



Lebanon Situation Report

August 6, 2021

Background

For background on the economic and political situation in Lebanon, see Anera's last [Situation Report \(July 16\)](#). The background to the Beirut blast and COVID-19 in Lebanon is summarized in Anera's first [\(August 8\)](#) and most recent [\(August 4\)](#) Beirut blast situation reports and its latest [COVID-19 Situation Report \(March 25\)](#).

Overview

Since early 2020, [Lebanon](#) has faced worsening social, health and economic challenges which have affected all sectors of the population. The port explosion caused significant damage and combined with the effects of COVID-19 and the collapse of the national currency to create a grave crisis threatening the livelihoods and security of the people of Lebanon.

Following the Beirut blast in August 2020, the Lebanese government leadership resigned, leaving Lebanon to be run by a caretaker administration. A year later, the economic crisis created by the blast and subsequent collapse of the government continues to worsen. The international community offered loans and aid to Lebanon contingent on Lebanon's ability to form a government. After nine months of political deadlock, former prime minister-designate Saad Hariri resigned on July 16. On July 26, the Lebanese parliament named Najib Mikati as the new prime minister-designate.¹ Following his appointment, Mikati stated that he would work toward forming a government and implement a French plan to counter the economic crisis that includes creating a government of specialists in order to enact reforms and resume foreign aid.²

However, it is still uncertain whether Mikati will be able to form a new government before elections are held next year, especially since he belongs to the ruling elites of the country who are widely held responsible for the pervasive corruption and governing paralysis in the country.

Economic Crisis

In recent months, the Lebanese pound fell to 15 times less than its official value, and the Lebanese minimum wage, which barely reaches \$40 a month, failed to keep up with inflation. The Lebanon Central Bank's strategy of subsidizing the peoples' basic needs is no longer feasible, as the federal reserves are drying up. The Lebanese government continues to gradually lift subsidies, which directly affects people's purchasing power and lifestyles. The collapse of the currency and the hoarding driven by fluctuating prices have created shortages of medicines and fuel, causing hospitals to begin running out of medicines.³

Between 2019 and July 22, 2021, Lebanon's currency lost 95% of its value against other major currencies. The purchasing power of Lebanese citizens continues to plummet, and more than half of the population now lives below the poverty line. According to the American University of

¹ [Lebanon: Najib Mikati named new prime minister-designate | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

² [Lebanon's PM-designate says he can form government to implement French plan | Reuters](#)

³ ['Moment of Truth' Approaching for Crisis-Wracked Lebanon | VOA News](#)

Beirut's Crisis Observatory, it costs Lebanese families around five times the minimum wage to put sufficient food on the table during Eid Al-Adha. The Observatory also reported a 700% increase in food prices since 2019, with a 50% increase just within the past month.⁴

Electricity

Amid fuel shortages and an economic crisis, the amount of electricity provided by the Lebanese state electricity supplier dropped, leaving families, hospitals, and businesses reliant on backup generators. Power outages last upwards of 20 hours a day, and hospitals struggle to obtain fuel for generators.⁵ Many Lebanese households receive a mere two hours of state power each day.

The amount of power provided by back-up generators continues to decrease as well, due to the shortage of fuel oil in the market at the official price. Fuel oil is available in the black market, but it costs more than three times the official price.

As for daily mobility, drivers can currently expect to wait for at least two hours in line at a gas station to get fuel. Many do not even have the opportunity to fill their vehicles. Few gas stations remain open. Those that do only operate for 10 hours a day and strictly ration the gasoline sold to each driver. Several fights and shootings occurred recently in gas stations, due to individual personal disputes while waiting in line.⁶

Water

According to UNICEF, more than four million people in Lebanon are at risk of losing access to safe water because of a decrease in water pumping due to shortages of funding, supplies, and fuel. Of those at risk, one million are refugees. UNICEF's assessment estimates that **70 percent of the Lebanese population lives with "highly critical" or "critical" levels of water vulnerability.**

UNICEF expects a gradual cessation of water pumping throughout Lebanon in the next four to six weeks.⁷ A collapse of the water sector could raise the price of water by 200 percent *each month*. The price of bottled water has already doubled in the past year. Around 1.7 million people are only able to access 35 liters of water a day, which is an 80 percent decrease from the national average of 165 liters prior to 2020⁸ and does not meet the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendation of 50 to 100 liters per person per day.⁹

Fires

On July 28, a wildfire raged through a forest in North Lebanon, resulting in one death and about 25 injured. The fire forced nearby residents to evacuate their homes and destroyed much of the pine forest. According to the state-owned National News Agency, the two-kilometer-wide fire spread over seven kilometers and destroyed tens of thousands of pine trees.¹⁰ The lack of equipment and emergency preparedness in Lebanon exacerbated the effects and spread of the fire, and the government is now calling on Cyprus for assistance.

