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# **Ensuring Accountability in Reconstruction and Reform Efforts in Lebanon: Synthesis Report**

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# **Ensuring Accountability in Reconstruction and Reform Efforts in Lebanon: Synthesis Report**

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## Glossary

<b>3RF</b>	Reform, Recovery, and Reconstruction Framework
<b>ACAPS</b>	Assessment Capacities Project
<b>ACTED</b>	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
<b>AFD</b>	Agence Française de Développement
<b>AUB</b>	American University of Beirut
<b>CERF</b>	Central Emergency Response Fund
<b>DCP</b>	Donor's Coordination Platform
<b>DRM</b>	Disaster Risk Management Unit
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FER</b>	Army Forward Emergency Room
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>LTA</b>	Lebanese Transparency Association
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>RDNA</b>	Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDAC</b>	United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
<b>UNOCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>WBG</b>	World Bank Group

## I. INTRODUCTION

A powerful explosion at the Beirut Port on August 4, 2020, left Lebanon, already facing an unrelenting torrent of crises, with a serious humanitarian crisis. The explosion claimed more than 200 lives, more than 6500 injured, and left over 300,000 Lebanese homeless.<sup>1</sup> Based on the Beirut Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) conducted in August 2020, through a joint initiative of the World Bank Group (WBG), in cooperation with the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU), it was estimated that damages ranged between \$3.8 and \$4.6 billion USD and losses ranged between \$2.9 and \$3.5 billion USD.

In response to the disaster, international and regional actors have joined efforts to assist Lebanon, sending medical food donations and rescue teams to Beirut to tend to urgently needed relief. On August 9, 2020, an international support conference pledged almost \$298 million in immediate relief aid and the EU set its mapping system to support Lebanon to assess the damage and plan for reconstruction. Recognizing the endemic corruption and mismanagement as core factors leading to the blast, international actors have called for strong transparency and accountability reforms for the Lebanese government and state institutions to regain the trust of its people and supporting countries. In addition, due to the major discontent of the Lebanese people towards their government, many Lebanese are demanding that money and aid in the form of food, medical care and housing be channeled only through trusted local organizations.

Several recent reports and documentaries have questioned the transparency and accountability of international assistance related to the Port of Beirut (PoB) explosion. There are claims that millions of dollars have been misused or wasted to corruption. “Ensuring Accountability in Reconstruction and Reform Efforts in Lebanon (EARREL)” intends to fill this information gap. EARREL is led by the American University of Beirut (AUB)<sup>2</sup> and the Lebanese Transparency Association (LTA) and funded by Transparency International. This report builds on an exhaustive literature review conducted by the team as well as a data collection exercise that included (1) field surveys of 250 aid beneficiaries in the PoB area,<sup>3</sup> and (2) Key Informant Interviews<sup>4</sup> (KIIs) with 25 experts in the field.

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Hajj, S., Dhaini, H. R., Mondello, S., Kaafarani, H., Kobeissy, F., & DePalma, R. G. (2021). Beirut Ammonium Nitrate Blast: Analysis, Review, and Recommendations. *Frontiers in public health*, 9, 657996.

<sup>2</sup> The AUB project team is composed of: Dr. Leila Dagher, Dr. Ghina Tabsh, Ola Sidani, and Oussama Abi Younes.

<sup>3</sup> Dagher, L., Tabsh G., Sidani, O., Abi Younes, O. (2022). “Ensuring Accountability in Reconstruction and Reform Efforts in Lebanon: Field Survey Findings Report.” Hereafter Survey Findings Report

<sup>4</sup> Dagher, L., Tabsh G., Sidani, O., Abi Younes, O. (2022). “Ensuring Accountability in Reconstruction and Reform Efforts in Lebanon: Key Informant Interviews Report of Findings.” Hereafter KII Findings Report

The project aims to ensure greater accountability and transparency of humanitarian aid and reconstructions efforts, particularly for those most affected by the Beirut port explosion. It will do so by better equipping local civil society and journalist networks in their roles as watchdogs, by supporting state actors to improve government reforms and manage crisis in transparency, and by equipping citizens to monitor and report corruption, particularly in areas of Beirut most affected by the explosion. This final report is divided into five sub sections: introduction, methodology, background, discussion of findings, and the conclusion.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This report is based on the triangulation of findings from the literature review, surveys with the beneficiaries and key informant interviews (KII) with experts in the international aid sector. Accordingly, the methodologies used are detailed in this section.

### A. SURVEYS METHODOLOGY

#### 1. DEVELOPING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The package submitted to the Institutional Review Board at AUB on November 20, 2021, included the IRB application, the consent script, and the survey questionnaire (see Appendix in Survey Findings Report). The questionnaire was developed by the AUB team to facilitate the gathering of the desired information from a representative sample of aid recipients in the port of Beirut area. An extensive literature review conducted by the team informed the design of the data collection tools in terms of themes and specific questions. After several rounds of revisions, the IRB approval was granted on February 25, 2022.

#### 2. DETERMINING THE TARGET SAMPLE

The sample size of 250 surveys in the first round was predetermined by LTA research team and communicated to AUB research team. A second round with the same number of surveys is planned for August-September 2022. The names (and all identifying information) of all the respondents shall remain anonymous and undisclosed in the report as per AUB IRB rules. In the selection process, the team prioritized diversity and representativeness, to gain a more holistic picture about the aid process. Hence, the following inclusion criteria were applied.

- *Gender*: balanced inclusion of both male and female beneficiaries- making sure to meet the donor's minimum target of 30% women
- *Household versus Business*: inclusion of both households and businesses, landlords, and tenants
- *Nationality*: Lebanese and non-Lebanese beneficiaries
- *Neighborhoods*: All neighborhoods in the six zones (as categorized by the Army) that were affected by the blast. The primary concentration in this phase is to focus on the areas closer to the blast.

#### 3. DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

The firm Bridge Outsource Transform (BOT) was recruited to conduct the surveys. In order to be well-prepared for the data collection process, the AUB team of researchers in collaboration with the LTA team conducted three coaching sessions to get the BOT team of enumerators ready for the task.

On Monday 1 March 2022, the first session was held by the AUB research team, where they met online with the BOT management to explain the full and detailed scope of the project. As such, both teams discussed the logistics, the means of communication and reporting as well as the needed number of enumerators and field support needed. It was agreed to deploy five enumerators to cover the Beirut Blast Area (namely adjacent to the Port) while taking into consideration the zoning map prepared by the army for the Blast. A field advisor and quality manager from BOT team also supported the team of enumerators. Dr. Leila Dagher, had secured a permission for the data collectors to ensure their safety during fieldwork from the Army Intelligence. The follow-up on the data collection process was monitored by the field supervisor, the quality control manager at BOT team, as well as Dr. Ghina Tabsh from AUB team via monitoring the online link where the data are updated on a daily basis.

