

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTRE BEIRUT

ASSESSMENT & ANALYSIS CELL

Analysis of affected areas in Greater Beirut

Secondary data review - 12 August 2020

On 4 August a large explosion occurred in the port of Beirut, killing over 200 people and injuring over 5,000 (BBC 10/08/2020). The cause of the blast is pending investigation but has been attributed to 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate which was inadequately stored in port warehouses (The Guardian 05/08/2020).

A number of sectors of Greater Beirut are affected, some of which are home to vulnerable, poor, migrant workers or refugee communities. Homes and businesses, including restaurants, bars, and hotels have been lost. Up to 300,000 people could have lost their homes (World Vision 08/2020; UNICEF 05/08/2020, NYT 05/08/2020, UNICEF 07/08/2020).

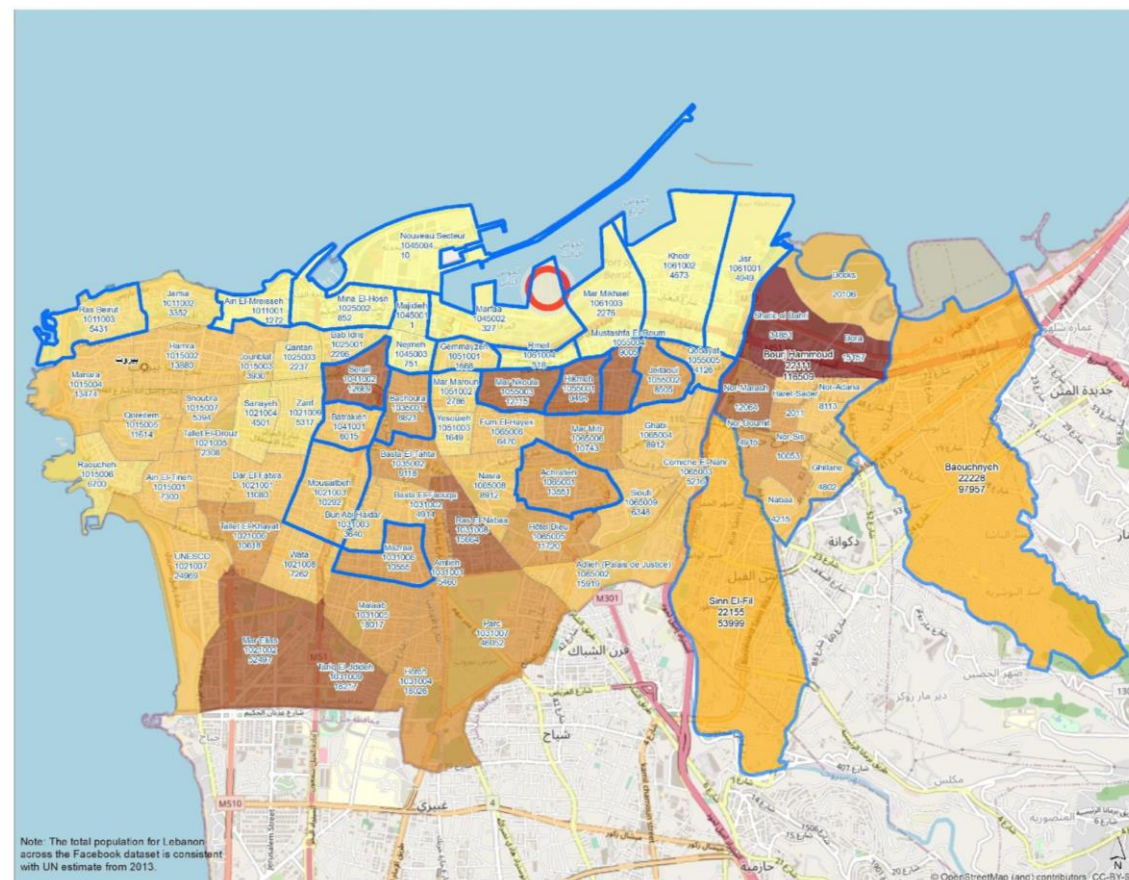
The explosion takes place while Lebanon faces a deep economic crisis (OCHA 05/08/2020, BBC 06/08/2020, NYT 05/08/2020) and rising COVID-19 cases. Protests based on mistrust of the Lebanese government and overall administration have been taking place for months in Beirut city prompting the Government to step down on 10 August 2020.

Table of contents

Overview and humanitarian conditions.....	2
Sector specific information.....	5
Underlying vulnerabilities.....	11
Coping mechanisms.....	16
Community perception.....	16
COVID-19.....	16
Economic crisis.....	17
Political instability.....	18
Humanitarian access.....	19
Information gaps and needs.....	19
Appendix 1.....	22

Lebanon: Explosion
Neighbourhood (Admin 4) and Cadaster (Admin 3) Areas with Pcodes, Population Density and Priority Areas

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See full map on page 21.

About this report

This report presents a comprehensive review of secondary and primary data available on areas affected by the Beirut port blast as of 12 August 2020. It was developed by ACAPS, MapAction, Mercy Corps, and OCHA/UNDAC, with support from the Lebanese Red Cross and Emergency Operation Cell partners. It provides a summary of available information on priority geographic areas and sectors for response, and the main vulnerable groups within the affected population to support.

Overview and humanitarian conditions

On 4 August a large explosion occurred in the port of Beirut, killing over 200 people and injuring over 6,000, with 110 people remaining missing (BBC 10/08/2020). The exact causes of the explosion are pending investigation, but so far, the explosion has been attributed to 2,750 tons of improperly stored ammonium nitrate in one of the port warehouses (The Guardian 05/08/2020).

The explosion had a significant impact on several neighbourhoods in Beirut governorate/city and adjacent quarters in Mount Lebanon governorate. According to preliminary assessments, among the most affected areas are:

- **In Beirut governorate:** Gemmayzeh (Saifi quarter); Karantina (also known as Khodr) and Mar Mikhael (Medawar quarter); Jetaoui (Remeil quarter); Gharb, also known as Karm El Zeitouni (Achrafieh quarter); Nouveau secteur, also known as Downtown, and Marfaa (Marfaa quarter); Bachoura quarter; Zqouq al Blatt quarter; Mazraa quarter; Moussaitbeh quarter; Ras Beirut and Ain Mreisseh sectors (Dar El Mreisseh quarter); and Minet El Hosn quarter
- **In Mount Lebanon governorate:** municipalities of Bourj Hammoud, Bauchriyeh, Sin El Fil, Aamaret Chalhoub, Jdaidet El-Matn and Zalqa (all in Metn district)

In these areas, people have lost homes and businesses, including restaurants, bars, and hotels, while already facing a deep economic crisis (OCHA 05/08/2020, BBC 06/08/2020, NYT 05/08/2020). Up to 300,000 people have lost their homes. The majority of displaced so far are housed with families, friends, and fellow citizens, though the elderly, migrant workers and refugees will likely need targeted support. Schools, hotels, and other public buildings have been offered as shelters (World Vision 08/2020; UNICEF 05/08/2020, NYT 05/08/2020, UNICEF 07/08/2020).

As of 11 August, more than 220 people were reported dead, approximately 6,000 – injured, and over 100 were still missing following the explosion (BBC 10/08/2020, OCHA 7/08/2020). Casualties include at least 34 deaths and over 120 casualties among refugees. Seven refugees were missing (UNHCR 11/08/2020)

The explosion came in the midst of a deep financial and political crisis. Protests have been ongoing since October 2019 and started again in Beirut following the explosion, with people calling for the resignations of the government. The government of Hassan Diab (Prime Minister) resigned on 10 August, following the resignation of various cabinet ministers in the previous days and increasingly violent protests (BBC 10/08/2020).

Protests turned violent on 8 August, particularly in Nouveau secteur (Downtown) of Beirut city, where both the Parliament and the Prime minister's offices are located. Clashes between demonstrators and security forces resulted in injuries amongst protesters and one casualty (Al Jazeera 08/08/2020). Some sources report that over 700 protesters were wounded as of 10 August. Police used tear gas and rubber bullets, while protesters threw

stones and fireworks and lit fires. Protesters entered several government ministries and occupied them temporarily (Al Jazeera 9/08/2020).

Coping capacities of people and services were already stretched due to the Syrian refugee crisis, economic, fiscal, and financial crises, and a recent increase in confirmed COVID-19 cases. Poor households, refugees and migrant workers are particularly vulnerable, having limited resources to reconstruct damaged shelters or to be able to purchase food and non-food items. These groups also often live in densely populated neighbourhoods of Greater Beirut, with limited access to services, including WASH and health services.

Food, fuel and electricity, as well as other non-food items, were already becoming more expensive before the explosion, due to hyperinflation (at around 89% in May 2020) and the loss in value of the local currency. With silos containing wheat reserves lost during the explosion and the port being damaged, imports of many essential goods will have to be diverted to Tripoli port. In the meantime, prices of food and other essential goods are expected to continue to increase.

Priority concerns of people affected from the explosion are shelter (rehabilitation and cash assistance), livelihoods, health (especially in light of COVID-19) and food insecurity.

Profiles of areas affected

Lebanon is divided administratively into three main levels – provinces or governorates, districts or cazas, municipalities.

Municipalities are further divided into quarters (*ahya'*), or cadastres which are then divided into sectors (*manatiq*). In the case of the explosion, quarters which can be considered as neighbourhoods, and are the unit for which analysis is being attempted where possible. The immediate impact of the explosion is in the area considered as Greater Beirut; this includes the Beirut governorate as well as part of Mount Lebanon governorate.

Greater Beirut

Beirut is the capital city of Lebanon and one of the country's eight governorates (*muhafazat*). Administratively, Beirut is a municipality divided into 12 quarters (*ahya'*) or cadastres and 60 sectors (*manatiq*) (Map Action 06/08/2020; Lebanese Arabic Institute). Beirut is a seaport facing the Mediterranean and, together with Tripoli, is Lebanon's commercial hub. Before the blast, 85% of all food imports transited through Beirut port (UN Habitat 10/2011; WFP 06/08/2020).

What is referred to as Beirut today is often actually Greater Beirut, an area which includes adjacent municipalities such as Bourj Hammoud (in the Mount Lebanon governorate), or Fourn El Chebbak and Dahiyeh (in Baabda district of Mount Lebanon governorate). Greater Beirut has an estimated population of over two million people, almost a third of the total population of Lebanon (6.8 million) (The World

Bank; Facebook 04/03/2020; The World Bank 30/09/2014). Most of Lebanon's population is concentrated in the coastal areas, with Greater Beirut and Tripoli City (in North Governorate) the most populated.

Greater Beirut is a multi-confessional (and multi-faith) and multi-cultural urban area, with sharp socio-economic differences across its population neighbourhoods. Beirut has long been a key commercial and cultural hub. Its urban development, demographic composition, and architecture are the result of cultural and economic exchanges as a result of trade, refugee and migration flows from abroad, and internal displacement caused by conflict (UN Habitat 10/2011). Today, some neighbourhoods, quarters, or municipalities of Greater Beirut are still known for their faith or cultural-based demographic composition. Amongst them, the (mostly) Christian quarters of Achrafieh and Medawar, the Armenian municipality of Bourj Hammoud, the (mostly) Shia'a municipality of Burj Al Baranjeh or the (mostly) Christian Maronite district of Baabda (Lebanese Arabic Institute). Although these areas are still largely associated with particular religious communities, in reality they are inhabited by a diverse mix of nationalities and religions.

Beirut experienced major reconstruction following the Lebanese Civil War in 1990, and after the 2006 conflict with Israel. Modern buildings are often adjacent to traditional houses, and rich modern neighbourhoods (both in Beirut city and in the suburbs) are next to older, poorer areas. The provision of services, including electricity, and the level of critical infrastructure is not homogenous throughout the city. Disparities are found between the city centre and the suburbs, and amongst sectors in the city centre, with some areas hosting crowded, low income housing, home to migrant workers, refugees and informal sector workers (like Karantina or Karm El Zeitoun sectors in Beirut city, or Nabaa in Bourj Hammoud municipality).

