



# Lebanon Situation Report

March 16, 2021

## Background

The immediate background to the crises and increasingly dire humanitarian situation in Lebanon is summarized in Anera's last [Situation Report \(December 21\)](#). 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

Going into the new year, Lebanon faced and continues to face increased economic deterioration, marked by a significant loss in currency value in the second week of January.<sup>1</sup> As a result of the economic situation in Lebanon and the country's inconsistent subsidies, electricity is in short supply<sup>2</sup>, and food insecurity continues to increase throughout the country.<sup>3</sup> The economic crisis is compounded by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as Lebanon's daily number of new cases continues to rise with the spread of the newest omicron variant.

In addition to the material challenges facing the residents of Lebanon, the country is facing a sharp increase in serious crime, such as extortion, kidnapping, and murder. Since 2019, the number of murders in Lebanon has more than doubled.<sup>4</sup> These conditions create an environment that limits residents from securing their basic needs and forces them to live in fear for their wellbeing and that of their families.

## Economy

As of January 11, Lebanon's currency lost more than 15% of its value since the beginning of 2022. The Lebanese pound traded at over 33,000 to the dollar, compared to 27,400 to the dollar on December 31.<sup>5</sup> As of January 14, the value had risen to 27,300 to the dollar, recovering slightly. In response to the drop in value, the Central Bank now aims to further increase the value of the Lebanese pound. It plans to do so by easing dollar purchase restrictions, removing the ceiling it previously set for bank purchases of dollars.<sup>6</sup> The depreciation of the pound's value directly affects the people of Lebanon, who face changes in purchasing power as the value of the pound changes. With decreased purchasing power, more and more people continue to descend into poverty and struggle to provide for the basic needs of themselves and their families.

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<sup>1</sup> [Lebanon's currency plummets again amid financial crisis and political deadlock | Reuters](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Lebanon faces internet service interruption amid fuel crisis | ABC News](#)

<sup>3</sup> [GIEWS Country Brief- Lebanon | FAO](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Extortion, kidnappings on rise in crisis-hit Lebanon | Arab News](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Lebanon's currency plummets again amid financial crisis and political deadlock | Reuters](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Lebanese central bank seeks to strengthen currency after slump | Arab News](#)

The World Bank reports that Lebanon's 2021 GDP fell from 55 billion USD in 2018 to 20.5 billion USD in 2021. From 2018 to 2021, Lebanon's real GDP per capita fell by 37.1%. **Lebanon's unemployment rate, estimated at 11.4% in 2019, is now over 40%.** The unemployment rate is even higher among youth, at 60%. As of November, the food price inflation reflected an annual increase of 350%.<sup>7</sup>

### Electricity

On the night of January 8, Lebanon experienced a nationwide blackout. Protesters had stormed a substation of the national electricity company near Aramoun. According to the company, the protesters tampered with equipment, which decreased the stability of the network and caused the blackout. The protesters were there to stage a demonstration against the daily power cuts in Lebanon.<sup>8</sup>

Lebanon's daily power cuts are largely due to the country's ongoing fuel shortages. Residents of Lebanon receive only a few hours of state electricity a day, leaving those who can afford it to rely on generators. On January 16, the fuel shortage caused internet services to be disrupted. A major power station run by the state internet provider in west Beirut went offline, affecting more than 26,000 subscribers. Diesel donated by a resident enabled the provider to go back online by mid-day. However, telecommunication companies continue to complain that they are unable to meet the rising operational costs, including the cost of fuel.<sup>9</sup>

**In addition to the existing fuel shortage, fuel prices have risen by 33% since the Russian invasion of Ukraine.** This is due to a significant increase in global fuel prices, driven by global uncertainty. Small amounts of fuel are reaching Lebanon, and importers are trying to ration supplies. Most of the gas stations that closed temporarily as a result of the fuel shortage are waiting for their supplies to be delivered.<sup>10</sup> It is unclear whether the shortage and increased fuel prices will lead to more competition over the resource when the supply becomes available, or whether the people of Lebanon will have to cope without fuel due to the steep prices. Regardless, Lebanon continues to face fuel and electricity challenges that make daily life even more difficult for cash-strapped Lebanese.