The second coaching session for the team of enumerators was conducted online on Thursday March 3, 2022 at 12:00 pm. The session lasted for an hour, during which the survey was explained thoroughly to the enumerators and several discussions followed to clarify each question to the enumerators to enable them to probe on and to clarify the questions in the field where needed. The session also included the "Do's and Don'ts" and expectations during the fieldwork.

The third coaching session was held by the LTA team on Thursday 7 March 2022 at the LTA office in Sodeco, where the enumerators were introduced to the aim of EARREL project, how their work would contribute to it, and the seriousness and the responsibility that is expected from them. The no harm and integrity measures were highlighted in this session to ensure that the data collection process is in line with the research ethical standards.

The survey was translated by a professional translator on Thursday 10 March 2022 and was consequently digitized. During the third week of March, the data collection process using digital devices was launched for pilot testing. During the pilot phase, close follow up and communication with the enumerators was taking place to make sure that the process flowed smoothly. In addition, the quality of the data was double-checked before giving the team the green light to proceed with the targeted 250 questionnaires. The full data were collected and finalized by Wednesday April 6, 2022.

The survey revolved around the Beirut blast recovery and reconstruction aids received by beneficiaries who resided in the most damaged areas in Beirut. The tool included 45 questions and lasted on an average for 20 minutes per beneficiary on the Survey CTO tool. Some surveys took up to 45 minutes to explain, elaborate and get the consent from the beneficiary. Recruitment faced some challenges as the target participants were drained by the number of interviews/surveys they have been invited to participate in post-explosion. All 258 interviews (see Table 1) were conducted anonymously, in person with a consented audio recording, by a team of 5 enumerators from BOT.

- Target: 250 surveys (equally split between households and businesses)
- Collected: 258 surveys (84% Households and 16% Businesses)



Table 1. Breakdown of Respondents

Households			Businesses		
Completed	Refusal	Not Eligible	Completed	Refusal	Not Eligible
<b>210</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>156</b>

“Not Eligible” implies that those respondents did not receive any aid, although in need.

#### 4. DATA CLEANING

BOT and AUB research team validated and cleaned the data all throughout the collection process and continued after closing the data collection process once the targeted number of surveys was secured. Random samples of surveys were double-checked via listening to the recordings, especially those held during the pilot phase and first week of the data collection process, to ensure the quality of the collected data. After completing the data collection phase, BOT and AUB research teams went over the excel sheets to unify the data, make sure it's consistent and to check for any anomalies and outliers. The cleanliness of the dataset, a good indication that the survey was well designed, allowed for the inclusion of all surveys.

A total of 258 surveys were collected and validated. The final data set is saved in excel format with all the relevant recordings on a shared drive accessible to the AUB research team as conditioned by IRB office at AUB.

Next, for the data analysis, the data were coded and uploaded to SPSS software to generate the statistics. The AUB research team first reviewed the statistics and findings after which they agreed on further segregations and cross tabulations to generate the findings report.

## B. KIIs METHODOLOGY

### 1. DEVELOPING THE KII GUIDE

The package submitted to the Institutional Research Board at AUB on November 20, 2021, included the IRB application, the consent script, the email invitation script, and the KII guide (see Appendix in KII Findings Report). The guide was developed by the AUB team to facilitate the gathering of the desired information from a representative sample of key informant interviewees. The informants are individuals who have had an intervention role in aid disbursement in the port of Beirut area. An extensive literature review conducted by the team informed the design of the data collection tools, in terms of themes and specific questions. The goal of the KIIs was to solicit in-depth information about the aid process from experts who have first-hand knowledge about the topic.

The KIIs were designed to be conducted in a semi-structured format, whereby the facilitator explains the research questions, the goal of the project, and a list of specific questions to initiate a discussion with the interviewee. After several rounds of revisions, the IRB approval was granted on February 16, 2022.

## **2. DETERMINING THE TARGET SAMPLE**

The team compiled a list of over 60 potential experts to interview, out of which 25 individuals were actually interviewed in this first round of KIIs. A second round is planned for August-September 2022. In the selection process, the team prioritized diversity and representativeness, to gain a more holistic picture about the aid process. Consequently, the 25 informants came from diverse backgrounds and different capacities, including the Beirut Municipality Council, the Lebanese Army, Embassies, UN agencies, World Bank, International NGOs, Local NGOs, Microfinance Institutions, Aid Alliances, and Research Institutions. The names (and all identifying information) of all the interviewees shall remain anonymous and undisclosed in the report as per AUB IRB rules.

## **3. DATA COLLECTION PROCESS**

The AUB research team emailed invitations to participate in the KIIs to all 60 initially identified key informants. This was followed-up by calls to schedule the interview. Recruitment faced some challenges as the target participants were drained by the number of interviews/surveys they have been invited to participate in post-explosion, on top of very long working hours in many cases. Through an extensive process of snowballing and referrals, a total of 71 contacts were contacted by the end of the process, of which the first 25 to respond were selected. At first, the AUB team had planned to hold the interviews in groups of 5, however it proved quite difficult to find common time slots among the participants. As such, the team employed different modalities to adapt to the availability of the interviewees.

Only 1 round of 5 group KII was conducted, after which the team shifted to holding individual interviews. The majority of the interviews were held face-to-face, online interviews were only conducted for individuals who were abroad or during national holidays. All in all, the interview method was quite diversified; online, face-to-face in a reserved meeting room at Citea Hotel, or in the interviewee's office. The interview session typically lasted between 45 and 75 minutes in which the facilitator asked informants a series of customized questions (see Appendix in KII Findings Report) but left the discussion to flow freely. Most importantly, all 25 interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees. Data collection was carried out between the months of March and April 2022. We effectively conducted 25 semi-structured interviews; 13 women (52%) and 12 men (48%).

#### **4. DATA CLEANING AND ANALYSIS**

All interviews were recorded and stored on a shared drive. The recordings were then transcribed with the help of NVIVO if the whole interview was conducted in English, or otherwise manually transcribed. The transcripts were then reviewed by one of the team members and finally validated by the enumerator, to ensure the quality and accuracy of the information.

As for the data analysis and report writing, the content analysis approach is used. Using content analysis, the team was able to quantify and analyze the presence, meanings, and relationships of specific words, themes, or concepts.