Profiles of select areas affected by the blast

Twenty one areas (neighbourhoods) of Beirut and Mount Lebanon governorates have been particularly affected by the blast based on preliminary assessments (this will change as better information becomes available). Preliminary assessments have identified these most affected neighbourhoods based on the degree of damage to buildings and critical infrastructure combined with areas of pre-existing vulnerability where residents have less capacity to self-recover or find alternative living arrangements.

Existing neighbourhoods and quarters most affected by the blast include:

- **In Beirut governorate:** Gemmayzeh (Saifi quarter); Karantina and Mar Mikhael (Medawar quarter); Jetaoui (Remeil quarter); Gharb, also known as Karm El Zeitouni (Achrafieh quarter); Nouveau secteur, also known as Downtown, and Marfaa (Marfaa quarter); Bachoura quarter; Zqouq al Blatt quarter; Mazraa quarter; Moussaitbeh quarter; Ras Beirut and Ain Mreisseh sectors (Dar El Mreisseh quarter); and Minet El Hosn quarter

- **In Mount Lebanon governorate:** municipalities of Bourj Hammoud, Bauchriyeh, Sin El Fil, Aamaret Chalhoub, Jdaidet El-Matn and Zalqa (all in Metn district)

Marfaa quarter (PCODE 10450): Marfaa sector, in Marfaa quarter, is the epicentre of the explosion. It contained the commercial port of Beirut. Marfaa quarter also includes the sectors of Majidieh, Nejme, and Nouveau secteur (Central district), also known as *centre ville*, in French, or Downtown in English. Marfaa quarter is a business, commercial and administrative hub, and is not a major residential area. Yet, at the time of the explosion people in the area were affected by the blast, with fatalities being reported (BBC 10/08/2020). Damage to the port and its warehouses, as well as to silos containing wheat, will impact on the country's economy and on people's food security, there will be an impact on livelihoods particularly for port, retail and service sector workers.

Within the quarter, Nouveau secteur, is a modern neighbourhood re-built almost entirely following the Lebanese Civil War. The development of Nouveau secteur was undertaken by the Lebanese company Solidaire, with reconstruction works starting in the late 1990s. It is the administrative centre of the Lebanese capital, hosting the Lebanese Parliament in Place de L'Etoile (Nejme Square), Beirut City Hall, and the Grand Serail, headquarters of the Prime Minister. Besides being an administrative hub, Nouveau secteur also hosts a number of diplomatic buildings, such as the UN offices (including UN ESCWA headquarters), monuments, religious buildings, and other touristic attractions including art galleries and Beirut Souks (shopping centre) (Living Lebanon; BBC 10/08/2020; L. Bucciatti-Barakat, Téoros [Online], 25-2 | 2006).

Medawar quarter (PCODE 10610): Medawar quarter includes the affected neighbourhoods of Rmeil, Karantina (also known as Khodr), Jisr Hadid, and Mar Mikhael.

- **Karantina or Khodr sector (PCODE 1061002):** Karantina's name derives from its historic role as a quarantine station for sick people entering the port of Beirut during the rule of Ibrahim Pasha in the mid-19th century (Ottoman Empire). From 1915, with the first Armenian refugees coming from what is today modern Turkey, Karantina became a destination point for incoming refugees (Armenians, Kurds, Palestinians, and Syrians). In 1976, during the Lebanese civil war, the neighbourhood was the scene of a massacre during fighting between Christina militias and the Palestine Liberation Organisations (PLO) in Beirut (L'OLJ 28/03/2020). Karantina, today, remains a poor commercial and semi-industrial neighbourhood, close to Beirut's commercial port. It has a population of around 4,638 people most of whom are income poor (ACTED 07/08/2020). In early 2000, a study from Greenpeace found out that Karantia was amongst the most polluted neighbourhoods in Beirut because of waste producing industrial sites in the area, a slaughterhouse and waste treatment plant, which no longer exists

(The Daily Star 02/11/2004). Waste disposal is still a problem in many poor areas of Beirut city and Greater Beirut, especially in Metn district, which is adjacent to Jisr and Karantina sectors.

- **Mar Mikhael sector (PCODE 1061003)** : Mar Mikhael is a vibrant neighbourhood of Beirut city. It is a residential and commercial neighbourhood, which attracts tourism with its cafes, restaurants, and art galleries. Although not densely populated (2,300 people for 52.06 Ha), it was close to the blast and reported some damage to houses and commercial buildings. Being one of Lebanon's commercial hubs, the damages to Mar Mikhael will affect Lebanon's economy (it contains the headquarters of Electricite du Liban and several other prominent companies). Owners of shops, restaurants, and cafés risk not being able to rebuild due to the current financial crisis and this will also have knock on effects to all of the people employed in the restaurant and hospitality businesses there, including many informal workers.

Achrafieh quarter (PCODE 10650): Achrafieh quarter includes Achrafieh, Mar Mitr, Nasra, Corniche El Nar, Hotel Dieu, Sioufi, Adlieh (Plais de Justice), and Ghabi (Karm El Zeytoun) neighbourhoods. It is known as the Christian quarter of Beirut (as historically it was mainly populated by Greek orthodox and Maronite communities). It includes residential neighbourhoods, with a good level of services, cafes, shops and restaurants. It is home to the Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth (one of the main universities in the city) along with several schools and colleges, hospitals and health clinics. For this reason, most neighbourhoods in Achrafieh attracted investment. It is one of the oldest sectors of Beirut, but the few traditional buildings that remain from the civil war are often next to modern constructions and expensive apartments. The damage from the blast, on top of Lebanon's financial crisis, are affecting service provision in the area (WASH, electricity, education, and healthcare), while health services across the city were already overwhelmed by COVID-19.

- **Gharb sector (PCODE 1065004)**, also known as Karm El Zeytoun, unlike most neighbourhoods in Achrafieh is poor, the cost of housing is lower than in the rest of the quarter. For this reason, Gharb hosts a number of Syrian refugees who could not afford to rent an apartment elsewhere in the neighbourhood (ACTED 07/08/2020).

Saifi quarter (PCODE 10510):

- **Gemmayzeh sector (PCODE 1051001)**: Gemmayzeh sector is, which also includes the sectors of Mar Maroun and Yesouieh. Like Mar Mikhael, Gemmayzeh is a lively commercial and tourist hub, with bars, restaurants, art galleries, and some residential streets. Gemmayzeh has a population of around

1,668 people. Like Mar Mikhael, the damage to Gemmayzeh will likely affect Lebanon's economy and owners of shops, restaurants, and cafés risk not being able to rebuild their activities due to the current financial crisis, threatening the livelihoods of informal service sector workers who were employed there.

Rmeil quarter (PCODE 10550): Rmeil quarter is next to Saifi and Medawar quarter. It includes the sectors of Mar Nkoula, Hikmeh, Mustashfa El Roum, Jetaoui, and Qobayat. Mar Nkoula (Mar Nicolas), Hikme, and Moustashfa El Roum which are particularly densely populated (Mar Nkoula with 12,115 ppl/25.26 Ha; Hikme with 9,494 ppl/20.95 Ha; Moustashfa El Roum with 9,005 ppl/18.62 Ha).

A preliminary assessment of the areas most affected by the blast, conducted by the Lebanese Red Cross, shows that in Rmeil there is a higher number of households reporting family members with chronic illnesses and disabilities and other vulnerabilities compared to other assessed quarters. Out of 850 households' responding to the survey (7 percent of the total population of the quarters assessed) 20 households reported separated children, 80 households a member with disabilities, and 505 a member with chronic illnesses. Although the numbers should not be seen as representative of the needs of the total affected population in Beirut and Rmeil, they do indicate that people in the quarter are likely to be in need of health and protection assistance, including psychosocial support.

- **Jeitaoui sector (PCODE 1055002)**: Jetoui sector, in Rmeil quarter, is a residential and densely populated neighbourhood (8,505 people for an area of 23.12 Ha). It was not amongst the hardest hit by the blast, but people still reported damage to homes. Jetoui hosts the Hospital Saint George and Lebanese Hospital of Jetaoui. Traditionally it has been home to Armenian and Lebanese communities, as well as many foreigners.

Zqouq al Blatt quarter (PCODE 10410): Zqouq al Blatt is a quarter close to Minet El Hosn and Marfaa quarters, where Beirut's port used to be located. It was possibly affected by the blast due to its proximity to the explosion. It is a residential area, not densely populated with 12,669 people living in Serail sector and around 6,015 in Batrakieh sector.

Mazraa and Mousaitbeh quarters (PCODE Mazraa 10310/PCODE Moussaitbeh 10210): Mazraa and Moussaitbeh quarters are commercial areas of Beirut. Besides possible damage to houses affecting the quarters' inhabitants, damages to commercial buildings and roads, telecommunications and WASH infrastructure risk having an impact on the livelihoods of Lebanese owning, and working in, businesses in the area.

Dar El Mreisseh quarter (PCODE 10110): Dar El Mreisseh quarter includes Ras Beirut, Ain Mreisseh, and Jamia sectors. It is adjacent to **Minet El Hosn quarter (PCODE 10250)**.

It is a residential area and commercial and touristic hub of Beirut. The blast risks having an impact on businesses in the area.

Bourj Hammoud municipality and quarter (PCODE 22111): Bourj Hammoud is located in the Metn district of Mount Lebanon Governorate. However, for many, Bourj Hammoud is considered part of Beirut city. It is often known as the Armenian neighbourhood. Bourj Hammoud is characterized by narrow streets and the tangled electric wires that build a net across the municipality buildings. It is a highly densely populated area (116,509 ppl/264.53 Ha), and includes the vulnerable neighbourhoods of Nabaa, Arax, Maraache and Adana (ACTED 07/08/2020). Bourj Hammoud hosts at least 10,000 Syrian refugees, many living in Nabaa, as well as thousands of migrant workers. These districts are known for the poor living conditions of its communities. Even before the blast, service provision in Bourj Hammoud was particularly poor, with bad waste management being one of the main problems (UN HABITAT 03/2017).

Sin El Fil quarter (PCODE 22155): Sin El Fil is a quarter and municipality in Metn district of Mount Lebanon, to the south of Bourj Hammoud. It is mainly a residential district but not densely populated as the neighbouring quarter. It is often considered as a suburb of Beirut city.

Sector specific information

Current priorities

At this stage in the crisis, the priority sectors where needs are emerging are:

- **Shelter**, in the form of support to rehabilitation
- Capacity and access to **health-services**
- **Livelihoods**, including access to food

So far there is less information available in other sectors, but damage has also been reported to WASH and education infrastructure.

Cash programming is likely to play an important role in responding to multi-sectoral needs. However, cash actors need to have strong strategies in place to guard against exchange rate losses and banking restrictions in Lebanon's unstable financial environment and engage closely with cash coordination structures on the ground.

Shelter (housing) and NFI (important non-food commodities)

Commercial and residential buildings reported a range of damages. **Up to 300,000 people have been displaced from their homes and are now mainly staying in friends' and relatives' houses.**

Risks:

- ❖ **Unavailable and/or unaffordable construction and repair materials**
- ❖ **Rise in COVID-19 transmission due to shared accommodation**

Complete **destruction** of buildings and infrastructure was reported within a 2 km range from the port. Buildings up to 8 km from the explosion site reported extensive structural damage, while properties 20 km from the blast reported minor damage (IFRC 04/08/2020). Palestinian refugee camps in the capital reported no severe damage (UNRWA 07/08/2020). People surveyed in early assessments reported the urgent need to repair **broken windows and doors** (LRC 08/2020). Windows are being temporarily covered with disposable material such as nylon and plastic to provide some protection and privacy (discussions with operational partners 10/10/2020, UNHCR 11/08/2020). In Burj Hammoud and other municipalities of the Metn District, damage is concentrated along the boundary of Beirut City and the sea coast (PCPM assessment, 11/08/2020).

The Governor of Beirut estimates that up to **300,000 people** cannot currently live in their homes due to the blast (ACTED 07/08/2020, OCHA 07/08/2020). UNICEF estimates that up to **100,000 children** could be part of a family with either a destroyed or heavily damaged house (UNICEF 07/08/2020). Debris is still reported inside houses and on the streets with removal operations and cleaning ongoing (OCHA 07/08/2020). There are concerns that structurally unsound buildings can pose a safety hazard to responders and civilians, especially those who refuse to leave their severely or partially damaged houses in poorer neighbourhoods (LRC 08/2020, ACTED 07/08/2020, discussions with operational partners 08/10/2020).

