

LEBANON

Amman, 16 March 2021

SITUATION

Going into its third year of severe economic recession, Lebanon faces its worst and hardest depression ever since the end of the Lebanese Civil War that went on for 15 years. Between the Syrian refugee influx crisis, street protests, COVID-19 pandemic, dangerous depletion of resources, Beirut port explosion on August 4th, 2020, protracted absence of a functional cabinet and overlapping economic, financial and social crises, Lebanon grapples to survive on the edge of collapse.

Lebanon has the world's highest number of refugees per capita. The country hosts around 500.000 Palestinian refugees, 500.000 migrant workers from different nationalities and 1.5 million Syrian refugees of whom about 78 percent lack legal status (UNHCR) and 89 per cent live below the extreme poverty line.¹

Lebanon's financial crisis, foreign currency shortages and the devaluation of the Lebanese Pound have prompted commercial banks to impose strict caps on withdrawing dollars and a block on most transfers abroad². Residents' bank savings have also been blocked and withdrawal allowances barely meet people's needs.

Despite a decades-long rate of 1,507.5 LBP to the dollar, the black-market value of the USD is now around 12,000-13,000 LBP, which indicates a reference of the currency's real worth and Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). Due to corruption and an unfriendly system to businesses, Lebanon has limited self-sustaining domestic industries. Central Bank reserves are going dry and shortages in goods and materials in the market are increasing. The loss of purchasing power hence is dramatic and mostly felt by those who earn in Lebanese Lira and have no other sources of income in foreign currencies. Lebanon's average inflation rate in 2020 soared to 84.8 percent, the highest since 1992. The end-of-year inflation (December 2020 relative to December 2019) stands at 145.8 percent with the price of food and non-alcoholic beverages increasing by 5 times and the price of clothing and footwear increasing by 6.6 times.³

Additionally, and according to UNOCHA, 220 people were killed by the Beirut Port explosions, with more than 6,500 injured including 1,000 children and some 300,000 people who became homeless. Moreover, 120 schools, the country's main grain silos and at least 15 medical facilities, including three major hospitals have sustained damage ranging at around \$5 billion as per Beirut's governor; These explosions further increased vulnerabilities and inequalities in the country. On top of that, COVID-19 greatly hit the country. The virus had started spreading again in an almost uncontrollable manner right after the Beirut port explosion, and hospitals are barely able to find beds (Both regular and ICU) for even the most critical patients. The dollar shortage has restricted the import of vital medical equipment and led banks to curtail credit lines. Medical supplies, including oxygen, ventilators, gloves and masks, are scarce, compromising Lebanon's ability to deal with the coronavirus pandemic.⁴ Many health workers resigned and others have died of the virus itself. The country has since been put under severe lockdown compromising people's remaining ability to generate income and protect their families.

With stressors adding up, poverty in Lebanon is likely to continue to worsen in 2021. UNESCWA estimates reveal that more than 55% of the country's population is now trapped in poverty and struggling for bare necessities.⁵

NEEDS

Increasing levels of unemployment, lack of income generating opportunities and multidimensional poverty are among the greatest factors driving individual need in the short-term. Also, and as the COVID-19 virus will continue to have an impact in 2021, adaptable responses, as well as flexible funding and cash assistance, will be essential going forward. Three main areas remain of particular concern –

1 <https://unscol.unmissions.org/nine-out-ten-syrian-refugee-families-lebanon-are-now-living-extreme-poverty-un-study-says>

2 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/07/lebanon-to-default-on-debt-for-first-time-amid-financial-crisis>

3 <http://dailystar.com.lb/Business/Local/2021/Feb-12/517301-lebanons-inflations-hits-85-percent-in-2020.ashx>

4 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/lebanon>

5 https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/20-00268_pb15_beirut-explosion-rising-poverty-en.pdf

protection, food security, and health – as needs remain high and basic living conditions of already vulnerable communities could rapidly deteriorate further.⁶

Over the medium-term, Lebanon will have to prioritize building better institutions, strengthening livelihoods, good governance, and a better business environment, alongside physical reconstruction. However, given Lebanon’s state of insolvency (sovereign, banking system) and its lack of sufficient foreign currency reserves, international aid and private investment will be essential for a comprehensive recovery and reconstruction.⁷ At a time where the social fabric is under pressure, violence against women and risks of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) continue to be reported across the region.⁸ Enhancing local capacities, specifically infrastructure, service provision, and social safety net programmes, is a critical element to ensure that the needs of vulnerable individuals can be met in the medium and long-term by building resilience⁹

