



Lebanon Situation Report

July 16, 2021

Background

The background to the Beirut blast and COVID-19 in Lebanon is summarized in Anera's [first \(August 8\)](#) and [most recent \(December 10\)](#) Beirut Blast Situation Reports and its latest [COVID-19 Situation Report \(March 25\)](#). Details on the economic instability and humanitarian crisis may be found in the post, [“A Country in Depression” \(June 25\)](#) on Anera's [Olive Press Blog](#).

Overview

According to the World Bank, Lebanon currently faces one of the worst economic and financial crises anywhere on the planet. Beginning in 2019, the Lebanese pound's (LBP) value decreased by 90%. Lebanon's GDP contracted 6.7% in 2019 and 20.3% in 2020, and in 2021, the GDP is expected to contract 9.5%.

The crisis decimated the purchasing power of Lebanese citizens, evaporated their savings, and led to half of the population living below the poverty line.¹

At the end of 2020, over 40% of households reported having challenges accessing food and basic necessities. From February to December 2020, the unemployment rate rose from 28% to 40%.² As of February 2021, the unemployment rate stood at over 30%.³

Since the resignation of Prime Minister Hassan Diab in August 2020,⁴ Lebanon lacks a fully-functioning government. Officials continue to disagree over the number of cabinet ministers that should be in the government and what constitutes a fair representation of various sects and political parties. Nations and international finance organizations who promised aid and loans to rebuild Lebanon refuse to provide the necessary funding until the country establishes a government and enacts reforms.⁵

Fuel and Medicine Subsidies

Foreign currency reserves, which equaled \$30 billion prior to the crisis, dropped to \$15 billion, causing the central bank to reduce subsidies of imports. The lack of subsidized imports led to both increased prices and reduced imports, creating a shortage of gasoline and medicines. The gas shortage causes electricity cuts and hours-long lines at fuel stations, sometimes leading to violent arguments, including shootings and fistfights on several occasions. In protest against threats, beatings, and blackmail, the owners of 140 fuel stations refused to receive gasoline on June 22.⁶ On June 25, the caretaker

¹ [Lebanon raises price of bread for the fifth time in a year | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

² [Lebanon crisis could rank among world's three worst in 150 years | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

³ [Lebanon \(1701\) | Security Council Report](#)

⁴ [Lebanon's prime minister to step down amid large protests following last week's blast | The Washington Post](#)

⁵ ['Little hope left': Lebanon's paralysis and a collapsing state | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

⁶ [Lebanon raises price of bread for the fifth time in a year | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

prime minister reduced fuel subsidies when he approved the financing of fuel imports at a rate higher than the official exchange rate. The change will likely ease the fuel shortage temporarily but cause the price of fuel to increase.⁷

Medicine imports in Lebanon are almost completely halted as of July 4, and the importers now lack the medicines required to treat chronic diseases.

The depleted stocks include some medicines used to treat cardiac diseases, high blood pressure, cancer, diabetes, and multiple sclerosis. The central bank currently owes more than \$600 million in promised payments to international suppliers for subsidized medicines, which must be paid in order to resume imports. On July 1 the government announced that it would continue subsidies of high-priority medicines and medical supplies.⁸

Electricity

Électricité du Liban (EDL), the state-run electricity producer in Lebanon, could not purchase fuel due to a lack of funds, and the government responded by issuing a \$200 million advance from the central bank.

Electricity sector losses cost the country an estimated \$1.6 to \$2 billion in public funds each year, which makes up 3% of the Lebanese economy and accounts for nearly half of its public debt.

For nearly three decades, Lebanese households have faced daily intermittent power cuts. Power cuts in Beirut typically last three hours and they are even longer in other parts of the country. Recently, the duration of the power cuts has increased due to a lack of fuel for power plants. The EDL recently was unable to pay for fuel from oil tankers that had already arrived, causing Karpower, a Turkish energy group, to shut down two floating power barges. The barges previously supplied a quarter of Lebanon's electricity.