Lebanon's economic crisis, which wiped out 70% of savings for many Lebanese, will make it very difficult for people to **fund repairs** to their homes (ACTED 07/08/2020). Prices of construction and repair materials such as **wood, aluminium and steel for windows and doors, as well as glass** are likely to increase due to higher demand and their potential scarcity on the market. Even those that find equipment and can afford to cover the expenses face **strict cash withdrawal limits imposed by Lebanese banks**. As a result, they might also have to wait before their houses are habitable again (The Economist 05/08/2020). The most vulnerable households might face prolonged displacement or live in hazardous conditions without basic services such as water and electricity, or privacy (Plan International 06/08/2020). However, over 55% of the houses assessed in the area were rented, which may allow the affected population to move elsewhere with relative ease (LRC assessment 10/08/2020).

Most displaced people are staying with **friends and relatives** or have accepted offers of free accommodation from **fellow citizens**, including in holiday houses. Almost all households surveyed in early needs assessments had taken in additional people due to the blast, most were hosting 2 to 10 individuals. Local communities may not be able to sustain this support for an indefinite period however (discussions with operational partners 09/08/2020 and 10/08/2020, World Vision 08/2020). Large numbers of injured people (around 5,000) are still in hospital and may need shelter or rent support when they are discharged. One source mentioned that approximately one hundred people, mostly labourers, were unable to find shelter and were sleeping in the street on 6 August (Islamic Relief 07/08/2020). Hotels, schools, churches and other public buildings have opened their doors to the displaced (PIN 07/08/2020). However, these have not been utilised to great effect yet and only offer a temporary solution (discussions with operational partners, 11/08/20). Some displaced people remain in the city but out of the blast area, while others reportedly moved to **makeshift shelters** close to their houses (discussions with operational partners 10/10/2020). It was also reported that social distancing measures have made it more difficult for displaced individuals to find shelter (discussions with operational partners 10/08/2020).

As accommodation alternatives had to be found quickly it is unlikely that **COVID-19 distancing measures** were observed (IFRC 09/08/2020). Where several families are now living together the numbers of people now sharing a house will prevent social distancing and create greater exposure to potential spread of the virus, putting vulnerable members such as the elderly at greater risk. Should more people make use of temporary public shelters, it is not clear what kind of public health measures will be adopted (IFRC 09/08/2020). The **duration of displacement** will vary sharply. Some households are predicting to be displaced for up to a month, others for a longer, indefinite period (discussions with operational partners 10/10/2020). Affected population from the Karantina district may take up to one year to return (discussions with operational partners 09/08/2020).

Out of the five neighbourhoods of Jetaoui, Karantina, Bourj Hammoud, Nabaa and Karm el Zeytoun, two (Nabaa and Karantina) had no **electricity** while the others continued to have electricity at pre-explosion levels, i.e. less than six hours daily (ACTED 07/08/2020). Some **cables and generators** within the power grid were severely damaged cutting off electricity provision. The Hamra neighbourhood seems an exception with electricity provision increasing compared to pre-blast levels, possibly due to less demand on the network (discussions with operational partners 10/08/2020). While power outages of three to six hours a day are common in Lebanon, they went up to 20 hours a day in July due to fuel shortages. Private and public consumers have to pay for generators out of their own pocket (Discussions with operational partners 06/08/2020, The Economist 05/08/2020, HRW 09/07/2020). Refined petroleum is Lebanon's top import (OEC 2018). If the supply chain is disrupted, pre-existing **fuel shortages** and power cuts could last even longer (HRW 09/07/2020).

Health

The blast caused heavy damage to hospitals and primary health centres (PHC). An already overburdened healthcare system and personnel had to face **an influx of trauma patients while also experiencing an increase in COVID-19 admissions**. Stocks of medicines and vaccines and PPE in port warehouses were lost.

Risks:

- ❖ **increased challenges in access to healthcare and medicines for people with pre-existing conditions and needing routine treatment due to greater financial strain and less availability**
- ❖ **Spike in numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases due to less social distancing and higher exposure of patients and health personnel in overcrowded ERs**

Morbidity and mortality

According to provisional estimates over **200 people died** while more than **6,000** were treated for **injuries** after the explosion (BBC 10/08/2020). These figures are likely to grow as the life-saving window for search and rescue operations closes. The number of people **missing** ranges from **21 to 200** (OCHA 07/08/2020, WHO 06/08/2020, DG ECHO 09/08/2020, IFRC 09/08/2020). As of 7 August, thousands of patients were still in hospital with trauma and burns. The initial need for blood donations has been met, medical equipment is still needed (IFRC 09/08/2020).

Health care facilities, infrastructure and staff

Beirut has 16 **hospitals**. Four of them were within a 1 km radius from the explosion site, where buildings have reported severe damage (DLR 05/08/2020). Three hospitals closed due to widespread destruction after the blast and two reported severe damage losing an equivalent of **500 hospital beds** (WHO 06/08/2020, WHO 06/08/2020). As Beirut hospitals were overwhelmed by patients on 4 and 5 August, the injured were transported out of the capital, as far as Nabatiyeh and Tripoli, 70 km from the capital (HRW 06/08/2020). Assessments including these areas are needed to ascertain whether medical facilities need reinforcement and can fill the capacity gap of other Lebanese areas (discussions with operational partners 11/08/2020). 16 **Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs)** reported damage affecting **160,000 people** who normally rely on them (UNICEF 07/08/2020). These are key treatment centres which relieve hospitals of some of their patient load (discussions with operational partners 05/08/2020).

55 PHCs in affected areas in Beirut were surveyed in a rapid, voluntary assessment. 37% reported damage ranging from limited to severe, 13% claimed health workers were among the injured, **less than half of the PHCs were able to continue offering routine health treatment, 55% were in need of further medical supplies** (WHO 08/08/2020). A list of 15 PHCs

to undergo priority damage assessment has been prepared (discussions with operational partners 11/08/2020).

The number of available **health personnel** is reduced as several were injured and killed in the blast and hundreds had already been laid off due to economic constraints (IMC 05/08/2020). Due to the economic crisis, underfunded hospitals had closed wards prior to the blast (AP 22/07/2020).

Several containers of **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** and other medical material, destined to support the COVID-19 response, were destroyed by the blast (WHO 06/08/2020).

The **national warehouse and cold rooms** run by the Ministry of Health and UN agencies in Karantina reported heavy damage with health material, such as vaccines, insulin, acute, mental health, TB and HIV medicines moved to other facilities (OCHA 07/08/2020, WHO 06/08/2020). UNICEF reported a loss of around 10% of vaccine supplies in the cold rooms it provided (OCHA 07/08/2020). National storage capacities for health supplies need to be restored (discussions with operational partners 05/08/2020).

Toxic gases from the explosion

According to government sources, the blast has occurred as a result of the ignition of 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate. Following the explosion, a **toxic cloud** of nitrous oxide was released. The government has requested international expertise in the field of detection of hazardous substances (Government of Slovenia 08/08/2020). The Aerosol Research Lab at the American University of Beirut reports that air quality indicators have **returned to pre-event levels** after an increase was observed between 6 and 7 PM on 4 August, after the explosion. However, **toxic dust and asbestos** are a concern, along with other chemical substances stored at the port (discussions with operational partners 11/08/2020). It is not yet clear how many people reported health problems due to the toxic substances released (HRW 06/08/2020, Project HOPE 07/08/2020, UNICEF 07/08/2020).

The American University of Beirut and the World Health Organization have issued **guidelines** for the public. It is recommended to **wear masks** at all times when cleaning and outside, as well as thick gloves to protect from shattered glass, frequently wash exposed skin with water and soap, sweep the dust with vacuum cleaners and/or wet towels (ensuring drying afterwards) instead of brooms, and spray water in gardens and balconies outdoors to help particles deposit faster.

Based on CBRN preliminary assessments, the UN is advising that all personnel operating at the port protect their mouth and nose with a protection level of at least FFP2/3 (discussions with operational partners 11/08/2020).

Health needs

Shortages of medical equipment were already an issue before the blast (Project HOPE 07/08/2020, HRW 24/03/2020). A review of information to date reveals the following needs:

- Relief supplies are needed, in particular **PPE, mobile medical units, drugs for acute and chronic diseases** (Government of Belgium 07/08/2020, Action against Hunger 07/08/2020). Lebanon does not have any local production of medical supplies (HRW 24/03/2020).

- Early needs assessments in affected areas highlighted a need for **medicine** to manage **chronic illness**.
- Major **reconstruction** support for at least two hospitals and **equipment** support for other severely damaged health infrastructure (discussions with operational partners 11/08/2020).

COVID-19

The impact of the explosion cannot be separated from the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Hospitals could not adequately prepare because of **limits on imports** of medical equipment due to shortages of foreign currency. Lack of funds and global shortages of medical supplies in March and April left Lebanese hospitals struggling for equipment and supplies, including PPE. Power shortages and reliance on expensive generators also threaten the functioning of health infrastructure (Action against Hunger 07/08/2020).

The chaos which ensued after the explosion and ongoing protests involving thousands of people have led to the **transgression of social distancing** measures (WHO 08/08/2020, discussions with operational partners 10/08/2020). Lebanon was already witnessing an upsurge in the number of confirmed COVID cases since the start of August. Since 5 August the country has registered **over 200 cases** daily. Beirut is one of the four governorates with the highest COVID cases nationwide (MOPH accessed 10/8/2020). This uptick in cases led the government to announce a new lockdown which ran from 30 July till 3 August and was planned to resume between 6 and 10 August. Following the blast lockdown measures were revoked (Al Arabiya 28/07/2020, Save the Children 05/08/2020).

The areas around the port were already registering a high rate of COVID-19 transmission (UNICEF 07/08/2020) and it is likely this **upward trend** in cases will continue as overcrowded ERs and hospitals and a lack of PPE has exposed health workers and patients to a high risk of infection in the immediate aftermath of the explosion (WHO 08/08/2020, OCHA 07/08/2020). The likelihood of **transmission** has also increased as people share **temporary shelter** arrangements (WHO 08/08/2020).

In several hospitals in the capital **intensive care units (ICUs)** were already at capacity before the blast due to COVID-19 and would most likely be unable to accept new COVID-19 patients now (WHO 08/08/2020, OCHA 06/08/2020). While overall levels of positive tests still remain below emergency levels, there is concern of ICU bed shortages if current infection trends persists (Health sector, 11/08/2020).

Based on anecdotal evidence, **individual behaviour** in response to COVID-19 (wearing of masks and gloves) has not changed after the blast with those disregarding precautionary measures still doing so, while others were and still are more respectful of the guidelines. Mistrust in the governmental response to COVID-19 may have undermined respect for official guidelines (discussions with operational partners 10/08/2020).

Challenges to provide regular health services

With hospital capacities overstretched, attention will be focused on serious COVID-19 patients and trauma victims from the explosion (Malteser 09/08/2020). It may be difficult to provide services for people with **pre-existing conditions** needing regular treatment such as dialysis, chemotherapy or other more **routine primary healthcare services** such as maternal and infant healthcare, chronic illness, vaccinations, mental health treatments and general medical consultations (discussions with operational partners 07/08/2020).

Medical expenses may become unsustainable for residents who have exhausted their savings and can no longer afford treatment. Early needs assessments show many affected people reporting that they are struggling to find the money to buy essential medicines needed to treat chronic diseases (LRC MSNA 08/2020). Operational partners report that the cost of health services, along with that of **transportation** are major access barriers within the highly privatised healthcare system. Refugees, migrant workers, and informal sector workers particularly struggle to pay high health costs (discussions with operational partners 10/10/2020).

Beyond physical wounds and the need for **physical rehabilitation** for those severely injured, the exposure to such a traumatic event may result in needs for **mental health** support (ICRC 11/08/2020). Previous studies on children affected by explosions have showed how some experience long-term anxiety and sleeplessness (Save the Children 07/08/2020). Healthcare and response personnel who have been under severe pressure might also need specific treatment, along with citizens who lost relatives and friends and those who reported life-changing injuries (Action against Hunger 07/08/2020, WHO 08/08/2020, ICRC 11/08/2020).

