



Lebanon Situation Report

December 21, 2021

Background

The immediate background to the crises and increasingly dire humanitarian situation in Lebanon is summarized in Anera's last [Situation Report \(October 28\)](#). Information on Anera's work on food insecurity in Lebanon is available in Anera's blog post, [Combating Food Insecurity in Gaza and Lebanon](#).

Overview

On November 10, 2021, Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati made a statement regarding Lebanon's economic crisis. Mikati noted that the government does not have a "magic wand" to resolve the crisis. He said, "We feel the citizens' concerns and we seek to alleviate some burdens, especially the living conditions."¹ As Lebanon's economic situation continues to deteriorate, a delegation from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) arrived in Lebanon on December 6. While in Lebanon, they met with Lebanese officials to discuss strategies for a potential economic recovery program for Lebanon.² Even in the most optimistic scenarios, Lebanon still has a long path ahead for economic recovery, and its citizens and residents continue to face deteriorating living and social conditions.

Economy

As Christmas quickly approaches, Lebanon continues to face one of modern history's worst depressions. As a result, many families cannot afford the rising costs of gifts and decorations. At the current black market rate, a Christmas tree costs between two and three million pounds. For a telecom office worker interviewed by Arab News, the cost of a tree is nearly double a one-month salary. With the cost of the tree alone, ornaments and other decorations are out of the question for many Lebanese families, and some have resorted to explaining to their children that Santa Claus cannot come because he is sick. The majority of Lebanese families face food insecurity, with 77% of families reporting a lack of sufficient food, and electricity shortages. Even those homes that have a Christmas tree do not have electricity to light it.³

Since the summer of 2019, the Lebanese currency has lost more than 93% of its value. At the end of November, 2021, the US dollar reached a value of 25,000 pounds, while the official rate remains at 1,500 pounds.⁴

¹ ['No magic wand' to resolve Lebanon's economic crisis | Arab News](#)

² [IMF delegation arrives in Lebanon, to meet PM Mikati on Tuesday | Arab News](#)

³ [Lebanon's economic meltdown threatens to cancel Christmas | Arab News](#)

⁴ [Lebanon's economic meltdown threatens to cancel Christmas | Arab News](#)

On December 9, the Central Bank of Lebanon announced a new rate for withdrawals from bank deposits. The rate is now 8,000 Lebanese pounds to the US dollar, compared to the previous rate of 3,900 Lebanese pounds. In addition, withdrawals can now only be completed with local currency. Those who hold accounts with the Central Bank have not had unrestricted access to their accounts since 2019, and they can now withdraw up to the equivalent of \$3,000 each month, according to the new guidelines.⁵

As the foreign reserves dwindle in Lebanon's Central Bank, the government and economic experts argue that universal subsidies should be lifted and replaced with financial aid to poor households. The government nonetheless began to lift subsidies even as a financial assistance program has yet to be implemented. The Lebanese government rolled back subsidies of fuel and petrol over the summer and reduced medicine subsidies in November. In addition, the government continues to gradually increase the price of bread.⁶

In order to provide temporary relief to struggling Lebanese, the government opened registration for two cash assistance programs on December 1 to assist 700,000 vulnerable families. The goal of the first program, called Aman, is to provide \$150 a month to 150,000 families and put \$200 toward the school costs of 87,000 secondary students. The World Bank will fully cover the cost of this program with a \$246 million loan. The second program is a ration card program that will provide up to \$126 a month for vulnerable families. It is unclear who will fund the ration card program, which is expected to cost around \$556 million, and whether the distributed cash will be in US dollars or pounds. If cash is distributed in pounds, its value is subject to the fluctuations of the black market rate, which greatly limits the purchasing power of recipients. The Lebanese government first announced these programs in September 2020, but delayed implementation, citing technical and administrative issues and funding shortfalls.⁷