### III. BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

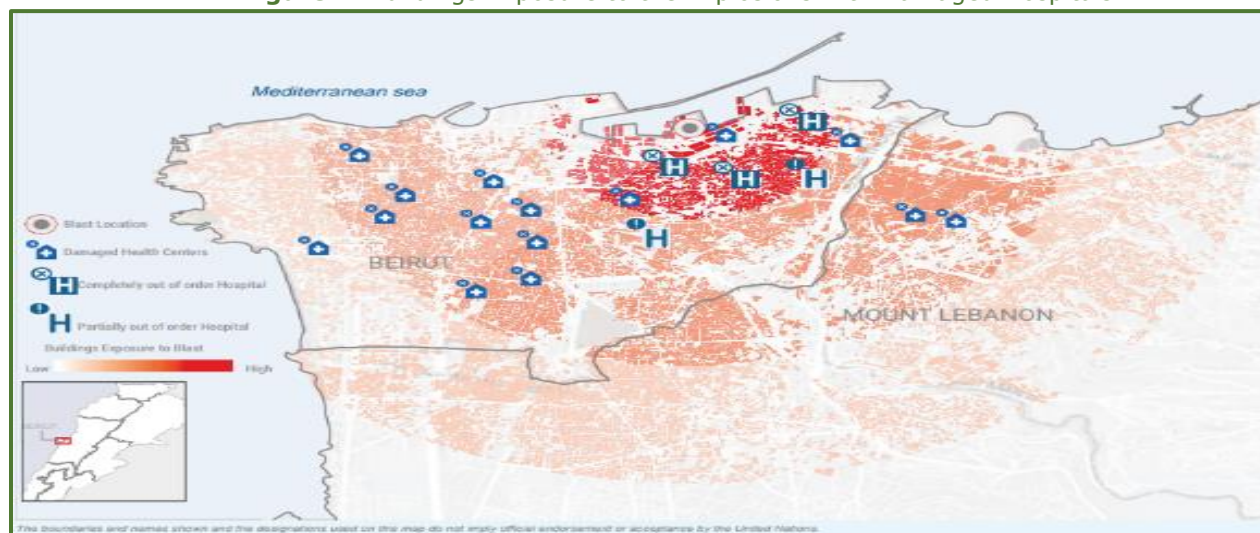
Described as one of the largest non-nuclear destructive explosions in history, the Beirut port blast shook the Lebanese capital on August 4, 2020 and left behind a tragic scene. Many people are still dealing with the explosion's catastrophic aftermaths. The explosion was the result of 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate, stored for years in one of Beirut's port warehouses, that detonated in the blink of an eye and pulverized the Beirut port, the national grain reserve silos, and destroyed a large part of the city.

The damages were substantial and far-reaching; hundreds of people lost their lives, thousands were injured, tens of thousands lost their houses, businesses lost their offices, dozens of hospitals were damaged, hundreds of schools destroyed, and thousands of children were left without a shelter and severely devastated psychologically. People were traumatized at the sight of the shocking scene of victims and the massive destruction of the city. The apocalyptic scene induced an instant community mobilization to harness efforts to provide humanitarian intervention in response to the disaster.

#### A. THE BEIRUT PORT BLAST DAMAGES

According to a report by ACAPS, MapAction, Mercy Corps, and UNOCHA/ UNDAC following the explosion in August 2020, twenty-one areas of Beirut and Mount Lebanon governorates have been particularly affected by the blast. This is based on the intensity of the damages in relation to building and infrastructure.<sup>5</sup> The widespread destruction affected buildings up to 20 km away from the epicenter.

**Figure 1.** Buildings Exposure to the Explosions with Damaged Hospitals



Source: OCHA, "Lebanon: Flash Appeal", August 2020

<sup>5</sup> ACAPS, "Emergency Operations Centre Beirut Assessment & Analysis Cell", 2020, available at: [https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20200825\\_acaps\\_situation\\_analysis\\_beirut\\_explosion\\_0.pdf](https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20200825_acaps_situation_analysis_beirut_explosion_0.pdf)

**Table 2. Most Damaged Areas**

<p><i>In Beirut governorate</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gemmayzeh (Saifi quarter)</li> <li>▪ Karantina and Mar Mikhael (Medawar quarter)</li> <li>▪ Jetaoui (Remeil quarter)</li> <li>▪ Karm El Zeitouni (Achrafieh quarter)</li> <li>▪ Downtown and Marfaa (Marfaa quarter)</li> <li>▪ Bachoura quarter</li> <li>▪ Zqouq al Blatt quarter</li> <li>▪ Mazraa quarter</li> <li>▪ Moussaitbeh quarter</li> <li>▪ Ras Beirut and Ain Mreisseh (Dar El Mreisseh quarter)</li> <li>▪ Minet El Hosn quarter</li> </ul>
<p><i>In Mount Lebanon governorate (all in Metn district)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bourj Hammoud</li> <li>▪ Bauchriyeh</li> <li>▪ Sin El Fil</li> <li>▪ Aamaret Chalhoub</li> <li>▪ Jdaidet El-Matn</li> <li>▪ Zalqa</li> </ul>

Source: ACAPS, "Emergency Operations Centre Beirut Assessment & Analysis Cell", 2020

The Beirut port explosion resulted in 218 people killed and 7000 injured, where more than 150 have permanent infirmity and severe psychological damage. Three children died, 1,000 children were injured, 31 children required hospitalization and 80,000 children lost their home.<sup>6</sup> The blast destroyed 77,000 residential units and displaced around 300,000 people and resulted in massive damage to Beirut's infrastructure including: transport, energy, water supply and sanitation.<sup>7</sup> Over 70,000 workers are estimated to have lost their jobs, with direct implications for over 12,000 households. Education and health care services sectors were extremely affected with around 170 public and private schools impaired, and 3 of the capital's hospitals inoperable due to widespread destruction. Two hospitals reported severe damages, and 16 of the primary health care centers were heavily damaged.<sup>8</sup> Businesses and shops were destroyed or severely damaged, including: hotels, bars, cafes and restaurants in proximity of the port; some of which did not reopen due to lack of funds for reconstruction and restocking.<sup>9</sup> Trauma and mental health issues were reported among the affected population particularly in Karantina and Nabaa neighborhoods.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> OCHA, "Lebanon: Beirut Port Explosions Situation", Report No. 2, 7 August 2020, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-beirut-port-explosions-situation-report-no-2-7-august-2020-enar#:~:text=HIGHLIGHTS&text=More%20than%20157%20people%20were,than%20150%20people%20remain%20missing.&text=At%20least%20three%20hospitals%20and,rendered%20partially%20or%20fully%20inoperable.>

<sup>7</sup> ACTED, "Beirut Blast Rapid Needs Assessment Report", 7 August 2020

<sup>8</sup> OCHA, "Lebanon: Beirut Port Explosions Situation", Report No. 2, 7 August 2020, op.cit.

<sup>9</sup> ACAPS, 2020, op.cit

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

The Beirut Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment<sup>11</sup> developed by the World Bank Group (WBG), in cooperation with the EU and the UN, provides an estimation of the value of damages, losses and needs for recovery and reconstruction. The RDNA estimates physical damages, assessed as “*the replacement value of totally, partially, or minimally damaged physical assets*,”<sup>12</sup> ranging between US\$ 3.8 and 4.6 billion, with the housing and cultural sectors most severely affected (US\$ 1.9 – 2.3 billion and US\$ 1.0 – 1.2 billion, respectively). “*Losses are estimated in the flows of the economy that arise from the temporary absence of the damaged assets [...] Typical losses included the decline in output in productive sectors (for example, Commerce and Industry and Finance), as well as lower revenues and higher operational costs in the provision of services (for example, Education, Health, and Water Supply and Sanitation sectors)*.”<sup>13</sup> Losses in economic flows are estimated in the range of US\$ 2.9 and 3.5 billion, with housing being the most hit (US\$ 1.0 – 1.2 billion), followed by transport and port (US\$ 580 – 710 million) and culture (US\$ 400 – 490 million). The public sector recovery and reconstruction needs for the year 2020-2021 are estimated to be between \$ 1.8 and 2.2 billion.