Additional injuries during protests

Protests erupted in the capital over the weekend of 8-9 August and were met with violent police response: one policeman died and over 200 people needed medical treatment on site or in hospital (DG ECHO 09/08/2020, WHO 08/08/2020, ICG 07/08/2020). If protests and clashes continue the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC), Beirut hospitals and health centres may need to take in a third wave of patients beyond those hospitalised for COVID-19 and trauma after the explosion. There are questions over their capacity to treat this potential **new caseload** of injured.

Food security

While food stocks are reported as relatively low, no food shortages should occur. **The challenge will be at the household level** where the ability to afford food may impact quantity and diversity of food consumption.

Many people had already exhausted savings and been forced to decrease their food intake, especially of expensive items, before the blast; coping capacities are low.

Risks:

- ❖ **increase in food prices**
- ❖ **unavailability of specific food items**
- ❖ **currency volatility and banking restrictions pose challenges for cash programming**

Ready-made meals, snacks, and food parcels have been provided by locals and NGOs (Islamic Relief 07/08/2020, WFP 10/10/2020). There is a commonly reported need for **cash and voucher assistance (CVA)** to guarantee access to food (IFRC 09/08/2020, ACTED 08/08/2020). According to initial assessments most **markets** are functioning with some exceptions, such as the food market in the neighbourhood of Karantina which was destroyed.

Food prices have been rising steadily due to the economic crisis but no evidence of increasing prices after 4 August have emerged. There is still a risk that prices continue to raise amidst the ongoing economic and political crisis, supply chain disruptions and the loss of up to **85% of the country's cereal reserves** (HRW 06/08/2020, WFP 06/08/2020). The food security of the poorest households and of those who had just enough to provide for their families will be increasingly threatened. Half of the Lebanese surveyed in June by WFP were already worrying about a lack of food, while humanitarian programming started including food parcels in October 2019 to address underlying food security concerns (WFP 06/2020, Islamic Relief 06/08/2020).

Local sources suggest food shortages should not occur, but **food stocks remain relatively low** (FT 10/08/2020). WFP suppliers reported that there are stocks of food for up to two months. Around 15,000 metric tons of staple food stored in port warehouses (such as wheat and soy) was lost (OCHA 07/08/2020, WFP 10/08/2020). Wheat is a key ingredient in the production of pita bread, a staple of the Lebanese diet. If normal consumption rates are maintained, Lebanon will be left with only six weeks of wheat flour reserves classifying the country as food insecure¹ (WFP 10/08/2020, WFP 06/08/2020). In a worst case scenario, **bakeries** might no longer be able to function due to a lack of flour (Islamic Relief 07/08/2020, DFID 09/08/2020). In fact, several **milling facilities** around the port are damaged, as are the

¹ Threshold to ensure food security is equivalent to three months of reserves.

silos containing the country reserves of grains. National food storage capacities need to be restored (WFP 10/10/2020, UNICEF 06/08/2020).

Lebanon **imports** most of the products the population needs, including 85% of national food needs (WFP 06/08/2020). With the **Beirut port**, where the majority of the total imports used to be processed, not operational for up to a month, sea traffic is shifting to **Tripoli** which is 85 km north of the capital and has lower logistic capacity (OCHA 07/08/2020, OCHA 05/08/2020). This will put further upward pressure on staple food prices, which have already doubled in the six months previous to the blast due to the economic crisis and shortages of foreign currency (WFP 05/08/2020, WFP 06/2020). Most families were already reducing their food portions and intake of more expensive food items such as meat before the blast (discussions with operational partners 10/10/2020).

An initial assessment in the neighbourhoods of Jetaoui, Karantina, Bourj Hammoud, Nabaa and Karm el Zeytoun has showed that food can be purchased. Still, **affordability and availability of food** and **cooking equipment** remains a concern for early phase of the response (ACTED 07/08/2020). It is unclear whether food shops and markets will shut down definitively due to the lack of funds and unavailability of reconstruction material on the market (ACTED 07/08/2020). As construction material is bulky, it might be more difficult to transport and import into the country, especially by plane, compared to other aid items (discussions with operational partners 10/10/2020).

Cash programming is likely to play a crucial role in supporting multi-sectoral needs (food security, livelihoods, shelter rehabilitation, access to health care. Lebanon's financial crisis has sparked wide gaps between official (YER1,500 to the USD) and black market exchange rates (up to YER8,000 to the USD) and banking restrictions. This poses challenges for cash programming. Cash actors need to coordinate closely with partners in country.

Livelihoods

Thousands were dismissed or saw their salaries reduced already before the blast. Exhaustion of savings, loss of jobs, businesses and shops and new expenses for reparation and reconstruction following the blast might push even more people below the poverty line.

Risks:

- ❖ higher levels of unemployment
- ❖ more households exhaust savings

Before the port explosion, livelihoods in the capital were deteriorating. Rising **unemployment** and **salary reductions** put households under financial stress. **Inflation** had been rising sharply for months before the explosion with commodity prices consistently increasing (OCHA 07/08/2020, Reuters 23/07/2020). Consequently, more and more residents

exhausted their savings and thousands of people fell below the **poverty** line. The latest data before the blast showed that 45% of Lebanese were considered poor (World Bank 09/08/2020). 78% of the responders surveyed by the LRC after the blast reported having no savings and 37% reported no income (LRC MSNA 08/2020).

Businesses and shops were **destroyed** or severely **damaged**, including hotels, bars, cafes and restaurants in proximity of the port (Government of Turkey 10/08/2020). Some businesses might not open up again due to **lack of funds** for reconstruction and restocking. Owners may be already heavily indebted and unable to borrow more money (ACTED 07/08/2020). Some business owners might also have used all their savings to maintain their activities during the compounded economic and COVID-19 crises. These business owners and their employees are likely to be pushed closer to poverty, as few people have access to social safety nets in the country (IFRC 09/08/2020). Even if businesses do reopen there is the likelihood of **less customers** going to restaurants and bars, as people have less disposable income now due to the combination of ongoing crises.

The **import-export sector** made up of distributors and suppliers will suffer from the temporary loss of the Beirut port and the diversion of commercial traffic, potentially sending more people in the sector in a spiral of debt, unemployment and poverty (ICG 07/08/2020, discussions with operational partners 10/10/2020). Even if the **port of Tripoli** is an option, the extra costs associated with road transport may be too much for some operators.

Lebanon hosts **400,000 migrant workers**. Many of them have lost their job since October 2019 due to the economic crisis or because of COVID-19 restrictions and were already extremely vulnerable to economic shocks, some of them even living in the streets. A July 2020 study revealed that 77% of the surveyed migrants had no source of income (IOM 07/08/2020). They might recur to more and more negative coping mechanisms to survive in the aftermath of the blast

Nutrition

Nutrition data on wasting and stunting has not been updated since 2004 and does not offer a reliable baseline (Global Nutrition Report 2018). Baby food was reported as lacking in initial assessments (LRC MSNA 08/2020). **Baby milk and other childcare products** already had high prices before the blast. These products might become rare and thus even more expensive following the explosion (discussions with operational partners 06/08/2020).

WASH

Tanks and drainage pipes were damaged, while no major water shortages were reported. Prolonged disruptions in waste collection are reported.

Risk:

- ❖ disease transmission and outbreak due to uncollected waste and vector presence

A lack of water in the areas affected by the explosion was reported, for instance in Karantina neighbourhood (UNICEF 07/08/2020, ACTED 07/08/2020). Water storage tanks on roofs were destroyed (WASH Cluster 08/2020). **Water tanks and drainage pipes** have been damaged and need to be replaced, this was specifically reported in LRC-surveyed areas in Ashrafiyeh, Karam el Zaytoun, Karantina, Badawi and Khandak al Ghameek (LRC 09/08/2020, discussions with operational partners 10/08/2020). Further, around **6%** of the surveyed HHs reported having **no access to water** after the blast (LRC 09/08/2020).

In the LRC-surveyed areas most people used **bottled water** for drinking purposes and **public filtered water** for cooking and washing needs (LRC 09/08/2020). There have been some reports of increased prices for bottled water following the blast (discussions with operational partners 10/10/2020).

While not enough information is available about damages to the **sewerage system**, 13% of the households surveyed by LRC in Ashrafiyeh, Karam el Zaytoun, Karantina, Badawi and Khandak al Ghameek reported having toilets in unacceptable conditions (LRC 09/08/2020).

Waste collection and disposal activities are facing disruptions and garbage is piling up on the streets potentially favouring disease transmission through vectors (Project HOPE 07/08/2020, discussions with operational partners 10/08/2020, LRC 09/08/2020). Regular provision of these services was not guaranteed even before the blast (The National 16/07/2020). While local responders and volunteers have successfully removed large quantities of rubble, problems with recycling plastic, glass and other materials have emerged (LRC 09/08/2020).

As prices are likely to rise and **hygiene products** were already in high demand before the blast due to the pandemic, poor households might have to decide between purchase of food or hygiene items, potentially exposing themselves to a higher risk of COVID/19 and other infections.

Education

120 schools reported some sort of damage from the explosion. This affects **55,000 Lebanese and non-Lebanese children** who are to resume classes in September after the summer vacation (OCHA 07/08/2020). As schools are closed during the summer break, they have opened their doors as **shelters**. If a substantial amount of people is hosted in schools, a prompt resumption of classes in a month might prove difficult (UNICEF 06/08/2020, discussions with operational partners 06/08/2020). Damage to schools following the blast and after their usage as collective shelters can also be expected.

Telecommunications

Telecommunication networks were affected immediately after the explosion, with network outages lasting a couple of hours. On 5 August 85% of the networks were already back to their initial capacity. As of 11 August, networks are almost fully restored, with some congestion points signalled only in some densely populated areas (TSF, 11/08/20).

Protection

Trauma and mental health issues were reported among the affected population particularly in Karantina and Nabaa neighbourhoods. Mental health issues such as anxiety, sleeplessness, or night terrors are likely to be particularly experienced by children. Research suggests that children can still suffer negative psychological effects of experiencing large scale explosion even 16 months after (Save the Children 7/08/2020).

Adults are also likely to be in need of psychological support due to shock, stress, and other mental disorders commonly triggered by trauma. If not addressed, this can lead to a risk of longer term mental health conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and addictions (Metro 7/08/2020).

Mental health issues remain a taboo in parts of Lebanese society and often the effect of stigma on people with mental illness is more burdening than the disease itself.

Violent protests

The explosion came in the midst of a deep financial and political crisis. Protests against the government have been ongoing since October 2019 and **have resumed in Beirut since the explosion with people calling for the resignations of the government and disarmament of Hezbollah.** Protests turned violent on 8 August, particularly in areas surrounding the parliament, and the ministries of foreign affairs, economy, and environment in central Beirut. The government of Hassan Diab (Prime Minister) resigned on 10 August, following the resignation of various cabinet ministers in the previous days and increasingly violent protests (BBC 10/08/2020).

Violent clashes between demonstrators and security forces resulted in the death of at least one police officer, and more than 700 injuries, out of which at least 65 people required hospital attention. Police used tear gas and rubber bullets, while protesters threw stones and fireworks and set up fires. Protesters entered several government ministries and temporarily occupied them (Al Jazeera 11/08/2020, Al Jazeera 9/08/2020, CNN 8/08/2020).

It is expected that the violent clashes will continue in spite of the cabinet resigning 10 August. Lack of rule of law and arbitrary detentions were flagged as main concerns in Karantina and Jetaoui (ACTED 7/08/2020).

Lack of social protection and potential homelessness

An estimated 300,000 people are thought to be displaced across the Greater Beirut area, including up to 100,000 children. Most have found shelter with relatives or local community groups, but many people without local support networks are forced to sleep on the streets or in unsafe buildings (UNICEF 7/08/2020).

Some migrants and domestic workers were reportedly abandoned by the families they worked for and are now forced to live on the streets, often with no documentation. Migrant workers are highly concentrated in Jetaoui, Gemmaze, and Burj Hammod, where high levels of humanitarian needs are reported. There is a rising concern about increasing

human and sex trafficking incidents of vulnerable migrants. 15 trafficking cases were reported in Nabaa and Burj Hammoud (Operational actors in Lebanon).