Lebanese households that can afford to do so supplement their electricity by paying for extra power from private generator suppliers. The suppliers are currently struggling due to significant increases in demand and costs, and some distributors began buying expensive fuel on the black market. Distributors worry that demand will further increase with continued hot weather.⁹

Food Security

According to the UN, Lebanese food cost inflation is the highest in the world. Food prices are now over 400% higher than they were before the economic crisis began. 1.5 liters of cooking oil cost 2,000 LBP in 2019, and it is now worth 31,000 LBP. One kilogram (2.2 pounds) of chicken is worth 23,000 LBP, up from 2,800 LBP in 2019. Food inflation will likely cause Lebanese citizens to reduce the amount of meals they eat a day and buy more carbs to replace expensive meat and protein items. 22% of Lebanese citizens are food insecure, as are 50% of Syrian refugees and 33% of other refugees.¹⁰

⁷ [Lebanon reduces critical fuel subsidies amid petrol crisis | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

⁸ [Lebanon medicine importers warn imported drugs running out | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

⁹ [Lebanon electricity crisis: 'Disaster in the making' | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

¹⁰ ['No food in the fridge': A grueling Ramadan in Lebanon | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

In June 2020, the Lebanese government increased the price of flatbread by 30%, and it has since raised the price four times. Prior to June, the government had not raised the price of flatbread for ten years. The last increase brought the cost for two pounds of bread to 3,250 Lebanese pounds. On June 22, the government raised the price again by 18%.¹¹

COVID-19 and Healthcare

As of July 5, there are 207 confirmed, active cases of COVID-19 in Lebanon.¹² Lebanon administered 1,379,853 vaccine doses as of June 21, accounting for about 10% of the population.¹³ In total, 545,570 cases and 7,681 deaths occurred since the beginning of the pandemic.¹⁴ On average, 159 new cases are reported each day, which amounts to only 3% of the peak daily average.¹⁵ Testing is available, but is out of reach for most as a PCR test currently costs around 100,000 LBP.¹⁶ The limitations in testing could indicate a higher number of cases than confirmed.

A curfew is in place from 9:30 pm to 5 am, and in order for customers to enter supermarkets, places of worship, and other crowded locations, they need permission from the government's [IMPACT platform](#) (Inter-Ministerial and Municipal Platform for Assessment, Coordination and Tracking), which serves as a platform for tracking COVID-19 information, government responses, and mobility permits to mitigate the spread and impacts of COVID-19.¹⁷

The multiple crises impacting Lebanon caused hundreds of doctors and nurses to emigrate and seek work abroad. In August and September 2020, over 150 doctors requested recommendation letters to work abroad from the Lebanese Order of Physicians. Between April and September 2020, over 200 nurses requested necessary documentation to work abroad from the Order of Nurses. Many of the doctors and nurses who left the country decided to do so following the Beirut blast, which directly impacted more than 2,000 doctors through injuries and workplace destruction and killed five on-duty nurses.¹⁸ Amid the economic crisis, medical professionals lost up to 90% of the value of their salaries in Lebanon, leaving some young doctors only making \$200 per month. Although it is difficult to know the true number of medical professionals who fled the country, estimates state that approximately 1,000 medical professionals, doctors, and nurses have left Lebanon since the Beirut blast.¹⁹

¹¹ [Lebanon raises price of bread for the fifth time in a year | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

¹² [Lebanon: WHO Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Dashboard | WHO](#)

¹³ [Lebanon: the latest coronavirus counts, charts and maps | Reuters](#)

¹⁴ [Lebanon: WHO Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Dashboard | WHO](#)

¹⁵ [Lebanon: the latest coronavirus counts, charts and maps | Reuters](#)

¹⁶ [COVID-19 Information | US Embassy in Lebanon](#)

¹⁷ [COVID-19 Information | US Embassy in Lebanon](#)

¹⁸ [Lebanon hospitals under threat as doctors and nurse emigrate | The National](#)

¹⁹ [‘Sometimes I feel like I betrayed my country’: Lebanon's doctors are leaving in droves | The World](#)

Refugees

Syrian refugees account for more than 20% of the population of Lebanon, and they face an even more dire economic and humanitarian situation than Lebanese citizens. From 2019 to 2021, the percentage of Syrian refugee households living in extreme poverty increased from 55% to 90%. According to the UN, these Syrian households live on less than half of the minimum wage, which leaves many deprived of food, drinking water, health, sanitation, education, and shelter.

