northern Israel claimed 42 lives, forced the evacuation of 17,000 people, and caused direct damages to infrastructure, homes and other property for an estimated US$250 million.

The Government of Israel requested international support to fight the fire and 24 countries and territories contributed to the response, including the Palestinian Authority, Egypt and Jordan. The support given was mainly in the form of fire fighting planes and equipment and some 250 foreign fire-fighters.

Those evacuees whose houses had been spared were allowed to return home shortly after the authorities declared the fire emergency over. The Government has decided on a series of steps to compensate affected people.
Morocco Red Crescent responds to Flash Floods

In Morocco, flash floods triggered by heavy rains at the end of November last year killed at least 30 persons and affected some 15,000 families to various degrees. Four thousand families across 11 governorates were identified as in need of direct humanitarian assistance.

IFRC released $200,266 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to support the Moroccan Red Crescent Society in delivering assistance to some 4,000 beneficiaries. The relief project will be implemented over the next six months.

In response to the emergency, Qatar Red Crescent provided assistance to some 5,000 families in Mohammadiya and Grand Casablanca in partnership with Moroccan Red Crescent. The UAE Red Crescent Authority has also been supporting a humanitarian programme to deliver basic food and shelter supplies to population affected by floods, also in partnership with the Moroccan Red Crescent.

WFP extends Emergency Response to Drought-affected Syria

Four consecutive droughts in Syria since 2006 have caused significant losses for 1.3 million people in the northeast of the country, particularly in Al-Hasakeh, Deir Ezzour and Al-Raqqa. Small-scale farmers have been the worst affected while herders have lost between 80 and 85 percent of their livestock since 2005, according to UN figures.

Thanks to a new donation of 40,000 metric tons of rice, valued at $26 million, from the Sultanate of Oman, the World Food Programme (WFP) emergency operation (EMOP) which was launched in December 2009 has been extended until May 2011. This will allow for continued assistance to the drought-affected population and to bridge the gap until the new Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) is launched after the EMOP’s expiry in May. Part of the Oman contribution has also been allocated to the Food for Education development project, which has been modified and extended in time until June 2011.

Meanwhile, a WFP-led Emergency Food Security and Nutrition Assessment (EFSNA) has been conducted at household level to track the changes in vulnerability, nutritional status and coping mechanisms of the affected population. The EFSNA preliminary findings have revealed that 25 percent of the rural population in the five surveyed governorates (Al-Hasakeh, Al-Raqqa, Deir Ezzour, Idleb and Hama) are food insecure with another 50 percent vulnerable to food insecurity.

Current lack of funds has forced WFP to cut the number of targeted beneficiaries and to reduce the number of distribution cycles. However, the alarming results of EFSNA highlight the continuous deterioration in the food security situation for both farmers and herders. The emergency operation remains under-funded and is short of $26 million, or 60 percent of the required amount.

Iran Earthquake kills 6

An earthquake with the magnitude of 6.5 shook Kerman province in Iran on 20 December, claiming the lives of six persons and injuring hundreds. Roads were damaged and landslides blocked access to some areas. The affected cities and villages are located in economically deprived areas of the country. No official assistance was requested from the UN.

Afghanistan: Bleak Outlook for Food Security in 2011

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) plans to assist 7.3 million people in Afghanistan in 2011 but only has funding to feed the most vulnerable for a few months, and needs $400 million to continue its humanitarian activities next year, writes humanitarian news agency IRIN.

WFP appealed to donors for urgent funding through the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) launched on 5 December with the aim of making up a food shortfall of 103,600 tons (costing about $157 million) until June.

The UN Secretary-General warned in a December report that the funding shortfall could affect all WFP projects, including school feeding and food-for-work. But thus far no WFP project has been suspended and the organization said it was utilizing resources so as to avoid cutting food assistance to the most vulnerable.

Recent funding from the USA and Canada eased wheat shortages faced by WFP following the catastrophic floods in Pakistan in July. But the US-funded Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS-NET) has predicted that over half of the country would be highly or moderately food-insecure in January-February. It said wheat prices had increased by over 31 percent since July 2010 and further increases were likely in the coming months.

Afghanistan remains among the most food-insecure countries in the world where armed conflict and natural disasters have denied access to adequate food to over eight million people, aid agencies say.
15 people died and 780 homes were destroyed as floods hit Egypt. Material losses were estimated at $25.3 million. Strong winds and heavy rains also swept through the Gaza Strip, Israel and Jordan, destroying homes, knocking out power lines and cutting off roads.