As the situation deteriorates, more people lacking social protection (refugees, LGBTI+, domestic workers) will be unable to ensure their own survival needs and will entirely depend on service providers, exposing them to exploitation and abuse (Operational actors in Lebanon).

Some elderly people reportedly refused to relocate from their homes and decided to remain in unsafe locations. Many elderly people are left with no income, which further increases their vulnerability (Operational actors in Lebanon).

Women and children, particularly vulnerable refugees, migrants, and the LGBT community are likely to experience increasing levels of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). Men and boys in Lebanon are also subject to violence and abuse. However, reported numbers are likely to remain low because of social stigma, which hampers reporting. Lack of shelter and potential overcrowding exposes these vulnerable populations to exploitation.

SGBV in Lebanon had increased during the COVID-19 outbreak due to movement restrictions trapping women and children in often unsafe environments. It is likely that current conditions will result in further SGBV incidents. Increasing mental health issues, poverty, and people having to shelter with their families in crowded conditions are likely to exacerbate issues. Domestic violence has always been a concern in Lebanon, however as the economic situation deteriorates, household stress increases and families shelter together, family disputes might intensify leading to more incidents of domestic violence against the weakest members, often women and children. Limited infrastructure to provide health services, the general state of insecurity, and lack of safe spaces following the explosion is likely to prevent people reporting the incidents and getting assistance.

Previous assessments suggest that men are often embarrassed to queue in order to wait for assistance, which will likely leave the females of the household assigned to collect aid, potentially risking their safety.

Underlying vulnerabilities

Lebanon is a country of an estimated 5.9 million people residing within a densely populated area of 10,400km². The country hosts the highest per capita refugee population in the world – estimated 30% of the population are refugees.

Over 3.2 million people were considered in need of humanitarian protection assistance. Main vulnerable groups in the country include:

- **1.5 million vulnerable Lebanese** (people whose vulnerabilities have been exacerbated by the refugee crisis; their deprivation means that they have no, or very limited, access to health services, income, education and water and sanitation services, and live in poor housing conditions (IACL March 2015)).

- **1.5 million Syrian refugees**
- **250,000-400,000 migrants** – most of them women working as domestic helpers
- **180,000 Palestinian refugees already residing in Lebanon**
- **27,700 Palestinian refugees from Syria** (LCRP 2020).

There are approximately 500,000 people living in Beirut governorate (which excludes the outer suburbs like Burj Hammoud and Sin El Fil) including around 36,000 vulnerable Lebanese, 36,000 Syrian refugees and 5,770 Palestinian refugees (OCHA 21/06/2019).

Factors of vulnerability

Poverty

The explosions occur at the time of a severe economic crisis. An estimated one million people in Lebanon live below the poverty line (OCHA 7/08/2020). Palestinian refugees are most affected by economic exclusion with 90% of Palestinian refugees from Syria and 65% of Palestinian refugees from Lebanon living below poverty line in 2019. 51% of Syrian refugees were reported to live below the poverty line at the same time (OCHA 21/06/2019).

World bank projections for 2020, suggest a sharp increase in poverty, with an anticipated 40% of the Lebanese population living below the poverty threshold (currently at \$350/per month) and 20% facing extreme poverty (World Bank 04/2020, CARE 05/2020). It is estimated that 220,000 jobs from the private sector have been lost between October 2019 and January 2020 (CARE 05/2020).

The economic crisis which began in 2019 exacerbated the pre-existing fragile conditions resulting in further increasing poverty and social tensions. COVID-19 related restrictions since 2020 further deteriorated the economic situation leading to closure of many businesses and increasing unemployment. 33% of households interviewed by CARE in 2020 reported that their income had decreased by 50% since March 2020; 41% of women in comparison to 29% of men reported to have lost their jobs after the COVID-19 outbreak (CARE 05/2020).

Poor households are likely to be more affected by the current crisis due to increasing prices of basic services and commodities and the inability to pay for the reconstruction or repairs of their houses. It is likely that the current crisis will lead to a significant cohort of vulnerable households falling below or further below the poverty line and potentially into using negative coping mechanisms. The affected groups have already exhausted their resources and coping capacity and are in need of immediate assistance in order to absorb the impacts of the disaster. **99% of refugee households reported not having any savings in April 2020.** All households reporting having savings expect them to end in less than 1 month (DRC 20/05/2020).

Economic hardship: Lack of livelihoods and food insecurity

The worsening economic situation and the strict movement measures due to COVID-19 significantly affected the access to livelihood and income generating activities,

particularly for the those engaged in daily work and the informal sector (predominantly refugees). Across Lebanon, nearly 90% of Syrians and almost 80% of Palestinians have either lost their income-generating possibilities or have had their salaries reduced since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak or before. In May 2020, 70% of Syrian refugee families reported having no working members in the last week, a steep increase from 44% reported in February 2020, before COVID-19. Some 61% of Syrians working in the construction sector, one of the of employment sectors in which Syrians are permitted to work, reported losing their jobs (IACL 07/2020).

The negative impact is also being felt by Lebanese, with 70% of them having lost their jobs or having had their salaries reduced. In 2020, nearly one out of every three Lebanese was pushed into unemployment, while approximately 20% of the remaining population saw their salary being reduced (WFP June 2020).

At the same time, the currency has been consistently devaluating in 2020, driven by economic crisis and dollar shortage. Although the official exchange rate is Lebanese Pound LL1,500 to the US Dollar, the black market rate is now LL7,000-LL8,000 (FT 10/08/2020). For the provision of card-based cash assistance, banks use semi-official rates that are significantly lower than black market rates.

Food prices had already soared before the explosion due to the economic crisis — they were almost three times as high in June as they were a year earlier. Prices have reportedly further increased in the period following the port explosion.

Food supply chain is likely to be disrupted in the aftermath of the explosion. Lebanon is dependent on imports to satisfy around 85% of its food needs (ACTED 7/08/2020). Tripoli port, 80km north of Beirut, has been identified to handle most of the imports following the explosion. However, the capacity of Tripoli port to handle ships is approximately half of that of the Beirut port (FT 10/08/2020).

This will likely lead to increasing prices and temporary shortages disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable households, as the main concern related to the access to food is the lack of financial resources. Although there is no immediate threat of the country running out of food stocks, the majority of the storage and milling facilities and 120,000 metric tonnes of food stocks were destroyed resulting in food stock running low in the short term (OCHA 7/08/2020).

The amount of food intake since the explosion has been reportedly decreasing, with the majority of assessed populations in need of food assistance immediately after the blast (50% in Nadaa, 70% in Bourj Hammoud, 80% in Karantina, 95-100% in Jetaoui, and 70-90% in Karm el Zaytoun) (ACTED 7/08/2020). Food insecurity is likely to particularly affect people with special need such as female-led household, disabled, and elderly. Local support networks and NGOs have mobilised to provide food assistance to those in need.

Increasing economic vulnerability is reported both within the refugee community and host community, leading to social tensions. The competition in the job market is the most commonly cited cause for rising tensions between host and refugee communities, as

well as between Lebanese communities. (UNHCR 2/06/2020, Tension Monitoring System, ARC Perception Survey Wave VII findings January 2020).

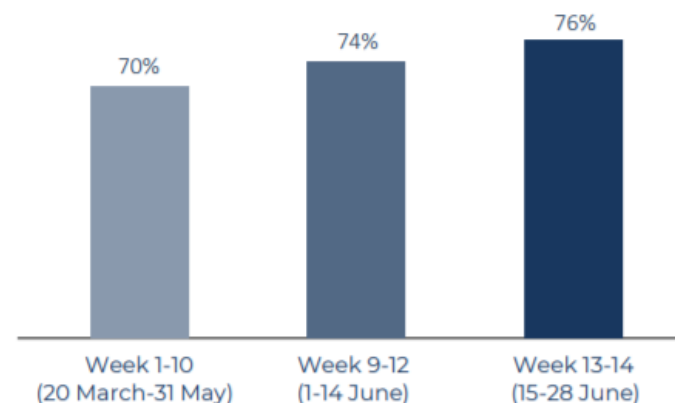
Shelter vulnerability

Even if the port itself is not densely populated, the area surrounding the port has a high concentration of Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian households living in some of the most vulnerable urban neighbourhoods of Lebanon's capital.

Karm el Zeytoun in a residential area of Achrafieh, a high-density poor neighbourhood where many Syrians found refuge thanks to the affordable prices and opportunities for informal employment. High level of community disputes have been reported in this area with over 32% of Lebanese and over 11% of non-Lebanese households facing disputes according to a household assessment from February 2020 (UN-Habitat 2020).

Bourj Hammoud, in particular the highly vulnerable neighborhoods of Nabaa, Arax, Maraache and Adana, located north-east of Beirut in el Metn district where a high concentration of Syrian refugees have settled is characterized by a chaotic urban structure, with shelters built haphazardly and not connected to the government's services.

Karantina, a low-income commercial and semi-industrial neighbourhood lying east of the Port of Beirut, adjacent to the North-South highway, with a high concentration of refugees (ACLED).



Inability (or increased difficulty) to pay rent among Syrian refugees

Source: ACL 07/2020

The majority of Syrian refugees in Beirut and Mount Lebanon governorates live in residential buildings (apartments, rented rooms, or hotels). Almost 50% of refugee households living in residential buildings (countrywide) lived in overcrowded, substandard or dangerous conditions before the explosion. This includes 35% of refugee

households in Beirut and almost 50% in Mount Lebanon governorates. Damages reported to the residential buildings are going to affect the vulnerable populations more, as they don't have enough resources for immediate repairs (IACL 07/2020).

Extensive shelter damage reported across the city is likely to contribute to increasing cases of evictions. Syrian refugee and other populations in a vulnerable situation have been increasingly unable to pay their rent since the deepening of the economic and financial crisis in the fourth quarter of 2019. This situation has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures Lebanon has had to take to prevent and contain the spread of the virus (IACL 07/2020).

Sharp increase in individual evictions and households at risk of evictions has been reported in the first half of 2020. This has been reported across all population groups in the country, including Palestinian refugees, Lebanese nationals, refugees from other nationalities, and migrants. 2,236 Syrian refugees (552 families) were evicted in the first half of 2020, an increase of 62% compared to the first half of 2019. 17,316 Syrian refugees (3,802 families) were at risk of eviction as of June 2020 (IACL 07/2020). **73% of households who are renting considered themselves at risk of eviction if the COVID-19 crisis continues as of April 2020 (DRC 04/2020).** Vulnerability and risk of evictions is likely to increase as the economic crisis in Lebanon continues and population's and refugees' purchasing power diminishes.

Supporting sustainable mid-term tenure security for both vulnerable Lebanese citizens and Syrian refugees should be one of the priorities. Aid agencies involved in Syrian refugee response have significant experience in provision of both in-kind (sealing-off kits) and cash-based shelter assistance (Cash for Rent), while tens of thousands of Syrian refugee families benefit from Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance programs that partially covers rent expenses. Due to low elevation, the affected area is not expected to be in need of winterization assistance beyond doors, windows and roof repair (no fuel needs are expected).

Health vulnerability and populations with special needs

There is a serious shortage in medical supplies in the country, especially in basic and vital materials used for bone, brain, and heart surgery (Syndicate of Private Hospitals 07/2020).

The share of refugee households with at least one member with a special need has increased to 73% in 2019 from 63% in 2018. Refugee households living in Mount Lebanon reporting the lowest access to healthcare services (VASYR 2019). Households with at least one member with physical or mental disability constitute 12% on average countrywide.

Population with disabilities and special needs are likely to be severely affected by the current crisis due to long-standing negligence by the state and high level of mental health issues.

Mental health issues are prevalent among youth and school children, at times resorting to substance abuse (tobacco and alcohol) as well as bullying and suicide occurring especially between the ages of 13 to 17 years old. Access to mental health services has

been challenging due to limited awareness, mobility restrictions, and general constraints of available services in the country. In addition, social stigma and misconceptions about mental health have prevented women and men from seeking support and specialised assistance. Since the beginning of COVID-19, mental health services provided through NGOs and civil society organizations had to scale down or change their support modalities to remote counselling and PSS activities.