The current economic crisis exacerbates the already poor living conditions of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The percentage of Syrian refugees suffering from food insecurity doubled from 2019 to 2020, reaching 50%. The crisis caused a decrease in informal employment opportunities and increased debt among refugees. 93% of refugees borrowed money to purchase food, while 48% borrowed to pay rent and 34% to purchase medicine. Food insecurity leads 68% of female-headed refugee households to resort to crisis-level coping measures such as child marriages, child labor, withdrawing children from school, and begging. In comparison, only 13% of male-headed refugee households resort to such measures.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Syrian refugees face a death rate four times higher than the national average. UNHCR covers 85% of the primary healthcare costs for Syrian refugees, and the World Bank, NGOs, and aid organizations also provide funding for healthcare. As of early April, only 1,159 Syrian refugees had received COVID-19 vaccinations, despite 17,891 having registered. Many refugees have not received vaccinations due to registration issues, lack of information, and fear of arrest or deportation. 80% of Syrian refugees lack legal residency due to restrictions on residency registration.²⁰

Protests

On June 26, the National News Agency reported that dozens gathered in Tripoli to protest the depreciation of the pound and the current living conditions in Lebanon. Protesters broke through the gates and entered the courtyard at a branch of the central bank, but the army prevented them from entering. Clashes resulted in injuries to five protesters and two soldiers, and protesters set fire to a government office entrance. Protests also occurred in Beirut, where scattered protesters gathered and burned tires, and Sidon, where protesters tried to storm a branch of the central bank before security forces stopped them.²¹

Migration

Prior to the Beirut blast, an average of 3,100 persons emigrated from Lebanon daily. The average number of persons leaving increased to 4,100 a day following the blast. Although there are no exact statistics available on the number of migrants between 2020 and 2021, countries such as France and Canada eased migration measures for Lebanese nationals. Affluent families and dual nationals were among the first to flee the country, and photos of the Rafic Hariri Airport departure lounge filled with people

²⁰ [Why Syrian refugees in Lebanon are a crisis within a crisis | Brookings](#)

²¹ [Several injured in Lebanon protests over plunging currency | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

circulated social media following the blast.²² Less-affluent Lebanese families migrated to Cyprus on smugglers' boats. One such mission resulted in six deaths and left six persons missing at sea when it went adrift off the Lebanese coast, and the UNIFIL marine task force rescued the boat. Between July 1 and September 14, 2020, at least 21 boats traveled to Cyprus from Lebanon, compared to the 17 boats that did so throughout 2019.²³

Anera's Response

Shelter Rehabilitation

Anera initiated its response just days after the Beirut blast, providing relief through shelter rehabilitation in order to allow those displaced by the blast to return to their homes. During Anera's first shelter response, the team in Lebanon assessed 1,500 affected households and rehabilitated 1,000 households and 200 small businesses. The extension of the shelter rehabilitation project concluded in April 2021 and enabled Anera's team to rehabilitate 52 additional homes. In addition, Anera's shelter rehabilitation program employed 150 youth workers trained in construction through the cash-for-work program. The project targeted homes in vulnerable communities, households with more members than average, and refugees in order to provide necessary rehabilitation for those who likely could not afford to rebuild otherwise.

Medical Donations

The program provides healthcare facilities with millions of dollars' worth of medicines for chronic conditions, hospital equipment, wheelchairs, over-the-counter drugs, and healthcare supplies to meet the needs of vulnerable communities. Due to the compounding crises facing the country, and the shortage of medical supplies, Anera's medical donations team has scaled up their efforts, and secured the delivery of 58 shipments of medical supplies air freight from the US and UK to Lebanon, currently valued at nearly \$50 million. Additionally, Anera distributed 1.7 million doses of 253 chronic and acute medications to healthcare facilities in Beirut and throughout Lebanon. Anera also delivers non-medical items like school supplies, clothes, and blankets.