5.3 on the Richter scale was the magnitude of the earthquake that struck Vanj district in Tajikistan on 2 January and left 264 families in urgent need of shelter.

April

1,040 kcal per person per day in IDP food rations instead of the 2,100 kcal required for an active and healthy life; this was the result of lack of funding to WFP in Yemen. WFP took the difficult decision to half food rations to avoid a stop of assistance after June.

17,853 deaths from pandemic influenza H1N1 were reported globally in mid-April. Of these fatalities, 1,019 have occurred in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia.

February

$509 million was allocated by the European Commission to help people in humanitarian need across the world. Countries in the Middle East were allocated $75 million and Afghanistan $43 million.

5 per cent of the funding requested by the Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan had been received. UNHCR - faced with an acute funding shortfall - took out an internal loan of $4.7 million to continue its programmes for 250,000 internally displaced people (funding picked up by the third quarter of 2010 to reach 50 per cent).

May

$5.3 million was requested by the Government of Tajikistan in collaboration with the humanitarian community to provide relief and recovery assistance to thousands of people affected by flash floods. Forty people were killed.

60 villages were affected by floods in Iran which killed two and caused at least $5 million worth of damages.

March

35 people died and 5,120 were displaced by multiple floods in southern Kazakhstan. The flooding was caused by heavy rains and snow melt.

200,000 beneficiaries began receiving emergency food assistance from WFP in the drought-affected areas of Syria. Since 2006, the north-eastern area of the country has been hit by three consecutive droughts.

6 staff members of the NGO World Vision International were murdered in Mansehra District in Pakistan on 10 March. The atrocity was promptly condemned by the UN.

June

400,000 people were displaced by inter-ethnic violence and civil unrest in Kyrgyzstan. The unrest was concentrated in and around the cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad where houses were burned to the ground. The affected population included tens of thousands who fled temporarily across the border to Uzbekistan.

24.4 per cent of Palestinian refugees in the West Bank are food insecure and cannot meet their basic food needs, says the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>14 million people in Pakistan were estimated to be affected by immense floods which submerged large parts of the country. The UN and its humanitarian partners on 11 August requested $460 million to meet their most urgent needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>$2 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) supported the emergency polio immunization of a combined six million children in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The first round of the Kyrgyz campaign reached more than 630,000 children under the age of 5, representing a 98 per cent coverage. $197 million were reportedly pledged or committed to the response in flood-ravaged Pakistan from governments, private charities and individuals in the Gulf countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>21 million was the updated estimation of the number of people affected by the ongoing floods in Pakistan. The UN and its partners had delivered one-month food rations to almost three million people and high-energy biscuits to 750,000 children. Medical attention had been paid to 3.9 million.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>$7.4 billion is requested in the global Humanitarian Appeal 2011. The Appeal is launched on 30 November in Doha - hosted by the Government of Qatar - and simultaneously in Geneva and Brussels. Outside the Appeal, UN agencies and their partners in Kyrgyzstan appealed for $42 million to continue humanitarian assistance to 800,000 people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>15,000 people - mostly children - were displaced by clashes in and around Al-Hauta village in southern Yemen. UNICEF said that children had been injured in the fighting and continued to be at risk from unexploded ordnances and landmines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>100 days after the flooding began in Pakistan, millions remained in urgent need of support after losing what little they owned, either under flood waters or from having to sell animals and personal items to help their families through the disaster. 17 per cent of children under 5 years of age suffer from severe acute malnutrition (SAM) in western Sa’ada governorate in Yemen, a UNICEF-supported survey said. SAM puts a child at risk of dying from a simple infection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>$197 million were reportedly pledged or committed to the response in flood-ravaged Pakistan from governments, private charities and individuals in the Gulf countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>82 hours of raging wildfire in the Carmel Forest in northern Israel claimed 42 lives and forced the evacuation of 17,000 people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>15,000 people – mostly children – were displaced by clashes in and around Al-Hauta village in southern Yemen. UNICEF said that children had been injured in the fighting and continued to be at risk from unexploded ordnances and landmines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information, please contact:
Jens Laerke, OCHA, 0020195 558 662, laerke@un.org