Lebanon has seen a steady increase in suicide and suicide attempts since 2016. In the first quarter of 2019 the number of incidents exceeded the average of previous years. Although there are no conclusive findings in the Lebanese context, feelings of increased anxiety and induced stress attributed to environmental factors such as the economic situation might exacerbate risks related to mental health conditions. The SGBV impact assessment conducted in November 2019 reported high levels of stress among women and girls interviewed throughout the civil unrest (CARE 05/2020).

Religions and political affiliation

Generally speaking, Beirut's suburbs follow sectarian/religious divisions throughout the country. Neighbourhoods are commonly referred to as, alternatively, Christian, Shia, Sunni, Druze etc. However, other identities, such as class and ethnic grouping also play an important role. Many of the suburbs affected by the explosion are seen as at least partly Armenian neighbourhoods, such as Borj Hammoud, Jetaoui or Mar Mkhayel. Heavily affected suburbs to the direct south of the explosion are generally recognized as affluent, with real estate value per square metre very high. Other suburbs, such as the mixed industrial/residential area of Karantina, are poor, with many Syrian and Palestinian inhabitants as well as migrant workers.

Lebanon is host to 18 officially acknowledged religious groups and has a well-established sectarian system that has historically played a paramount role in the social, political and economic history of the country and influences many aspects of Lebanese wellbeing including aspects of gender equality and family law (CARE 05/2020).

The tensions are often reported between dominant religious groups leading to discrimination or stalemate on issues such as nationality rights or census. As deputies are elected on the basis of their religious affiliation, they serve as de facto representatives of their religious communities, rather than seeking a common national interest. This has a direct impact on minorities, who are seldom represented or considered as a priority (Minority Rights Group International 12/2014).

Besides the larger Christian, Sunni and Shi'a denominations, many of the smaller religious groups find themselves under-represented or altogether excluded from the country's sectarian power sharing system.

While the majority of the damage was centred on the affluent Christian neighbourhoods of Ashrafieh, other, poorer neighbourhoods were affected with higher vulnerabilities due to the poorer make up. Of note, Syrian refugee and other more vulnerable populations,

while clustered in poorer areas, are also present in more affluent areas, irrespective of religious or communal generalisations.

Gender and age (based on CARE Rapid Gender Assessment May 2020)

Population age disaggregation for Lebanese:

- 0-14 years: 24.09%
- 15-24 years: 16.42%
- 25-54 years: 44.79%
- 55-64 years: 7.91%
- 65 years and over: 6.78%.

Population age disaggregation for Syrians:

- 0-4 years: 15.2%
- 5-11 years: 25.2%
- 12-17 years: 14.8%
- 18-59 years: 42.1%
- 60 years and over: 2.7%

Female headed households for Lebanese: 15%, for Syrians 20%

Women, the elderly, and people with specific needs (chronically ill, persons with disability, elderly headed households) were identified as the most in need of protection assistance following the explosion.

Given the low representation of women in public institutions and decision-making bodies, there is a risk that gender aspects of the response are not taken into consideration. A gender analysis of the impact of the economic, financial and COVID-19 health crises showed that 85% of women were eating smaller portions for their meals, compared to 57% of men and that the risk of child marriage for girls had increased as families try to reduce their financial burden by decreasing the number of people they have to feed. (CARE 7/08/2020).

Access to services including health and SRHR has been affected particularly for women and girls who experienced additional movement restrictions and lack of income.

Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian families uphold clear division of roles and responsibilities, with women and adolescent girls performing households related tasks including childcare. Women are likely to be expected to carry out additional unpaid work including caring for the elderly, people with disabilities, and dependant family members affected by the explosion. The additional burden has already led to physical and emotional distress for women, negatively affecting their wellbeing following the COVID-

19 outbreak. Currently, these negative impacts are likely to increase leading to more negative coping mechanisms and mental health issues (CARE 05/2020).

Women's access to livelihood opportunities, control over income, and access to basic services has been systematically decreasing in the last months due to movement restrictions and shrinking economy. 57% of men and only 11% of women interviewed following the COVID-19 outbreak reported to have control of their income. 64% of the women reported that this line of questioning was not applicable to them as they had no personal source of income and thus are dependent on their husband's income. However, some women were forced to engage in income generating activities (either home based or full time) potentially having a positive impact on their financial freedom and having a more significant say on how their households resources are spent and allocated (CARE 05/2020).

Women and men have also reported that the harsh economic conditions have forced families to take hard decisions with women reevaluating their priorities and neglecting some of their personal needs in order to give priorities to the family needs. More women were reported to resort to coping mechanism like eating less preferred food and limiting the portion sizes at meal time (CARE 05/2020).

Women and children have a prevalent role in the informal economy sectors and risk being further exposed to mistreatment, exploitation, and abuse. Child labour is prevalent in Lebanon. According to UNICEF, 6.7% of Syrian children and 5% of Palestinian children were engaged in some form of work in 2016 (Save the Children 2020). However, child labour has not only risen among refugee children but also among Lebanese children. The high percentage of children involved in economic activities was reported in Nabaa neighbourhood, where over 53% of children in Lebanese households and over 60% of children in non-Lebanese households were reported involved in child labour (UN Habitat 2017).

Lebanon has seen an increase in child labour in 2020, with boys being at higher risk of child labour than girls, except in agriculture, where Syrian refugee girls have the more significant share of full-time child workers. Boys and girls engaged in child labour are often forced to return to work in poor hygiene conditions, exposed to hazardous work conditions, with no access to hand washing facilities or protective equipment.

Adolescent girls are at high risk of early marriage with 14% of Syrian girls aged between 14 and 17 years married, compared to 1% of boys. Concerns about child marriage and the risk of girls being forced to marry at early age in order to alleviate financial burden of families struggling to cover their basic needs arise together with the deterioration of the economic situation (VASR 2019).

Incidents of gender-based violence have increased in 2020 with women and girls feeling less safe in the households and communities and access to specialised services being constrained. Key informants (women and men) reported that men staying at home during COVID-19 outbreak negatively affected the family dynamic and increased tensions in the household with reported incidents of abuse against women and children. Risks of sexual

exploitation and abuse increases as a result of more people being unable to meet their basic needs (CARE 05/2020).

Specific vulnerable groups

Refugees: There are 1.5 million Syrian refugees, 180,000 Palestinian refugees from Lebanon, and 27,700 Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon (LCRP 2020). The refugees remain the most vulnerable group in Lebanon and report consistent issues with access to basic services and livelihoods. Due to high poverty rates and unstable employment among the refugees, they are particularly vulnerable to economic shocks and consequences of the recent disaster.

95% of working Syrians are engaged in the informal sector with no social or legal protection, as the refugees are officially permitted to work only in construction and agriculture sectors. The rate of poverty, child labour, child marriage, and other negative coping mechanisms is much higher among the refugees than among Lebanese.

78% of Syrian refugees surveyed above the age of 15 do not have legal residency. Lack of regularized stay has far reaching consequences on all aspects of their life in Lebanon, including challenges in securing housing, accessing livelihoods and facing risk of arrest and detention. Rates among youth and women remain lower than middle aged, men counterparts. Needing to obtain a Lebanese sponsor, even for those that are exempt, was the highest reported barrier to regularizing their stay (VASYR 2019).

Migrant workers: There are between 250,000-400,000 migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, most of them women from African and Asian countries. Their rights are tight to kafala system with very little to no protection by labour law, which puts them at risk of further exploitation and abuse with very little power to negotiate or hold their employers accountable (CARE 7/08/2020). Embassy and consulates reported that four migrants died in the blasts and at least 128 more were injured. Two individuals remain missing (OCHA 7/08/2020).

As the economic crisis - and more recently the health crisis - strikes domestic workers find themselves exposed to series of violations including losing their residency and being at risk of deportation. Prior to the explosion, the economic and COVID-19 crises had pushed many migrant workers into unemployment, poverty and homelessness. 32% of migrants reported experiencing threats of abuse, violence, exploitation and trafficking. A further 77% reported having no source of income – many of whom have lost their jobs since the start of the economic crisis in October 2019 and COVID-19 lockdowns. (IOM 7/08/2020)

A number of suicide attempts among the migrant workers and other abuses reported to media over the last months indicate a high risk of abuse and exploitation by employers and very little access to services such as mental health support. Since COVID-19, live-in women migrant domestic workers are subject to increased restrictions on their mobility with no day off and limited capacity to communicate with family and friends that negatively affects their mental health. (IOM 7/08/2020).

Domestic workers who are not protected by labour laws are excluded from national COVID-19 policy responses, such as wage subsidies, unemployment benefits or social security and social protection measures. Where access to COVID-19 testing or medical treatment is available, they may not come forward due to fear of detention or deportation, especially those in an irregular status or those whose residency permit has expired and did not manage to leave the country (CARE 05/2020).

IDPs: up to 300,000 people have lost their homes and have been displaced. Up to 100,000 children across the Greater Beirut area. During times of disasters, affected people are made more vulnerable by lack of housing and economic insecurity. Vulnerable population groups such as children, elderly, persons with disabilities and sick people are at higher risk of neglect, exploitation, and abuse especially when there are displaced from their homes.

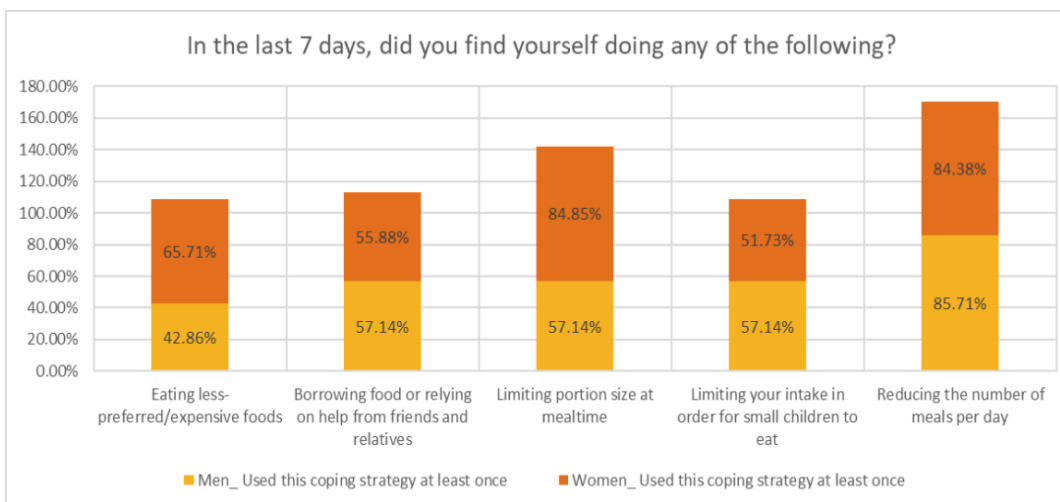
Displaced people were reported in Karantina in designated evacuation centers (1,000 individuals, mostly Lebanese), with an estimated 70% of the population having left the area (ACTED). Schools, currently on summer break, have been opened as shelters (UNICEF 6/08/2020).

Population with specific needs: According to WHO, 15% of the global population has some form of disability. Persons with disabilities are one of the most vulnerable and socially excluded groups in any crisis-affected community. They may be in hidden in homes, overlooked during needs assessments, and not consulted in the design of programs. A needs assessment conducted by UNICEF and Women's Refugee Commission in 2017 confirmed that women, children and youth with disabilities in Lebanon and their caregivers are facing a range of GBV-related risks including: Child marriage among girls with disabilities, intimate partner violence against women with disabilities, sexual harassment by male community members, and at risk of exploitation by family members who forced them to engage in begging on the street.

Approximately 13% of households assessed in Nabaa neighbourhood have a chronic illness and 10% temporary illness or injury (UN Habitat 2017). 73% of refugee households have at least one member with specific needs. Across the refugee population, 6% of individuals had a disability (visual, hearing, physical, intellectual and/or speech impairment), 14% had a chronic illness and 15% had a temporary illness (VASYR 2019).