In the midst of the wider economic crisis, the price of gasoline has risen at an alarming rate. In contrast to the recent shortage of fuel that left most of the country without electricity and transportation, gasoline now goes unused, as many Lebanese families cannot afford the steep prices. Based on current fuel prices, the national minimum monthly wage is less than the cost to fill the tank of a standard car. Now that the government lifted fuel subsidies, the price of fuel is expected to increase still further when the value of the dollar or the price of crude oil rises.⁸

Food Security

As a result of the compounding crises, 78% of the Lebanese population and nearly all of the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon live in poverty. Many are at risk of falling into extreme poverty as the economic crisis continues to worsen. After lifting subsidies this year, inflation has increased. Vulnerable groups face limited access to basic necessities like food, healthcare, and water and sanitation services. According to the World Food

⁵ [Lebanon's Central Bank sets new rate for withdrawals from dollar deposits | Arab News](#)

⁶ [Lebanon launches cash card aid, despite funding shortfall | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

⁷ [Lebanon launches cash card aid, despite funding shortfall | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

⁸ [In Lebanon, petrol is now priced out of reach | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

Programme 2021 survey, 34% of the Lebanese population and 50% of Syrian refugees face food insecurity.⁹

Protests

In November, protests increased throughout Lebanon as the government lifted fuel and medicine subsidies. On November 26, a group of demonstrators broke into the Ministry of Social Affairs building and removed a picture of President Michael Aoun. In its place, they left a banner that read in Arabic, “revolutionaries of October 17,” which is a reference to the 2019 nationwide protests against the ruling class. The protesters that broke into the ministry did so because of the unbearable social conditions caused by Lebanon’s economic collapse, for which they blame the government.¹⁰

Three days later, demonstrators set up roadblocks in Beirut, Tripoli, and other cities to protest the continuous devaluation of the Lebanese pound. Protesters called on the government to intervene. The army responded to these protests to clear intersections and roads blocked by demonstrators.¹¹ In Beirut, protesters burned piles of tires in the roads, forcing schools to close down. South of Beirut, protesters blocked the road leading to the airport in front of Al-Aytam station.¹²

Children

In November, UNICEF released a report detailing the effects of Lebanon’s living conditions on children, based on two child-focused rapid assessments conducted in April and October. In April, 36.7% of surveyed children had to skip meals due to not having enough food. By October, this number increased to 53.4%. Out of the surveyed families, 12% had to send children to work in October, compared to 9% in April. Lebanese families saw a sevenfold increase in child labor, to 7%. UNICEF estimates that 440,000 refugee children and 260,000 Lebanese children will be unable to return to school.¹³

In addition to other challenges to children’s education, teachers in Lebanon are currently on strike to protest the loss of 90% of their salaries’ value due to inflation. In September 2021, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education postponed opening public schools until October. In the midst of the teacher strike, teachers refused to return to school without a pay increase or other incentives.

In October, the Minister of Education announced a new compensation package of \$90 per month for public school teachers. If approved, this package would increase the salary of public school teachers by 50%. As of right now, salary adjustments remain unsettled. Because of this, it is unclear when public school teachers will return to school.

⁹ [Lebanon Country Brief | WFP](#)

¹⁰ [Protesters break into Lebanese ministry as crisis deepens | ABC News](#)

¹¹ [Cash-strapped Lebanon wakes up to country-wide roadblocks | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

¹² [Lebanese protesters block roads over economic meltdown | Arab News](#)

¹³ [Surviving Without the Basics- The ever-worsening impact of Lebanon's crisis on children | UNICEF](#)

Waste Management

The August 2020 Beirut blast destroyed two key waste sorting plants that have yet to be repaired. In addition, the Lebanese government is unable to pay the contracted waste management company, due to the country's economic collapse. As a result, Lebanon faces a looming garbage crisis. According to Lebanon's Environment Minister, the waste management issue would have already developed into a crisis, but the amount of garbage produced by the Lebanese people has decreased by 30 to 40% as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and Lebanon's devastated economy. The burning of unsorted waste at some 900 open-air dumps across Lebanon poses an ongoing public health hazard.¹⁴