### Food Security

According to World Food Programme (WFP) estimates, more than 1.3 million Lebanese citizens faced food insecurity by the end of September 2021. This is roughly 36% of the population. At the same time, WFP reports that the number of households with serious constraints on food access reached 57%, compared to 40% in September 2020. In September 2021, around 735,000 of the 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon faced food insecurity, and 88% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon depended on humanitarian assistance to cover basic needs.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> [GIEWS Country Brief- Lebanon | FAO](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Lebanon hit by nationwide blackout after protesters storm substation | Jerusalem Post](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Lebanon faces internet service interruption amid fuel crisis | ABC News](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Lebanese fearful as fuel and wheat shortage deepens | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

<sup>11</sup> [GIEWS Country Brief- Lebanon | FAO](#)

A recent Gallup poll revealed that **85% of people living in Lebanon find it “difficult” or “very difficult” to make ends meet.** In addition, 53% of adults reported lacking money for food at some point in the past year. UNICEF reports that as of October 2021, more than 50% of families had at least one child who had to skip a meal due to the economic crisis.<sup>12</sup>

The current war in Ukraine will likely create further challenges to food security in Lebanon, as up to 90% of the country’s wheat and cooking oil imports, as well as a large amount of grain imports, are from Ukraine and Russia. These imports are no longer possible due to the fighting in Ukraine and the economic sanctions placed on Russia. The shortage of wheat caused by the war is coupled with food inflation in Lebanon that totals a 1,000% increase since the beginning of the crisis. As a result, even more vulnerable Lebanese face and will face significant challenges in feeding themselves and their families as the war continues.<sup>13</sup>

### COVID-19

As of March 16, there have been 1,085,842 cases of COVID-19, and 10,219 cumulative deaths in Lebanon. The average number of daily new cases reached a new peak of 7,687 on February 11, and it has fallen by over 3,400 since then. On average, 780 new cases are now reported each day. So far, Lebanon has administered around 5,230,428 vaccine doses, which is enough for roughly 38.1% of its population to be fully vaccinated.<sup>14</sup>

**Lebanon’s vaccination numbers remain low due to vaccine hesitancy.** On January 8, nearly 300 people gathered in Beirut to protest measures imposed to encourage vaccination, such as requiring proof of vaccination or a negative PCR test to enter restaurants, hotels, and other businesses.<sup>15</sup> Another decision met with backlash requires vaccination or frequent PCR tests at the individual’s expense for public sector workers. These measures have sparked protests and widespread anti-vaccine rhetoric on social media. While protests continue to occur, the Ministry of Health is trying to encourage vaccination by providing vaccines without appointments on specified days throughout the country. During one of these “vaccine marathons,” Lebanon’s vaccine centers inoculated 30,000 people.<sup>16</sup>

### Anera’s Response

#### Medical Donations and Other In-kind Aid

A shipment from Health Partners International of Canada has arrived at port which contains medicines needed in Lebanon, such as those that treat heart and diabetes. Anera is currently distributing a large quantity of masks, worth \$3.6 million and donated by Distribute Aid, to beneficiaries in Lebanon. To help residents manage the electricity shortages, Anera has fully distributed mechanical and solar lanterns, which came from U-light and SoLight, to vulnerable communities across the country.

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<sup>12</sup> [Lebanon Food Security Brief # 22 | AUB Lebanon Food Security Portal](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Lebanese fearful as fuel and wheat shortage deepens | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Lebanon: the latest coronavirus counts, charts and maps | Reuters](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Hundreds in Lebanon protest measures targeting unvaccinated | AP News](#)

<sup>16</sup> [‘Vaccine Dictatorship’: Many Lebanese refuse the COVID jab | Al Jazeera News Network](#)

Anera has also completed distribution of chemotherapy medications and neuromuscular blocking agents as well as portable ultra deep freezers, donated by Direct Relief, which will be used to transport vaccines. Anera fully distributed a donation of hypertensive medications and antibiotics from International Health Partners.

### **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)**

We are continuing efforts to improve the WASH practices of refugees in Palestinian camps in Lebanon, with funding from UNICEF. Anera has focused on raising awareness through the use of mass media about menstrual hygiene and COVID-19 vaccines and safety measures.

### **Livelihood Opportunities**

In order to respond to the needs created by Lebanon's economic collapse and COVID-19, Anera has refocused its youth cash-for-work programs to provide short-term paid employment opportunities (directly, if no paid employer-based internships are available) through programs that address humanitarian needs.

### **Education**

Anera is continuing its educational programming for out-of-school youth, as well as the program we launched last year to provide conditional cash assistance to the families of vulnerable girls as a means to support the education of girls and reduce child marriage.

### **Solid Waste Management**

First launched in 2016, Anera's solid waste management program aims to mitigate the ongoing garbage crisis in Lebanon that threatens public health. Now supporting the operation of integrated waste management in 17 municipalities in the Bekaa Valley, the initiative continues to promote proper waste sorting, recycling, composting and garbage disposal, leading to an 80% reduction in waste going to landfills and dumps in the targeted areas.

### **Shelter**

In the days following the Beirut blast, Anera launched a program to provide relief through shelter rehabilitation for vulnerable families, enabling those displaced by the blast to return to their homes. Anera has rehabilitated 1,052 homes and 200 small businesses, while creating livelihood opportunities by employing 150 youth workers trained in construction through our cash-for-work programs. Anera is now expanding this program to cover vulnerable families beyond the port explosion, restoring plumbing and renovating kitchens and bathrooms to make homes safe and liveable.