## **B. THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND AID INTERVENTIONS**

In response to the Beirut port explosion, which magnified the multi-layered crisis Lebanon was already facing since 2019, there was a rush of assistance to damaged areas by grassroots initiatives funded by Lebanese diaspora. Donations were made from UN agencies and international NGOs. The Government of Lebanon activated the Disaster Risk Management Unit (DRM) for inter-ministerial coordination and established the Donor’s Coordination Platform (DCP), which aims at providing an interactive and dynamic platform for: countries, donors, and international and national organizations to know about the various support activities and contributions being made in response to the Beirut port blast. The Army Forward Emergency Room (FER) was deployed and entrusted with the damage needs assessments, coordination of field interventions, communication with affected people, and the maintenance of a unified and up-to-date database.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> World Bank, “Beirut Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment”, August 2020, available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/650091598854062180/pdf/Beirut-Rapid-Damage-and-Needs-Assessment.pdf>

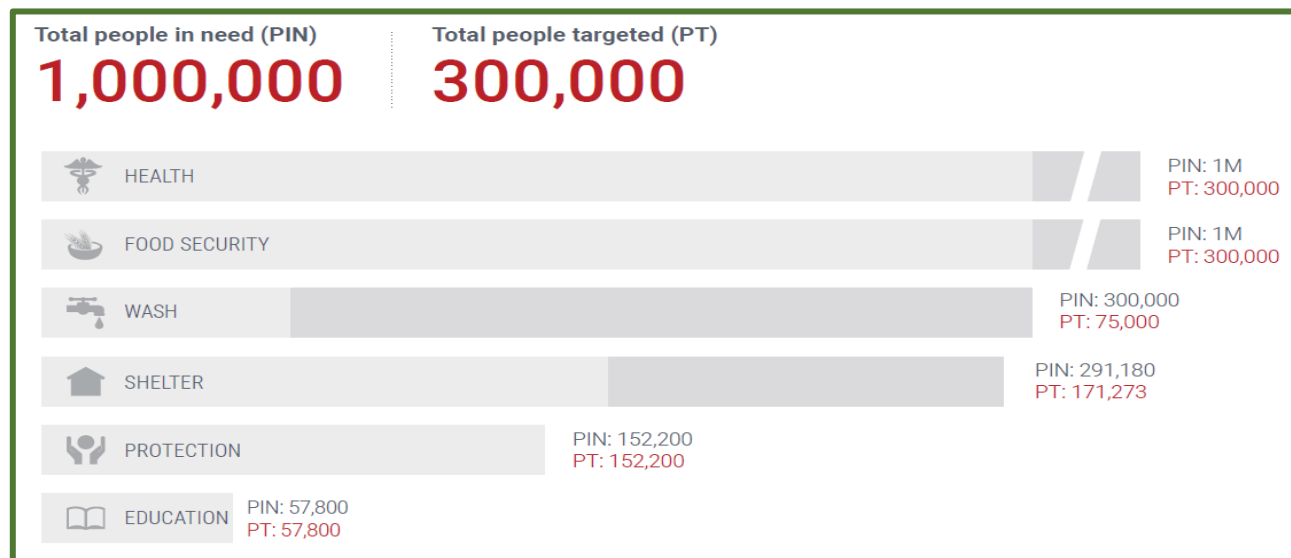
<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 25

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.25

<sup>14</sup> Lebanese Republic, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, “Beirut Port Disaster Situation, Report # 5”, 27 September 2020, available at: <http://drm.pcm.gov.lb/Media/News/PM-Beirut-Port-Disaster-weekly-5-27-Sep-2020-1.pdf>

An immediate humanitarian emergency intervention plan was activated by the United Nations and its humanitarian partners targeting the immediate needs of the affected population. A Flash Appeal was launched in August 2020 following the blast in order to mobilize US\$565 million in assistance for a target of 300,000 people, as well as the medium to long-term needs for psychosocial support, basic assistance and eventually recovery and reconstruction.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 2. People in Need Versus People Targeted by Intervention Sector**



Source: OCHA, "Lebanon: Flash Appeal", August 2020

The amount of US\$565 million was planned to bring assistance to 8 sectors, namely: education, food security, health, logistics, emergency telecoms, protection, shelter, and WASH, as per the table below.

<sup>15</sup> OCHA, "Lebanon: Flash Appeal", August 2020, available at: <https://lebanon.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Lebanon%20Flash%20Appeal%20FINAL%2014%20Aug%202020.pdf>

**Figure 3. OCHA's Response Planned Strategy and Capacity**

Sector	People in need	People targeted	Financial requirement (\$)	Summary of activities
Education	57,800	57,800	13,700,000	Educational institutions assessment and repairs Provision of education supplies Cash for education Psychological support to children
Food security	1,000,000	300,000	244,700,000	Immediate delivery of hot meals and food rations Expand cash base assistance Cash for work for cleaning, and reparation of structures Stabilise national grain supply Provide infrastructure support at port - including a bulk grain receiving facility
Health	1,000,000	300,000	85,700,000	Support reconstruction of the Central Drug Warehouse and rehabilitation of damaged health facilities to enable and maintain functionality and service delivery Enhance access to quality essential and critical health services including by procuring urgent lifesaving trauma kits and essential medications Strengthen infection prevention and control measures to prevent sharp increase in COVID-19 cases Assess impact of environmental hazards on public health
Logistics	n/a	n/a	1,255,000	Common logistics services and coordination Civil military coordination on humanitarian response
Emergency telecoms	n/a	n/a	370,000	Provide communication services to support the humanitarian response Support a feedback mechanism to enable two-way communication between humanitarian organizations and the affected population
Protection	152,200	152,200	15,975,000	Ensure protection mainstreaming and community participation Provide appropriate and efficient protection services
Shelter	291,180	171,273	179,100,000	Cash for shelter targeting families who relocated due to damages or destruction of their home Minor repair in lightly damaged homes Rehabilitation of moderately damaged homes Repair of common building areas/facilities that were affected by the blast Repair of structural damages (e.g. collapsed/ damaged beams and/ or columns)
WASH	300,000	75,000	24,200,000	Immediate and medium-term repairs in support of the BML Water Establishment Distribution of hygiene kits Plumbing repairs WASH services to hospitals
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>565,000,000</b>	