⁴ ['Moment of Truth' Approaching for Crisis-Wracked Lebanon | VOA News](#)

⁵ [Lebanon hospitals warn power cuts threaten 'catastrophe' | The Times of Israel](#)

⁶ [Pharmacies, gas stations close due to shortages in Lebanon | The Daily Star](#)

⁷ [Millions of Lebanese risk losing access to safe water: UNICEF | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

⁸ [Lebanon: Public water system on the verge of collapse, UNICEF warns | UN News](#)

⁹ [The Human Right to Water and Sanitation | UN](#)

¹⁰ [Wildfire in northern Lebanon scorches forest, 1 person dead | AP News](#)

In the past two years, summer heat waves caused hundreds of fires in Lebanon and neighboring Syria, forcing hundreds of families to evacuate their homes.¹¹ Fire brigade and civil defense volunteers have faced shortages of emergency medical equipment and healthcare kits when responding to these emergencies, and many volunteers resorted to purchasing supplies out of their own pockets.

COVID-19

WHO recorded a total of 564,364 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 7,917 deaths in Lebanon between January 2020 and August 4, 2021. As of August 2, Lebanon administered 1,961,662 vaccine doses.¹² The prevalence of COVID-19 cases in Lebanon is increasing, with an average of 622 new cases reported per day.¹³ Prior to July 16, more than 500 cases a day had not been reported in Lebanon since May. As the new delta variant spreads, doctors fear an influx of new patients, because it would put an additional strain on hospitals struggling to cope.¹⁴

According to Dr. Firas Abiad, the manager and CEO of Rafik Hariri University Hospital, “Six RHUH staff contracted Covid this month. Four of the infections were in fully vaccinated employees.”¹⁵

Health Sector

The health sector in Lebanon currently faces [catastrophic conditions](#) that significantly limit the accessibility of healthcare. The drop in foreign currency reserves and subsequent halt in medicine imports created a shortage of medicines and medical supplies that continues to rise and affect hospital operations. Health institutions are in need of support to continue providing necessary services. In response to these conditions, pharmacists are on strike and more medical aid suppliers continue to shut their doors. The public health sector is now responsible for providing care to those who previously attended private hospitals and medical centers but had to shift to public healthcare.

Currently in Lebanon, access to healthcare is seen as a luxury many cannot afford. **Only 10 to 20 percent of the population can access primary health centers and dispensaries, leaving many of those in need unable to access emergency services and chronic, acute, and specialized medicines.** Limitations on healthcare access began following the Beirut blast, but they continue to worsen due to the deteriorating economic situation and the upsurge in COVID-19 cases. Given the current circumstances, it is expected that government hospitals and primary health centers will be overwhelmed with four times more than their capacity of patients, as a result of medicine shortages and supplies that will encourage people to seek care at emergency rooms. Rafik Hariri University Hospital, for example, extended the ER next to the waiting area to accommodate this patient overflow.

Safety and Security

The economic crisis leaves many in Lebanon incapable of meeting basic needs. People face difficulty lighting their houses, getting medication, filling up their vehicles, and purchasing food and other basic necessities. This may well lead to escalating expressions of outrage among citizens and residents. People are already protesting and blocking roads on a daily basis.

¹¹ [Lebanon battles wildfires in country's north, firefighter dies | Reuters](#)

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

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

¹⁴ [Fears a new COVID wave could overwhelm Lebanon's health system | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

¹⁵ [Firas Abiad | Twitter](#)

In March 2021, a report was published showing **an increase in thefts by 144%**. This suggests greater instability in Lebanon as a result of political deadlock, economic crisis, and the conditions caused by COVID-19 and the Beirut Blast.

Forecast for the Upcoming Period

Although the Lebanese parliament appointed a new prime minister-designate to form a government, the tense political environment will most likely lead to a worsening of the current situation and a continued political deadlock in the creation of a new government. Additional disruptive protests, fuel shortages, and water shortages (due to the lack of fuel to run water pumps) are likely to continue, and a further increase in thefts and COVID-19 cases is expected. The government will most likely impose a lockdown in order to limit the spread of the coronavirus, as well as increased travel restrictions, COVID-19 tests, and quarantine requirements.