The overlapping crises have put the country in a state of depression and fear. Affected persons find themselves in a desperate situation, with many unmet vital humanitarian needs such as access to:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	sufficient food
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	safe shelter and basic non-food items
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	basic health services and facilities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	safe drinking water, as well as sanitation and hygiene infrastructure
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	livelihood activities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	protection services
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	education opportunities

The dire situation is further compounded for affected people with vulnerabilities. The intersecting crises the country is experiencing have disproportionately hit and affected vulnerable groups, people with specific needs, and disadvantaged communities, such as female-headed households, children, youth, older people, the LGBTIQ+ community and people with disabilities, and refugees and migrant workers.¹⁰ There is a pressing necessity to provide immediate assistance to minimize loss of life and to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are covered first.

STAKEHOLDERS

The following national and international entities are present and doing their best to respond to the crisis:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	National government	Absence of a cabinet since August 2020; The current cabinet in its caretaker role has failed to set a coordinated relief plan for the country.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	UN Agencies	UNOCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, UNWFP and other UN agencies
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	INGOs	Programs to meet the needs of refugees and host communities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Red Cross Red Crescent Movement	Providing relief to victims of the Beirut Port Blast and implementing programs to meet the needs of vulnerable communities in Lebanon
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Military presence	Present and monitoring work in Greater Beirut after the explosion
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	National NGOs	Programs to meet the needs of refugees and host communities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Civil society groups	Programs to meet the needs of refugees and host communities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Faith based groups	Programs to meet the needs of refugees and host communities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Philanthropy groups	Present and organizing activities to support those affected

6 UNOCHA Lebanon: Beirut Port Explosions Situation Report No. 16, 20 January 2021

7 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview>

8 3RP Regional Needs Overview 2021 - <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-inter-agency-3rp-regional-needs-overview-2021>

9 3RP Regional Needs Overview 2021 - <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-inter-agency-3rp-regional-needs-overview-2021>

10 UNOCHA Lebanon: Beirut Port Explosions Situation Report No. 13, As of 15 October 2020

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Host communities	Already vulnerable and hosting refugees of different nationalities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Affected communities	People are leading their own recovery in the absence of state.
<p>The emergency response is currently being led by the Humanitarian Coordinator supported by UNOCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, UNWFP and other UN agencies depending on the sectors of intervention, with a co-leading role by the Government of Lebanon (GoL). To ensure that the humanitarian response is well coordinated and complementary, the ACT Lebanon Forum and ACT members will take part in meetings with all relevant sector stakeholders, UN working groups and Local/International NGO Forums, and establish an open line of communication with crisis affected persons and communities to ensure a humanitarian response based on participation and feedback.</p>		
ACT Alliance		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ACT Alliance has been working in Lebanon since 2011, now helping/planning to help people affected by the Beirut Port Explosion and overlapping crises in the country. ACT Forum members include Act Church of Sweden, Diakonia, DSPR, MECC, NCA and CA	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ACT Alliance works in all affected areas around Lebanon and is assessing the impact of the disaster to better understand the needs and vulnerabilities.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ACT Alliance is currently monitoring the situation and members are preparing a rapid needs assessment to have an in-depth context analysis and better understanding of existing vulnerabilities.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Emergency teams are ready/preparing to respond according to the results of a contextual analysis and rapid needs assessment.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	In collaboration with relevant stakeholders, the ACT Lebanon Forum has identified a gap in basic assistance, shelter, food security, PSS and protection, health, education, livelihoods, and WASH including the response to COVID-19, and has resolved that if funded, it will have the capacity to contribute to bridging the identified gap.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The ACT Lebanon Forum is planning on submitting a funding proposal to ensure that the affected persons' basic needs are met with regards to basic assistance and unconditional cash, shelter and business rehabilitation, food vouchers, health assistance to chronic disease and COVID-19 patients, PSS to vulnerable groups specifically women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities, WASH infrastructure and kits, restoring businesses, providing training and livelihood opportunities to women in order to enhance their social protection, and supporting children to go to school.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Furthermore, ACT Alliance will engage in advocacy on the national and international level to ensure that the voices of those affected by the Beirut Port Explosion and overlapping country crises are amplified.	

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to the the Director of Operations, Nancy Ette (nancy.ette@actalliance.org)

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