Source: OCHA, "Lebanon: Flash Appeal", August 2020



Building further on the UN Flash Appeal and the RDNA report, the WBG, the UN and the EU, in cooperation with civil society, the Lebanese Government and the international community, have all developed the *Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF)* as a roadmap to operationalize the RDNA and other assessments' results. The 3RF pursues 2 tracks bridging the immediate humanitarian response and the medium-term recovery: i) a people-centered recovery track, and ii) a reform and reconstruction track. While the first track focuses on urgent actions to address the needs of vulnerable populations and the small businesses affected by the blast to help them recover, the second track requires progress on governance and socioeconomic reforms that are prerequisites for mobilizing international financing for reconstruction.<sup>16</sup>

According to the "Beirut port explosions - UNHCR's response update" published in August 2021, of the amount requested for the UNHCR Lebanon operation in 2021, only 42% was effectively funded as of July 27, 2021. That is an amount of US\$ 233.6 million received for all combined interventions benefiting around 100,000 individuals.<sup>17</sup> Interventions included: mental health and psychological support, individual case support services including emergency cash assistance to vulnerable persons, legal aid, weatherproofing kits, cash for shelter assistance of US\$ 600 provided to 11,000 eligible households,<sup>18</sup> and support to owners and households for minor repairs or rehabilitation through professional contractors. UNHCR repaired 1,734 housing units with single interventions costing up to US\$ 1,500 and rehabilitated 1,330 housing units for up to US\$ 4,500 per unit. UNHCR further supported the repair and rehabilitation of 123 housing units in heritage buildings inhabited by vulnerable households.<sup>19</sup>

For its part, in response to the explosion, UNICEF Lebanon set-up an Emergency Cash Transfer (ECT) provided to households in priority areas that include one of the following: at least one child, person with disability, female lead households, pregnant women, and persons above the age of 70. The ECT, which reached 80,000 affected individuals with vulnerabilities, is a one-off transfer of US\$ 120 per individual, up to three individuals per household with a total budget of around US\$ 10 million<sup>20</sup>. Also, the UNICEF supported the refurbishment and replacement of damaged furniture and laboratory equipment for 90 public schools affected by the explosions and rehabilitated 13 private and public schools. It provided access to safe sanitation for more than 197,000 people, reconnected buildings to the public water system, reaching more than 23,000 people and distributed around 16,500 hygiene kits and 790 baby kits.

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<sup>16</sup> World Bank, "Lebanon Reform, Recovery & Reconstruction Framework (3RF)", the World Bank, 2020, available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/948021607068524180/pdf/Lebanon-Reform-Recovery-and-Reconstruction-Framework-3RF.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> UNHCR, "Beirut port explosions - UNHCR's response update", August 2021, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/beirut-port-explosions-unhcr-s-response-update-august-2021>

<sup>18</sup> Eligible households are selected according to the damage level to their homes and their socioeconomic vulnerability.

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR, "Beirut port explosions - UNHCR's response update", August 2021, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup> UNICEF, "Beirut Blast Response 2020- UNICEF Lebanon Emergency Cash Transfer", 2020, available at: [https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/7031/file/UNICEF Lebanon Blast Cash Response BRIEF 2021.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/7031/file/UNICEF%20Lebanon%20Blast%20Cash%20Response%20BRIEF%202021.pdf)

Moreover, UNICEF rehabilitated the Karantina hospital's children and maternity wards, and the Central Supply and Drugs Warehouse and its cold chain and provided essential nutrition supplements to 45,700 children under the age of 5.<sup>21</sup>

As for UN-Habitat, it launched an emergency cash-for-rent project funded by the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). This intervention provided 810 eligible households and around 4,000 individuals, with safe shelter options for four months. In addition to the emergency cash-for-rent project, UN-Habitat provided minor repairs (windows and doors) to more than 100 homes (around 500 individuals) in neighborhoods around the blast's epicenter. This was done through funding from the International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) and the Real Estate Syndicate of Lebanon.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, UN-Habitat rehabilitated the HIV and TB Centre with the funding of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, which undertook the rehabilitation of 23 schools in Beirut and Mount Lebanon through funding support from UNESCO.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, many initiatives were also supported by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). For instance, Mercy Corps, with the support of AFD, contributed to the recovery of 250 micro, small, and medium businesses affected by the explosion. They provided them with a one-off cash-assistance support ranging between \$US 2,500 and \$US 4,500.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, more than 20,000 people benefited from the aid intervention of Première Urgence Internationale, which provided support to the Lebanese Red Cross. Support came in the form of providing personal protective equipment during the first days following the explosion, psychological first aid, referral to available services, and emergency financial assistance for households in areas directly and indirectly affected by the double explosion and the rehabilitation of the Zarif and Boulghourdjian Primary Care Centres.<sup>25</sup>

While deeply needed, the assistance was largely criticized for lacking coordination and tracking, and for the lack of transparency in reporting the blast-response aid funds, with people receiving aid from more than a source and others left behind. The government of Lebanon reported a total of US\$ 317.7 million given by international donors (not including the 3RF), with about \$167 million coming through UN Flash appeal issued in August 2020, and the rest as bilateral donations to the Lebanese government or through

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<sup>21</sup> UNICEF, "Beirut Explosion: News and Updates on UNICEF response to the explosions that took place in Beirut", available at: <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/beirut-port-explosion>

<sup>22</sup> UN-Habitat, "Beirut explosion, six months on. UN-Habitat's response and what lies ahead", 2021, available at: <https://unhabitat.org/beirut-explosion-six-months-on-un-habitat%E2%80%99s-response-and-what-lies-ahead>

<sup>23</sup> UN-Habitat, "Beirut Port explosion: a year on Lebanon's capital city struggles to pick up the pieces", August 2021, available at: <https://unhabitat.org/beirut-port-explosion-a-year-on-lebanons-capital-city-struggles-to-pick-up-the-pieces>

<sup>24</sup> Mercy corps, "Lebanon- Support to micro and small businesses affected by the Beirut blast", available at: <https://www.afd.fr/en/carte-des-projets/support-micro-and-small-businesses-affected-beirut-blast#:~:text=Mercy%20Corps%20aims%20to%20support,Lebanese%20and%20Syrians%2C%20especially%20women>

<sup>25</sup> Première Urgence Internationale, "1 Year After Beirut Blast, The Overall Humanitarian Situation In The Country Remains Worrying", August 2021, available at: <https://www.premiere-urgence.org/en/1-year-after-beirut-blast-the-overall-humanitarian-situation-in-the-country-remains-worrying/>

other mechanisms. *"Out of the money given through the UN appeal, for which more detailed information is available, the largest donor was the European Commission, which gave more than \$US 40 million, mostly to UN agencies providing shelter, health and cash assistance to explosion victims, followed by the United States and Qatar."*<sup>26</sup> A considerable part of the value of funds benefitted banks who took advantage of the multiple exchange rates in place as a result of the financial meltdown.