Coping mechanisms

Food: Both women and men adopt coping mechanisms related to food consumption in order to cope with the harsh economic situation. 66% of women comparing to 43% of men eat less preferred food, 85% of women compared to 57% of men are limiting the position of food at mealtime while almost equally both men and women limit their intake in order for smaller children to eat (F: 52%, M: 57%) or reduce the number of meals (F: 84%, M: 86%) (CARE 05/2020).



Shelter: Vulnerable families have had to resort to a range of negative coping mechanisms to be able to pay their rent and therefore avoid eviction:

- Downgrading shelter type – families moving from residential to non-residential shelter or to informal settlements, where rents are usually lower.
- Downgrading shelter conditions – families moving to shelter in poorer condition, which raises additional public health concerns when there is limited access to water and sanitation facilities.
- Living in overcrowded conditions – families moving together into combined shelter, often done to share the rent burden, but potentially becoming a risk factor for spreading COVID-19 to others sharing the shelter.
- Going into debt or increasing existing debt – creating additional problems when families are unable to repay their debt due to lack of income.
- Reducing food consumption, to save money for rent – driving malnutrition and health risks in the medium- and long-term, especially for children (IACL 07/2020).

Lebanon has seen an increase in child labour and early marriage in 2020. KII expressed concerns about child marriage and the risk of girls being forced to marry at early age in order to alleviate financial burden of families struggling to cover their basic needs.

Community perception

Generally, the information-flow within communities is high with a lot of information being spread through social media and community volunteers. There is no vetting of this information however, and concerns are being raised about the accuracy of the information being circulated.

There is a perceived lack of information from governmental actors, which is further hampered by a general distrust in information from governmental sources. (discussions with operational partners) The potential for rapid spreading of dubious and false information is huge.

Access to information during the COVID-19 outbreak varied with the vast majority of Lebanese and Syrians relying on TV news and social media. Men rely mainly on TV news while women and adolescents' access online media for their information and receive information from NGOs and word of mouth. Women reported they also rely on other family members while 3% of women also reported they have no access to information. UNW report estimates that only 1 out of 3 women have regular access to a private phone. It is worth mentioning that based on a paper on access to technology published in 2017, only one third of the female interviewees reported having a phone in their possession (CARE 05/2020).

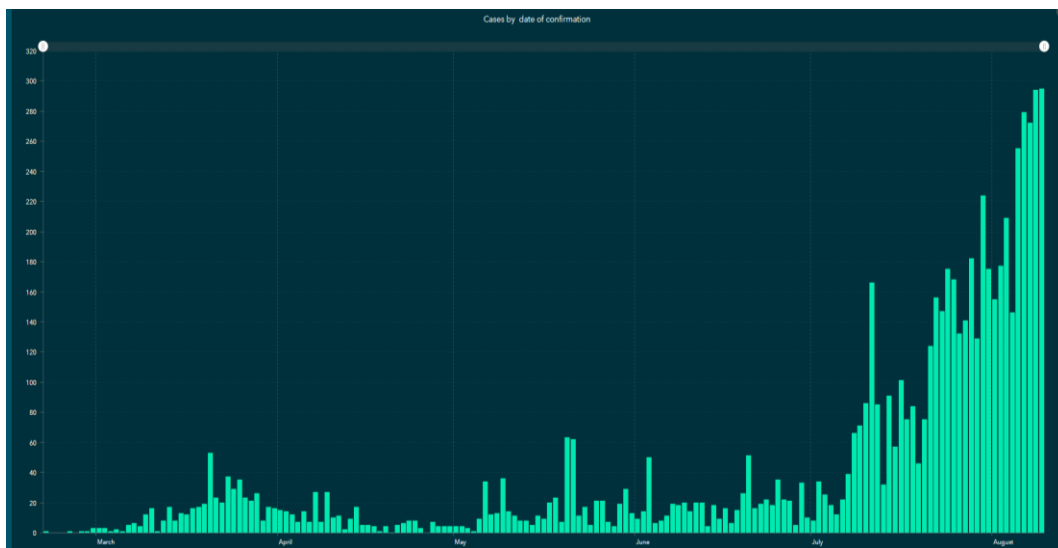
While a lot needs to be done in to have safe access to accurate information in a timely manner, information should be disseminated in a way that allows for people with disabilities such as hearing or visual impairments to be able to access relevant information in an equitable manner.

COVID-19

Humanitarians fear that displacement, damage to hospitals and health facilities, the increased strain on Lebanon's health sector, and lower compliance with COVID-19 safety measures among a population struggling with multiple challenges will likely exacerbate the spread of the disease.

Lebanon faced a sharp increase in reported COVID-19 cases in the weeks leading up to the Beirut port explosion. Two-thirds of all confirmed cases in Lebanon occurred during the 30 days leading up to 4 August. The country had recorded 6,812 cases as of 9 August, with community transmission widely reported. 9 August saw a record 295 confirmed new cases.

COVID-19 caseload from March to August



Source: Lebanon MoPH, accessed 9 August 2020.

On 4 August, Lebanon's main coronavirus hospital, Rafik Hariri University Hospital, announced being on the verge of reaching full capacity in its critical care ward. **Pressure on both public and private hospitals is at an all-level high, with the number of new cases surging rapidly** (ACTED 7/08/2020, OCHA 7/08/2020, Alahed 4/08/2020, MoPH 9/8/2020).

Lebanon reported its first COVID-19 positive case on 23 February 2020. The Lebanese authorities introduced a number of measures to seek to control the disease from 16 March, including movement restrictions, curfews, shop closures and temporary suspensions of flights. These measures will be increasingly difficult to maintain as the country deals with overlapping displacement, health, economic and political crises (CARE 05/2020).

Health, shelter, and protection actors are working to increase infection prevention and control measures in response activities, avoid activities involving overcrowding and maintain COVID-19 preventive measures. Shelter actors have put guidelines in place for enumerators conducting needs assessments to try to mitigate against the spread of the virus (discussions with operational actors, 9/08/2020). However, the crisis poses major challenges.

Displacement of affected people and overcrowding in the aftermath of the explosions increases the risk of the spread of COVID-19. 300,000 people were displaced by the explosion. Early needs assessments have found that almost all families surveyed in affected areas have taken in friends or relatives, with most households taking in between 2 to 10 additional people (Shelter actors 10/08/2020).

The emergency in Beirut has caused many **COVID-19 precautionary measures to be relaxed**, raising the prospects of even higher transmission rates and larger caseloads in

the coming weeks. It is difficult to maintain social distancing and other COVID-19 prevention measures when faced with competing priorities: local clean up and community support initiatives, the need to travel further to access services made more scarce by the destruction, and the daily challenges posed by political and economic upheaval (OCHA 7/08/2020).

The current crisis has put further strain on a health sector already struggling to cope with the impact of COVID 19. At least three hospitals have been rendered partially or fully inoperable. These facilities previously served 120,000 people. Following the port blast, Rosair, Carantina and Saint George Hospitals were so severely damaged that they had to shut down and send patients to other facilities. Jeitaoui and Rizk Hospitals were damaged but remain open. Hospitals have been overwhelmed with casualties, with many intensive care units (ICUs) already near their max capacity due to COVID-19. Sixteen primary healthcare centres serving some 160,000 people have sustained some damage. The explosion also destroyed 10 containers of with vital PPE at Beirut harbour (OCHA 7/08/2020, UNICEF 7/08/2020, ACTED 7/08/2020).

Interviews conducted by CARE in May 2020 found that the COVID-19 outbreak and economic crisis in Lebanon had

- Reduced women's access to health care, especially sexual and reproductive health care. 42% of interviewed of women said they could not access family planning solutions and SRHR services due to COVID-19 and economic difficulties. 83% of them reported that fear of COVID-19 transmission is a barrier for them
- Disproportionately impacted jobs for women, half said they had lost their job compared to 21% of men
- Increased gender based violence (according to 54% of interviewed women).

54% of women interviewed thought they needed more information about COVID-19, compared to 29% of men, with most women wanting to get their information through social media (Care 05/2020).

Economic crisis

The explosions that ruptured Beirut Port and reverberated across the nearby, densely populated areas and across the capital threaten to plunge Lebanon's acute financial, economic, and banking crises deeper than many people in Lebanon feared. A lot hinges on the nature and extent of the financial aid that has been pledged to Lebanon and how much of that aid is contingent on the introduction and implementation of reforms, as previously stipulated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and other donor countries (IMF). It is plausible that some external actors may, however, look to fast-track financial support packages to Lebanon and remove any conditions placed on tangible reforms being carried out, with the onus being placed on providing urgent support to the economy following the tragic events of 4 August.

The cost of the damage that the explosions caused to the city's infrastructure is estimated to be around several billions of dollars (ACAPS). It is not clear, however, whether this estimate factors into the equation the loss of income and livelihoods as a result of the blasts.

As for the significant destruction that the explosions caused to Beirut Port, this raised immediate concerns over the scale of the impact of loss of functionality of Lebanon's primary port and knock-on-effect for the rate of imports for essential commodities into Lebanon and the in-country supply chains. Beirut Port accounts for over 80 percent of Lebanon's imports and exports, and generates a purported \$250 million per year in port fees (Arabian Business). Lebanon's main port was also a major transit hub. The damage caused to Beirut Port's wheat grain silos and the port's warehouse capacity is concerning, although officials at Lebanon's second biggest port, in the northern city of Tripoli, are confident that there is enough spare capacity at Tripoli Port and in land to compensate for the damage caused at Beirut Port (Financial Times).

Anger felt toward the political elite predates the outbreak of the prolonged anti-establishment protests in October and the onset of Yemen's economic meltdown that has taken a heavy toll on large sections of the population. The resignation of the government headed by Hassan Diab is unlikely to satisfy the demand for reform both inside and outside Lebanon (Reuters). The continued political uncertainty and absence of reform that hangs over Lebanon will continue to negatively impact the economy. Foreign currency shortages, the continued devaluation of the Lebanese pound, and rising commodity prices will place the country and its people under immense pressure unless urgent action is taken to address the country's failing economy.

Since October 2019, Lebanon has faced dramatic political and financial challenges which have culminated in an unprecedented economic recession, further compounding existing vulnerabilities among the country's population – Lebanese and refugees alike. The value of the LBP has tumbled, losing 85% of its value, as of end of July 2020 (ACTED). On August 10 the value of the local currency against the US dollar on the parallel market was LL 7,700 per USD (Sarraf Lebanon).

According to the World Food Programme of the United Nations (WFP), the price of the "minimum survival food basket" (consisting of a monthly per capita ration of the amount of food (e.g., rice, bulgur, pasta, white beans, sugar, sunflower oil, salt and canned meat) had already increased by +116% between September 2019 and June 2020 (of which +34% between May and June alone), in a context where the Lebanese pound experienced a sharp depreciation on the parallel foreign exchange market.

On the 2nd of September 2019, Lebanon declared a "state of economic emergency" as a result of the country's longstanding structural problems, including the crippling public debt. The country is suffering from accumulating economic problems which have led to a deep and wide-reaching social, political and economic crisis that led thousands of protestors to the streets on 17th October 2019 (CARE).

The negative trajectory of the Lebanese economy accelerated in the second quarter of 2020 due to the aggravation of a series of interrelated factors. The lack of available foreign currency to meet the demand of importers that include fuel and food importers loomed large with concerns that this would lead to decreased imports and increased shortages of basic commodities. The devaluation of the Lebanese pound, rising commodity prices, rising unemployment, and decreased income was contributing to a sudden and swift reduction in people's purchasing power. In the absence of an injection of foreign currency into the economy, the value of the Lebanese pound is expected to depreciate and hyperinflation set in.

Political instability

On Monday 11/08, the Lebanese government resigned amid violent protests calling for the change of authority following the explosion. Many people have accused the country's leaders of culpability through their alleged negligence and corruption (BBC 10/08/2020). This has followed a previous resignation of several members of the government and the parliament (TRT World 9/08/2020) (CNN 8/08/2020).

Saturday, 8 August violent clashes between demonstrators and security forces erupted across broad swaths of central Beirut (ECHO 9/08/2020). The latest disaster is likely to unleash a new wave of popular protests with Lebanese organising on social media. Activist groups that played a prominent role in the October protest movement are starting to mobilise again, raising their popular slogan demanding the removal of the country's elites.