COVID-19

As of December 19, there have been 700,943 cases of COVID-19 and 8,936 cumulative deaths in Lebanon. On average, 1,555 new infections are reported each day, which is equal to 32% of Lebanon's peak cases. So far, Lebanon has administered 3.90 million vaccine doses, enough for 28.5% of the population to be fully vaccinated.¹⁵ On December 9, the Ministry of Health confirmed that two cases of the omicron variant arrived in Lebanon. Two passengers tested positive at the airport after arriving in Lebanon from Africa, and both were placed in quarantine.¹⁶

On December 7, Lebanon's parliament passed a law creating a penalty charge for unvaccinated individuals who spread COVID-19. The fee is 250,000 Lebanese pounds, which is equal to \$165 at the official exchange rate or \$10 at the black market rate.¹⁷ In addition, a night-time curfew will go into effect for unvaccinated persons on December 17. As of January 10, vaccination against COVID-19 will be mandatory to work in several sectors, including health, education, tourism, and public transport.¹⁸

Health and Medicine

As a result of the lifting of medicine subsidies, allocations for which fell from around \$120 million to \$35 million, prices have skyrocketed. Drugs for depression and schizophrenia now cost three times as much, while one hypertension medicine costs nine times more.¹⁹ The price of some medicines has risen by as much as 830%.²⁰ Because of the steep price increases, hospitals will be forced to continue relying on NGOs. According to the chief medical officer at the government-run Rafik Hariri University Hospital, a surge in deaths is expected.²¹

Winterization

Lebanon's refugee populations face a continuing battle with harsh winter conditions. Many refugee camps lack sufficient infrastructure to keep everyone warm and healthy, and refugees suffer because of heavy snow that collapses temporary housing structures,

¹⁴ [State of decay: How rubbish became Lebanon's latest dumpster fire | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

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

¹⁶ [COVID-19: Lebanon reports first Omicron cases | Khaleej Times](#)

¹⁷ [Unvaccinated Lebanese face \\$165 fine for spreading COVID-19 | Arab News](#)

¹⁸ [Lebanon reintroduces some COVID-19 prevention measures | Arab News](#)

¹⁹ [Doctors fear 'surge in deaths' after Lebanon lifts drug subsidies | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

²⁰ [Lebanese cry in pharmacies after subsidies on medicine are lifted | Arab News](#)

²¹ [Doctors fear 'surge in deaths' after Lebanon lifts drug subsidies | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

ice water that seeps into living spaces, and the high cost of fuel to warm themselves and their families. Respiratory illnesses, such as influenza, are expected to increase as they typically do during the winter season when people flock indoors, which is problematic as most refugee shelters are lacking in proper ventilation.²²

In addition to the typical challenges brought on by seasonal change, refugees are faced with navigating a viral pandemic, an economic crisis, and the aftermath of a deadly explosion. As COVID-19 continues to surge throughout the region, relief efforts will have to work to prevent accidental transmission of the virus to those in need. Despite reports of low rates of contraction of the disease, refugee camps are vulnerable to mass spreading due to dense populations. Some estimates show that as much as 80% of the Palestinian population of Lebanon may be at high risk.²³ Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan, who do not have access to UNRWA support, are even more vulnerable. This situation is made more difficult by a lack of awareness of the urgency of social distancing measures, as the virus is a secondary concern for families forced to group together for warmth indoors.

Many families face financial challenges buying fuel and food to wait out the weather, which often means finding temporary jobs in crowded market spaces. This is a very risky activity, as greater exposure in public increases the chances of contracting the virus, and many refugee housing units lack the essentials to fully implement self-quarantine. In addition to COVID-19, there is the recurrent problem of winter resurgence of respiratory illnesses. Shipments of much needed antibiotics and anti-inflammatories, such as amoxicillin, are important for hospitals, local treatment centers, and clinics.²⁴

Anera's Response

Medical Donations

In response to increasing prices and mounting need for support, the medical donations team is working on an appeal for donations of buprenorphine and naloxone to Lebanon. Reported shortages of medications used for opioid substitution therapy treatments have placed the lives of many patients at risk. Patients are required to take their medications without interruption in order to avoid deterioration of their conditions. Due to the shortage and price increase, patients are unable to afford the cost of their medications.