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<sup>26</sup> Abby Sewell, "What happened to the international aid promised to Lebanon after the Beirut port blast?", in L'Orient Today, 17 December 2021, available at: <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1285046/what-happened-to-the-international-aid-promised-to-lebanon-after-the-beirut-port-blast.html>

## IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section is based on the triangulation of information from all three sources: the literature review, the beneficiaries' input, and the key informant interviews. On the one hand, the findings from each source concur with each other regarding the importance of the aid intervention during POB. Without aid, the damaged areas, residents, businesses, and public utilities would have been in a critical situation especially since the country is in a prolonged economic, financial and political crisis along with the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, many gaps have been identified in terms of efficiency, accountability, coordination, and transparency. Those gaps, without any doubt, were observed by the public as well by the international donors, thus raising a red flag regarding the trust in the aid disbursement process.

### A. RELEVANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS

Immediately after the blast, the majority of the respondents indicated that their NGOs/associations called for an urgent emergency response meeting to set a quick plan for intervention. The main players in the aid process were: the private sector, individuals, neighborhoods, NGOs, INGOs, international donors such as UN agencies, World Bank, Embassies, microfinance enterprises, the Lebanese Red Cross, in addition to the Lebanese Army. The municipalities had a very shy contribution and indicated the bureaucratic process is very crippling, so they diverted the aid donation they received to UN Habitat. The government's role was not visible at least by any of the 25 key informant people that we interviewed, nor by the 258 beneficiaries that we surveyed.

The speed of the response varied based on the form of aid that each entity can provide. For instance, the medical and food responses were the fastest, followed by shelter, then came: cash, coupons, WASH/hygiene kits, in-kind donations, psychosocial support, and finally the renovation responses. Aid disbursement can be studied over three phases; first phase is the immediate response (right after the blast), phase two is the intermediate response based on a quick needs assessment via surveys, and phase three is the longer-term response based on a more planned type of assessment.

In phase one, many volunteers not only limited to NGOs but also private citizens, neighbors, friends rushed to move the injured on the streets to hospitals/clinics/medical centers inside and outside the Beirut district. At this stage, the aid was in its pure humanitarian form, as the people from different nationalities/religions/neighborhood rescued each other without thinking. The red cross had the most professional team in the field to move the injured, but there were ample numbers of injured people, so many other entities sent volunteers with basic instructions (with no medical background or training) to support those in pain or in need for help. For instance, a man was walking in Mar Elias when the blast came out, and the whole store glass shattered over him, leaving him on the side of the road bleeding and unconscious. The man was awakened by a guy on a motorcycle who moved him to the nearest hospital. In parallel people were trying to locate their missing family members via individual initiatives and WhatsApp groups.

In addition, phase one included the distribution of comfort food which was provided by several aid providers. Food supply included hot meals, sandwiches and drinking water. There is no doubt that the food support was very necessary especially in this phase, however, there was an over-supply according to the interviewees. What is even more painful during this phase is that citizens, household and businesses had to sleep on the doorsteps to protect their assets and belongings from theft. The only national body in the field was the Lebanese Army who mainly secured the explosion area in the port, yet there were no security measures to protect the affected alleys, the houses or businesses.

In phase two, aid providers started to organize the staff and set plans for assessments and started acting accordingly. In this phase, all types of aid were provided. Medical and food responses were the fastest, followed by shelter, then came; cash, coupons, WASH/hygiene kits, in-kind donations, psychosocial support and then renovation responses. Renovation aid varied from basics such as, closing the door/windows and fixings to complete renovation. As expected, heritage buildings were given a lot of attention from national and international NGOs. In fact, heritage buildings received more attention and funding than households or businesses. As a result, the percentage of the heritage buildings reconstructed exceeded by far the percentage of houses and businesses that received reconstruction aid.

Phase three is still ongoing and mainly provides for reconstruction, and social and psychological support.

Overall, the majority of the beneficiaries rated the relevance of the aid to their needs, the sufficiency of the aid as acceptable or below. More than half of them were not asked about their needs and received either one or no visits from aids providers before the actual disbursement. About 35% know people who needed help and did not receive it, in spite of asking. The most frequent needs of these people were cash, renovation, and food.

## **B. CHANNELING AID**

Almost all the aid was channeled directly through the aid players that we mentioned before, and not via the government. The respondents indicated that the lack of trust in the government and the high corruption level, are considered as the two main reasons for not involving the government. In addition, the government did not play a visible active role in pain alleviation during the Port of Beirut Blast, and had no coordination role either. The Lebanese government has a crisis management plan, yet it was never put in effect in terms of planning, training or execution.

As for the identification and reach out to the beneficiaries, each aid provider had a different modality of identifying beneficiaries depending on the area of intervention, time of intervention and on the type of aid. The NGOs who already operated centers in the affected areas found it easier to identify and reach out to beneficiaries. In many cases, victims turned up at the centers that are well known in the area and have the community's trust. However, those who have no presence in the areas of intervention had to put more effort to build a mobile visible center and to make themselves known to potential

beneficiaries. Other dynamics also played a role in the approach to identify beneficiaries. For instance, in phase one for provision of medical and food support, beneficiaries were identified on the field and were approach to be offered help. Furthermore, aid providers resorted to one or more of the following approaches:

- Establishing quick response corners to be visible for anyone in need for help in the affected areas
- Setting up hotlines to respond to the beneficiaries' needs
- Starting WhatsApp groups for outreach
- Starting their own list of beneficiaries and snow-balling the reach out via word-of-mouth,
- Using the needs assessments to build a database in order to support victims.
- Several initiatives of referrals between the aid providers mainly between the NGOs or the INGOs.

### **C. COLLABORATIONS**

Throughout the aid process and until the present, there has been several incidents of work duplication whether in terms of needs assessment, or in terms of aid support, and lately in terms aid evaluation. Unfortunately, the community suffers from survey and interview fatigue, and this included beneficiaries and key informants. Furthermore, many interviewees reported being told by the beneficiaries that they have filled several surveys, but did not receive any support whatsoever. Around 29% of the beneficiaries received support by different entities, in which the most frequent entities who offered this support were NGOs and the Lebanese army. The interviewees as well as the beneficiaries stressed on the absence of any proper coordination mechanism.

During the aid disbursement process and as the need emerged, some aid providers coordinated among themselves to refer beneficiaries who needed support in services they do not provide. However, all coordination initiatives were done on an individual level or between small alliances among NGOs that share the same vision. Other types of coordination processes emerged such as the one by OCHA and the Lebanon Reform, Recovery & Reconstruction Framework (3RF) that was designed as a collaborative process based on the participation of the government, civil society, the private sector, as well as development partners.

The key interviewees in this round, indicated that those coordination efforts didn't lead to actionable plans. The army also tried to assist in the coordination process especially in organizing the reconstruction efforts by dividing the affected areas into six zones (K, O, L, M, N, P), and assigning areas in those zones to different NGOs.