Anera's Response

Shelter Rehabilitation

In response to the damage caused by the Beirut blast, Anera has provided relief to affected residents by rehabilitating their houses, allowing those displaced to return home. Anera's team Anera teams have assessed 1,800+ structures in Beirut. They repaired or are in the process of repairing 1,198 homes and businesses.

	Completed	In process
Homes	827	195
Businesses	71	5

Anera is currently planning work on 120 more houses and businesses. The teams repair broken windows and doors, damaged ceilings and walls, and plumbing. The project targeted homes in vulnerable communities, households with larger families, and refugees in order to provide shelter for those who could not afford to rebuild otherwise. The home rehabilitation program also employed 150 youth workers trained in construction through the cash-for work vocational program, helping to rebuild livelihoods affected by the Beirut blast.

Education

The current crises in Lebanon greatly disrupted youth education due to damage from the Beirut blast, COVID-19 limitations on in-person schooling, and limited funds for education. In response, Anera assessed the needs of two damaged non-profit schools in Burj Hammoud: Al Wardieh school and Al Markazieh School, which serve a total of 1,400 students. Through a project funded by 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. Anera also provided the students kits, which included notebooks, bags, pencils, pens, face masks, sanitizer, and cleaning products for their families.

Livelihood Opportunities

Given the multiple crises affecting livelihoods in Lebanon, Anera refocused its existing cash-for-work programs to facilitate the entry of Lebanese youth into the business market and increase their chances of regular employment by providing vulnerable, skilled youth with short-term paid employment opportunities for a duration ranging from between one to three months. Anera adapted the modalities used to implement cash-for-work in order to meet the humanitarian needs created by the crises in Lebanon. During 2020, Anera's programs in Lebanon created 2,600 paid-on-the-job training positions, through which Anera facilitated preparation and delivery of 96,000 meals, production of 1.6 million face masks, reparation of homes affected by the blast, establishment of isolation centers and sanitation gates at entrances to camps and towns, and installation of plumbing in homes. The cash-for-work opportunities targeted students and graduates of Anera's vocational education programs. So far in 2021, Anera has supported 1,742 youth through cash-for-work opportunities in the sewing, healthcare, IT, construction, agriculture, and environmental and community mobilization sectors.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

In response to the WASH needs in Lebanon, which are exacerbated by the current crises, Anera implemented a program in partnership with UNICEF that aims at improving WASH practices among residents of [Palestinian refugee camps](#). Through the program, Anera implements 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 COVID-19 precautionary measures and awareness on administering the COVID-19 vaccine, environmental hygiene, and menstrual hygiene. To date, in camps throughout Lebanon, Anera distributed 2,900 COVID prevention kits, 7,000 hygiene kits, and 8,500 cloth menstrual pads to ensure better hygienic practices.

In Beirut, Anera's team assessed water tanks in 17 neighborhoods impacted by the explosion of 2020. They installed 189 new tanks, repaired connections to water networks, and rehabilitated damaged plumbing in 155 buildings.

Solid Waste Management

Anera is addressing Lebanon's garbage crisis through the creation of [recycling facilities](#) in different parts of the country. Most recently, Anera built two such facilities in villages in the Bekaa valley. We also installed 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 among 17 communities.

Food Security

Given the increased unemployment rates and prices of consumer goods, Anera launched an aid distribution and relief program named Kilna La Ba'd, meaning *for one another*, which is supported by Lebanon Humanitarian Fund and various individual donors. To date, Anera has distributed 17,000 food and hygiene kits, and 13,000 hot meals through partnerships with local organizations.

Nursing Scholarships

One of Anera's longest-standing vocational training programs in Lebanon aims to address the increased migration of nurses to other countries by facilitating the training of nurses. 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 have secured nursing or medical jobs at humanitarian organizations and have been able to assist Lebanon's most vulnerable populations.

Civil Defense and Fire Brigade Medical Backpacks

Anera supplied [first aid medical backpacks](#) for civil defense and fire brigade volunteers in order to address the shortage of vital supplies. The backpacks contained multiple packages for wound care, personal protective equipment, basic supplies, and pharmaceuticals, provided through a donation from Direct Relief. The donation supported the first responders who risk their lives and safety to combat fires and conduct search-and-rescue missions. Such donations will have an even higher impact in battling the destructive wildfires now, given the economic crisis and shortage of medications and medical supplies.