To combat the pandemic, a shipment worth \$3.6 million from Distribute Aid arrived at the port of Beirut on December 4 and is slated to arrive at Anera's distribution center by the end of the month. The shipment contains roughly 1.4 million masks which will be distributed to Anera's recipients in the field.

WASH

With funding from UNICEF, Anera implemented an initiative to improve the WASH practices of refugees in Palestinian camps in Lebanon. Anera conducted community mobilization activities in collaboration with local sub-partners and mass media. In 2021, Anera emphasized the importance of COVID-19 precautionary measures and vaccine

²² <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2020/08/winter-us-coronavirus-pandemic-dangerous-indoors/614965/>

²³ <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20201014-palestinian-refugee-camps-in-lebanon-are-facing-covid-19-alone/>

²⁴ <https://www.anera.org/stories/medicines-winter-lebanon/>

awareness, environmental hygiene, and menstrual hygiene through the use of mass media. To date, Anera has distributed 2,900 COVID-19 prevention kits, 7,000 hygiene kits, and 8,500 cloth menstrual pads to camps in Lebanon.

Livelihood Opportunities

In response to Lebanon's economic collapse, Anera refocused its youth cash-for-work programs to meet the needs of those affected by the economic crisis, COVID-19, and the humanitarian crisis. The program aims to provide short-term paid employment opportunities (when internships are unavailable) through programs that address humanitarian needs. The program also positions the participating youth to enter the labor market. The cash-for-work opportunities target students and graduates of Anera's vocational education programs. Throughout 2020, Anera created 2,600 paid-on-the-job training positions through its employment programs. In addition, Anera facilitated the preparation and delivery of 96,000 hot meals, the production of 1.6 million face masks, the installation of plumbing in homes, the repair of homes damaged by the Beirut blast, and the establishment of COVID-19 isolation centers and sanitation gates at entrances to camps and towns, all through the use of its cash-for-work employment programs. So far in 2021, Anera has supported 1,742 youths through cash-for-work opportunities in the sewing, healthcare, IT, construction, agriculture, and environmental and community mobilization sectors.

Education

In August 2021, Anera launched the Safeguarding Adolescents Through Meaningful Assistance (SAMA) project. The SAMA project aims to reduce child marriage among vulnerable girls in Lebanon by providing their families with conditional cash assistance to support the girls' education. By targeting families already benefiting from a poverty reduction program, Anera is able to ensure that the families' needs are being met and the cash assistance can go directly toward the cost of education for their daughters. In addition, Anera will conduct awareness campaigns on the drivers and consequences of child marriage. The awareness campaigns will target men and boys who have experienced the consequences of the divorce of a daughter or a relative who married at an early age. The SAMA project will address the root causes of child marriage and encourage community engagement in ending such dangerous practices.

Solid Waste Management

In response to Lebanon's solid waste crisis, Anera launched a solid waste management program in 2016 to support peaceful coexistence between refugee and host communities and support the operation of integrated waste management in 17 municipalities in the Bekaa Valley. Since 2018, Anera has established two recycling facilities in two villages in the Bekaa Valley, implemented awareness programs at the community level, distributed thousands of household and communal recycling bins, provided technical support to municipalities, and rehabilitated dumpsites. The intervention has led to a 40% increase in municipal solid waste collection and an 80% decrease in waste going to landfills and dumps in targeted areas. In 2021, Anera is targeting nine municipalities in Bekaa, reaching more than 210,000 individuals.

Shelter

Anera initiated its shelter 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 rehabilitated 1,000 affected 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. Since the conclusion of the shelter rehabilitation project, Anera's team in Lebanon has been working to rehabilitate additional homes. Anera has been restoring plumbing and sanitation in homes and renovating kitchens and bathrooms. This intervention enables families to return to safe and liveable homes.