A major drawback to the absence of a national crisis management team and a national coordination unit was the emergence of numerous NGOs that were visible in the field, yet had no experience in dealing with disasters. As a result, many of them conducted assessments and then disappeared; some set up hotlines but never replied or the numbers were disconnected. No doubt, this reflected negatively on the reputation of NGOs, not to mention the confusion it caused. Many beneficiaries were not sure who to trust or who talk to. The excessive number of NGOs created a general sense of chaos.

## **D. EFFICIENCY**

Monitoring the aid disbursement process varied from one donor to another. Some relied solely on the reporting done by the implementing partners. Others did thorough field visits in addition to the desk reporting, while some did selective field visits in addition to the reporting. All the respondents in this round of interviews indicated that they have their own reporting systems and in addition to that, they complied with the donor's reporting criteria. In the perception of the experts, an aid provider is considered to be honest and credible when all verification documents and reporting information including: reconstruction pictures, beneficiaries' lists, invoices, contractors' lists, supplies, inventories, performance indicator tracking sheets and more are available and well communicated with the donors.

There was a large discrepancy regarding the duration between requesting the aid and receiving it, especially with different aid providers. The discrepancy depends on the type of aid interventions, for example, medication, food, WASH and shelter were rather quick, within the same week of the blast. Others such as cash, coupons, in-kind and reconstruction took much longer. Therefore, the duration ranged from immediate to very long. The beneficiaries rated the response of aid providers to their request for information in a timely and comprehensive manner as acceptable or below acceptable. On the other hand, almost half of the beneficiaries believe that the distribution of aid is either somehow or completely biased.

In sum, the existence of aid duplication, the fact that some beneficiaries asked for aid and never received it, the existence of several fraud cases, and the lack of proper coordination affected the level of efficiency considerably. For instance, the KIIs revealed that some NGOs provided fake lists and documents of completed constructions. NGOs engaged in this type of fraud fixed only a few of the selected houses/buildings/businesses, while having received funds for many more. Another type of fraud was providing overvalued invoices by the contractors, and by cheating on the quality or quantity used. The NGOs approved those invoices because they had a limited time to spend the budget. Therefore, such cases negatively influenced the effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency of the aid disbursement process.

All interviewees agreed that things could have been more efficient had there been a crisis management plan, a shared database, and a proper coordination mechanism. However, without the aid intervention that took place during the blast, nothing would have been done and the situation could have been much worse.

## **E. FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS RESPONSE MECHANISM**

Not all aid providers have feedback and/or complaint mechanisms. For those who do, it is accessible through their websites, but none of the interviewees mentioned that it was used by Port of Beirut explosion beneficiaries. Some aid providers had follow-up mechanisms with their beneficiaries that allowed them to extend additional help to those in need, either themselves or by referring them to others who can. More than half of the beneficiaries did not know how and where to request information about support that they might be eligible for, nor were they able to access all the information they required to apply for support. Moreover, they were not able to track the disbursement of their support.

## **F. ACCOUNTABILITY**

The majority of the beneficiaries (90%) stated that their privacy was respected when receiving the aid and during communications with the donor. All interviewees confirmed that the lists of beneficiaries were not shared, unless there is a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) with a referral partner or the donors. Some interviewees mentioned that the Lebanese Army requested the lists of beneficiaries from them to coordinate the aid, while other NGOs stated that they were never asked to share any beneficiary's lists. At least one of the interviewees, was prohibited by the donor (OCHA) from sharing any beneficiaries' lists with the Lebanese Army.

Many NGOs are still in contact with their beneficiaries, either because they have initiated a trust relationship with them, or to offer further support especially in terms of psychological support. Some renovation projects are also still ongoing; hence the aid providers are still in touch with the beneficiaries.

On the negative side, around 26% of the beneficiaries who benefited from aid have negative feedback on any of the aid providers. Most of the negative feedback of the beneficiaries can be listed as: not enough, lack of response when reached out to, corruption, lack of organization and follow-ups. The aid disbursement process was not fair and not complete, in addition to low-quality products used or given. Almost 26% of those with negative feedback highlighted that the process was unfair over two levels. On the first level, some people received aid but others such as their neighbors did not. On a second level, the aid given was biased towards certain areas or sects. Some also used the term "Corruption within the NGOs" to describe the aid process as unfair, biased, and inefficient. Others commented on the lack of organization during the aid disbursement process, we quote some as "Complete chaos" and "Not organized, not equal to people, no protocol, and no strategy". Some beneficiaries noted that the process was humiliating, "Humiliating the individuals in order to receive the aid and sometimes the aid being inefficient, and the food provided was sometimes outdated". Few beneficiaries indicated that NGOs filled surveys with them and never came back. Others stated the lack of follow up especially regarding the quality of the renovation, for example, one respondent said, "There wasn't any follow-up regarding renovation after checking the damages", and another said, "The door broke after they fixed it". Last but not least, many commented that they called the NGOs, but no one responded, "They called the NGO, but it didn't answer".



## **G. TRANSPARENCY**

With regards to traceability, interviewees indicated that internally each aid provider is able to trace the aid (following the money), through the transaction chain from donor to crises-affected people. The same applies to many international donors, who have sophisticated and detailed monitoring systems. Yet, other aid providers, for example certain embassies, limited the follow up to the stage of the local implementing partners, and not to the end beneficiary. They selected their local partners after vetting and mostly worked with reputable NGOs.<sup>27</sup>

Many aid providers have already published the aid intervention-related facts, including on-site pictures and reports on their website, while maintaining the beneficiaries' confidentiality. Others, (around 50% of the interviewed NGOs) have compiled all the required reporting material, but shared them only with the donor and not with the public<sup>28</sup> since they were no strict requirements to do so or because it is still a work-in-progress.

## **H. STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION AND CONFLICT PREVENTION**

The feedback from both beneficiaries and interviewees concerning the effect of the aid intervention on; strengthening the social cohesion and in conflict prevention varied considerably between one interviewee and another. However, there was consensus that during phase one (immediate response), there was evidence of solidarity and spontaneous collective action to provide relief among the Lebanese, foreigners, and immigrants. As time progressed, and in view of the lack of transparency and the perception of unfairness and inequity of the aid process, amid a severe financial crisis, new tensions were created leading to new types of gaps among the neighborhoods and areas. It is important to note here, that the impressions about the impact of PoB explosion on social cohesion cannot be split from the impact of the economic and financial crisis that has placed many Lebanese people under a lot of pressure. It is essential to keep in mind that many had already lost their jobs due to the crisis. Therefore, the blast came on top of existing hardships, with which people were barely coping.

## **I. IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

Many NGOs are extending their projects to support the people in the explosion areas. Among the sample in the study, 67% of the beneficiaries who benefited from aid still need aid in relation to the Port of Beirut Explosion recovery, namely in relevance to renovation and cash. The majority (50%) believe that either the appeal did not contribute to the economic recovery of their business at all or somehow did.