Education

In order to address education disruption among youth in Lebanon, Anera assessed the needs of two damaged non-profit schools in Burj Hammoud: Al Wardieh school and Al Markazieh School. Combined, these schools serve a total of 1,400 students. With funding from the Ohrstrom Foundation, Anera provided electronic tablets for the students of these schools and laptops for the teachers in order to enable the schools to successfully conduct classes online. Additionally, Anera provided the students kits, which included notebooks, bags, pencils, pens, face masks, sanitizer, and cleaning products for their families.

²² [A new exodus from Lebanon after deadly Beirut blast | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

²³ [Overlapping crises in Lebanon fuel a new migration to Cyprus | The New Humanitarian](#)

Livelihood Opportunities

In response to the multiple crises impacting Lebanon, Anera focused its youth cash-for-work program on providing vulnerable, skilled youth with short-term paid employment opportunities for a duration ranging from between one to three months, with the aim of facilitating their entry into the business market and increasing their chances of regular employment. Anera has implemented cash-for-work through different modalities, each adapted to the circumstances and humanitarian needs in the country. During 2020, Anera's programs in Lebanon created a total of 2,600 paid-on-the-job training positions for that included preparing and delivering 96,000 meals, producing 1.6 million face masks, repairing homes affected by the blast, establishing isolation centers, setting up sanitation gates at entrances to camps and towns, and installing plumbing in homes. The cash-for-work opportunities targeted students and graduates of Anera's vocational education programs. Under the gender-based violence and women protection program, Anera hired 100 women to produce 10,000 jars of preserved food, which Anera distributed to hundreds of vulnerable families. During 2021, Anera has been supporting 1,742 youth with the creation of cash-for-work opportunities in the following sectors: sewing, healthcare, IT, construction, agriculture, and environmental and community mobilization.

WASH Response

In partnership with UNICEF, Anera aims at improving the WASH practices among residents of Palestinian refugee camps through the implementation of community mobilization activities in partnership with local sub-partners responding to the specific health and environmental needs in the camps. During 2021, the program focused on mass media campaigns promoting COVID19 precautionary measures, and awareness on administering the COVID19 vaccine, environmental hygiene and menstrual hygiene. To this date, from the five Palestinian camps all over Lebanon, 200 persons have been vaccinated, over 2,900 COVID prevention kits have been distributed to positive COVID cases, and over 7,000 hygiene kits, and 8,500 cloth menstrual pads have been distributed to camp residents, to ensure better hygienic practices.

Solid Waste Management

In response to the solid waste crisis facing the country, Anera continues to implement a solid waste management program aimed at bolstering peaceful coexistence between host and refugee communities, and supporting the operation of integrated solid management in 17 municipalities in the Bekaa valley. Since 2018, under this program, Anera has established two recycling facilities in two villages in the Bekaa valley, one composting facility, implemented awareness programs at the community level, distributed thousands of household and communal bins, provided technical support to the municipalities, and rehabilitated dumpsites. This has led to a 40% increase in the municipal solid waste collection.

Food Security

In response to the increased unemployment rates, and the major increase of the prices of consumer goods in Lebanon, and with the support of Lebanon Humanitarian Fund, and various individual donors, Anera launched an aid distribution and relief program named *كلنا لبعض* (Kilna La Ba'd), meaning *for one another*. To date, around 17,000 food

and hygiene kits and 13,000 hot meals have been distributed through partnerships established with local organizations. Additionally, Anera has distributed cooked meals in North Lebanon.

Nursing Scholarships

One of Anera's longest-standing vocational training programs in Lebanon trains nurses. The goal is to bridge the gap created by the increasing migration of Lebanese nurses to other countries. Anera carries out the project by partnering with several local accredited institutes that provide three years of formal nursing education. All program graduates thus far secured nursing or medical jobs at humanitarian organizations and have been able to assist Lebanon's most vulnerable populations.