In October 2019, Lebanese occupied the streets in various cities across the country demonstrating against corruption, unemployment and sectarianism in the country (CARE 05/2020). These protests led to a resignation of the government of former Prime Minister Saad Hariri, public disgruntlement against the ruling political class has been rampant, accelerating a financial crisis that is one of the worst the country has ever seen. Protests have continued in the country since then focusing against the political climate in the country, the corruption, and the deteriorating quality of life including the hyperinflation, increase in commodity prices, the informal capital controls measures, scarcity of foreign currency, and high levels of unemployment and redundancy affecting mostly women and youth.

The formation of the new government is unlikely to be a quick process due to the country's complex political system. Power in Lebanon is shared between leaders representing the country's different religious groups. In the meantime, the protests are likely to continue and potentially could spin out of control, leading to multiple casualties and political unrest.

Humanitarian access

The local response following the explosion has been very strong, with community support networks and NGOs mobilizing across Beirut to clean, assess damage, provide shelter, food, NFI support, and commence the reconstruction activities and temporary shelter solutions. There is a strong network of local humanitarian actors and organisations collecting and spreading information on the response through Whatsapp communications.

As of 09 August, the Lebanese authorities declared the lifesaving phase for search and rescue to be over. Initial response was supported by local and international organisations as well as international Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams.

On 10 August the Lebanese Army requested a more robust role in coordination of the response. The international community will need to strike a careful balance between operational coordination (which is necessary for an effective response), while maintaining humanitarian neutrality and impartiality.

The role of political parties, and their accepted areas of influence, may play a part in determining administrative access to certain areas, especially if local NGOs are themselves affiliated with a political party (discussions with operational partners 11/08/2020).

Access obstacles:

- Most roads in the affected area have now been cleared by local communities and Civil Protection entities. (discussions with operational partners 11/08/2020).
- All imports and exports have been redirected to the Tripoli Port, which is about 85 kilometres north of Beirut. The Beirut Port is expected to be inoperable for at least one month, pending repairs, debris removal and safety clearances. (OCHA 7/08/2020) The airport is still functioning, and commercial flights continue, despite suffering some damage.
- Already overwhelmed by the COVID-19 situation, hospitals in Beirut are reaching full capacity and are reporting a lack of equipment to treat the injured and care for patients in critical condition. Some injured are transferred to hospitals in other parts of the country (UNICEF 6/08/2020)
- In the districts of Gemmayzé as far as Mar Mikhaël one section is cordoned off for safety reasons due to debris like glass in the streets, etc.. (discussions with operational partners 11/08/2020).
- Access have been restricted in some areas by state authorities, but this is not being consistently enforced. (discussions with operational partners 11/08/2020).
- Local NGOs that are already responding flagged their need of masks, gloves and cleaning tools so they can move the debris. There has also been some community tensions between early responders clearing rubble, and homeowners worrying about people in their house (discussions with operational partners 11/08/2020).

Information gaps and needs

- The sectors with the most information available are shelter and health. Still, large scale assessments of shelter and reconstruction needs are still to be published making comparisons between neighbourhoods difficult (World Bank 09/08/2020).
- The duration and health impact of airborne toxic dusts have not been clarified yet, but assessments are ongoing. Similarly, the ecological and environmental impact of the blast still needs to be evaluated.
- Data on telecommunication, especially mobile and internet networks, is lacking. Different sources on WASH needs might report contrasting information on water shortages. While many sources agree on the negative impact of the blast on livelihoods and food security, more extensive research on short- and long-term needs is necessary. Market assessments would also help in this.
- Assessments that have been run so far were able to cover only a small proportion of Greater Beirut population. This make it challenging to have a clear idea of priority needs of the affected population.
- Information on electricity provision disaggregated by neighbourhood is missing. Electricity provision in Greater Beirut was a major issue prior the blast and it is still unclear if some areas record additional problems, or have no electricity at all, following 4 of August.
- Data on nutrition needs is also scarce, as well as on maternal and infant healthcare. So are documents incorporating a gender perspective. More information on how many people are currently housed in schools and more details on the damages sustained by educational centres are also needed, especially taking into account that children are supposed to start the school year in about a month.
- The explosion has affected vulnerable groups such as refugees and migrant workers. However, there is not enough information on the numbers of refugees or migrant workers affected. Anecdotal reports suggest that some migrant workers were abandoned by the families they worked for following the explosion, leaving them with no shelter, livelihood, and reportedly often no documentation. More assessment is necessary to investigate the scale of this concern and how the pre-existing vulnerabilities were exacerbated.

About the Assessment and Analysis Cell

On 5 August 2020, the United Nations established an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), led by OCHA and experts from the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team to conduct rapid analysis of the situation on the ground and help coordinate emergency response activities in response to the Beirut Port explosion.

The Assessment and Analysis cell of the Emergency Operations Centre asked ACAPS and partners MapAction, OCHA/UNDAC, Mercy Corps, UN Environment and other operational actors, to develop a secondary data review for a situation analysis. This report aims to provide a summary of existing information on the crisis, the pre-crisis context and underlying vulnerabilities of affected communities to inform response planning and the design of more detailed assessments.

The Analysis and Assessment Cell wishes to thank the Lebanese Red Cross and other operational actors who have provided rapid assessment data and information on needs.

This report relies on preliminary information and will be updated as new information comes to light. For corrections, questions or suggestions, contact lebanonteam-situation@undac.org



Priority Areas



Approximate Blast Location

Population Density (People/Hectare)



Neighbourhoods (with Name, Pcode, Total Population)



OpenStreetMap, Lebanese Arabic Institute, Facebook Connectivity Lab and Center for International Earth Science Information Network - CIESIN - Columbia University. 2016. High Resolution Settlement Layer (HRSL). Source imagery for HRSL © 2016 DigitalGlobe. Accessed 04/03/2020

Created 6 Aug 2020/ 18:00

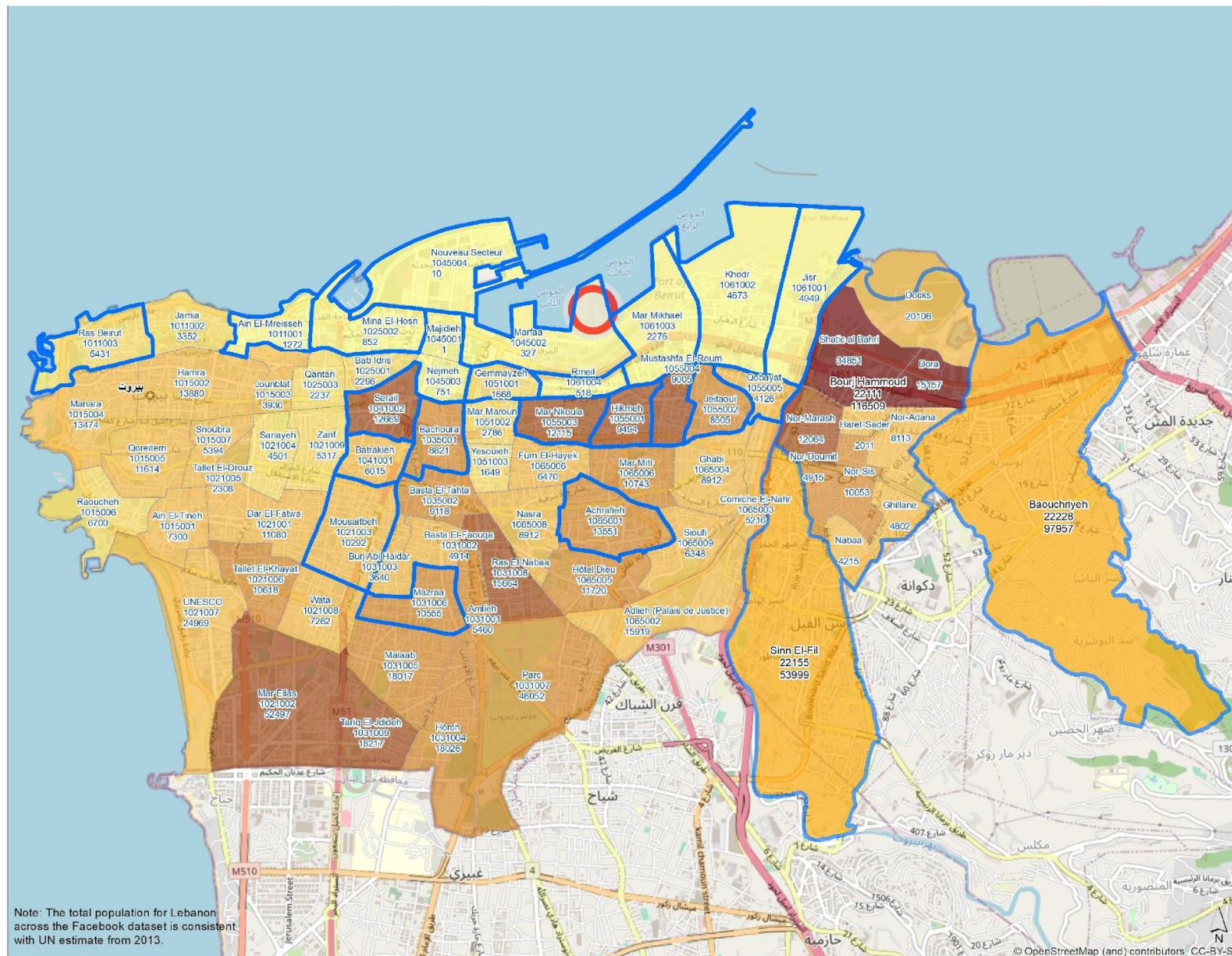
Projection & Datum UTM Zone 36N / WGS 1984

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The depiction and use of boundaries, names and associated data shown here do not imply endorsement or acceptance by MapAction.



Appendix 1: Beirut Explosion priority areas list

Adm 2 (Municipality)	Adm 3 (Quarter)	Adm 4 (Sector)	ADM0_P CODE	ADM1_P CODE	ADM2_P CODE	ADM3_P CODE	ADM4_P CODE
Beirut	Medawar	Mar Mikhael	LB	LB1	LB11	10610	1061003
Beirut	Medawar	Khodr	LB	LB1	LB11	10610	1061002
Beirut	Medawar	Jisr	LB	LB1	LB11	10610	1061001
Beirut	Medawar	Remeil	LB	LB1	LB11	10610	1061004
Beirut	Rmeil	Mar Nkoula	LB	LB1	LB11	10550	1055003
Beirut	Rmeil	Hikmeh	LB	LB1	LB11	10550	1055001
Beirut	Rmeil	Mustashfa El-Roum	LB	LB1	LB11	10550	1055004
Beirut	Rmeil	Jeitaoui	LB	LB1	LB11	10550	1055002
Beirut	Rmeil	Qobayat	LB	LB1	LB11	10550	1055005
Beirut	Achrafieh	Achrafieh	LB	LB1	LB11	10650	1065001
Beirut	Marfaa	Marfaa	LB	LB1	LB11	10450	1045002
Beirut	Saifi	Gemmayzeh	LB	LB1	LB11	10510	1051001
Beirut	Bachoura	Bachoura	LB	LB1	LB11	10350	1035001
Beirut	Zoukak el- Blatt	Serail	LB	LB1	LB11	10410	1041002
Beirut	Zoukak el- Blatt	Batrakieh	LB	LB1	LB11	10410	1041001
Beirut	Mazraa	Marzaa	LB	LB1	LB11	10310	1031006
Beirut	Mousaitbeh	Moussaytbeh	LB	LB1	LB11	10210	1021003
Beirut	Dar El- Mreisseh	Ras Beyrouth	LB	LB1	LB11	10110	1011003
Beirut	Dar El- Mreisseh	Ain el- Mreisseh	LB	LB1	LB11	10110	1011001
Beirut	Minet el- Hosn	Minet el- Hosn	LB	LB1	LB11	10250	1025002
Beirut	Marfaa	Beirut Central district	LB	LB1	LB11	10450	1045004
Mount Lebanon	Bourj Hammod	n/a	LB	LB3	LB36	22111	n/a
Mount Lebanon	Sin El- fil	n/a	LB	LB3	LB36	22155	n/a
Mount Lebanon	Bauchriyeh	n/a	LB	LB3	LB36	22228	n/a