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<sup>27</sup> Due to the emergency of the situation and lack of time, not all donors made the selection criteria available for the public.

<sup>28</sup> Due to the lack of binding criteria, not all NGOs published their aid intervention.

Yet, it is important to highlight the fact that the need for extended support is not independent from the economic crisis. Therefore, the aid intervention activities are still in progress particularly for cash assistance, psychological support, and reconstruction. Additionally, many NGOs have focused on entire neighborhoods in aims to revive the whole area, help enterprises go back to work and become self-sustaining businesses.

## V. CONCLUSION

The findings from the literature review, from the beneficiaries and key informant interviews indicate that a huge effort was put forth by the NGOs, the private sector (individual initiatives) and the Lebanese Army to alleviate the pain of Port of Beirut Blast victims. Without this effort, the situation would have been much worse. The results also show a major gap in terms of relevance, efficiency, coordination and fairness due to the absence of a proper crisis management process, and coordination and accountability mechanisms. This absence allowed room for chaos, duplication of work, emergence of non-credible NGOs (mushroom NGOs as many called them), and misguided aid disbursement approaches. As such, this resulted in less efficiency and weak transparency of the aid disbursement. For instance, many beneficiaries received food donations that were not very needed or in amounts that exceeded their needs. There was duplication of work essentially among NGOs themselves and between NGOs and the Army. Some beneficiaries indicated that the aid was not enough especially those receiving cash and renovation.

Similarly, the interviews with 25 key informants that the AUB research team conducted with representatives from NGOs, UN, World Bank, Embassies, Coalitions, decision makers and others, for the most part corroborated the findings from the survey. In spite of the efforts by NGOs, the private sector (individual initiatives) and the Lebanese Army to alleviate the pain of Port of Beirut Blast victims, the results show major weaknesses in the areas of aid relevance, efficiency, coordination and fairness. The interviewees reported that many beneficiaries received food donations that they did not need or ample amounts that exceeded their needs. Unfortunately, there was duplication of work essentially between aid provided by the NGOs and the Lebanese Army. However, it is worth noting that both the blast and the post-blast phase, during which the aid intervention was taking place, was a period of severe economic deterioration and rapid inflation. Therefore, the insufficiency of aid is likely to be primarily due to the lack of a proper transparent crisis management process, and exacerbated by the excruciating economic, financial and political crises, that the country is suffering from.

### A. CHALLENGES FACED BY AID PROVIDERS

Aid providers faced several challenges while supporting the community including but not limited to,

- Lack of national coordination.
- Absence of a care-giving government.
- Absence of a national risk management plan.
- Difficulty gaining the trust of the community.
- Working in areas that do not have offices.
- Working in an environment of complete chaos.
- Some NGOs did not have the expertise nor the capacity to manage large funds.
- Lack of training on how to act in a situation of crisis.
- Too many aid providers and lack of professionalism.

- Competing with aid providers that took this intervention as an opportunity to market themselves.

## **B. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- There is a serious need to launch a national crisis management unit, whose task is to contain crises and to coordinate any aid intervention process, including but not limited to beneficiaries, aid providers and donors databases to avoid aid duplication and achieve better efficiency.
- The DRM unit established at the Prime Minister's Office in December 2009 and has since been invested in heavily through the UNDP and other major donors. The NRP addresses the risks (including explosions) and the Global Resilient Cities Campaign was endorsed by 300 municipalities including Beirut. One key recommendation would then be to 1) understand the role of the DRM in the response to the Beirut Port Blast, and 2) identify challenges in terms of prerogatives and capacities to the actual implementation of the DRM mandate in the aftermath of the blast.
- The obvious lack of coordination of the response may seem somewhat normal in the direct aftermath of a disaster, however the involved parties (including international community and international organizations) have existing structures for coordination such as the existing clusters of the Syrian Refugees Response Plan, which could be capitalized on as a practice. While the aid being provided is assessed and disbursed by different aid providers and through different channels, it is being accounted for partially by the different stakeholders. This results in duplication or omission, leading to inefficiencies and lack of accountability in the management of the aid. It is thus recommended that aid providers share information in a transparent manner to allow the consolidation of aid-related data under one platform (the EARREL tracker for instance) which is accessible to the general public (including the Lebanese citizens and foreign tax payers, CSOs and media etc.) enhancing transparency in aid management.
- Another issue was raised by a number of citizens related to the complete absence of trust in the Lebanese Government to channel/manage the aid. Somewhat negative perception was also expressed towards CSOs which interventions were not always well perceived (due to the lack of coordination, survey fatigue, etc.). This can be mitigated by encouraging these CSOs to demonstrate higher level of transparency and disclosure of information related to their interventions (on their websites, through LTA's Transparent Hearts, etc.). This allows 1) the aid providers to vet aid recipients and establish eligibility and credibility, and 2) the general public to hold CSOs accountable through accessing pertinent information.
- There is a need to create a platform of vetted and credible aid providers, types of aids and hotlines accessible by the public.
- Aid providers need an incentive to collaborate and to abide by the humanitarian needs; hence, it is very important to create this incentivizing system. This highlights the importance of an aid tracker that allows all aid providers as well as the public to follow up on aid to build informed decisions, to gain trust in the aid process, and to achieve transparency.

- With the increased role of aid providers and CSOs in providing services and leading on meeting the needs of citizens in the absence of a strong state, comes an increased need to ensure similar levels of accountability and transparency in the management of such transactions than those that would be applied in the public sector.

### **C. FIELD WORK LIMITATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS**

The thorough planning and follow up from both the AUB research team and the BOT Team allowed for a relatively smooth and successful data collection process. A few hurdles were overcome by the continuous communication between the two teams. The highlights of the challenges are summarized in the points below:

1. Some of the areas that were of interest, were not residential and those that were, had very high security measures implemented, complicating the data collectors' access. These include, among others, the following neighborhoods: Biel, Zaytouna Bay, Downtown...
2. Although the target was equally split between households and businesses, the data collectors stumbled upon many business owners who were in need but did not receive any aid. Most of them had been visited by many aid providers for needs assessment only with no serious implementation, so they ended up using their own resources.
3. A few respondents refused to take the survey because of the audio recording despite the enumerators' multiple reassurances regarding anonymity.
4. The constant power outage was always an obstacle to access buildings.
5. The team of researchers identified 71 key informant interviews of which 17 responded in a timely manner. The remaining 8 interviews were secured with more difficulty, requiring intense follow-up and personal connections to be secured. Hence, the team has concerns regarding securing an additional 25 KIIs for the upcoming round.
6. The team had to revert to some online interviews for key people who have since moved out of the country or in live very remote areas. Thus, it is important to allow the flexibility to hold online interviews as many key informants were more inclined to conduct interviews online as it is more time efficient. It is also worth mentioning, that the online interviews hold the same quality as the face-to-face interviews especially that in both approaches, the interviews are being recorded.

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