

# Lebanon – Explosions

AUGUST 19, 2020

## SITUATION AT A GLANCE



- Lebanon records increase in COVID-19 cases, prompting health responders to reorient efforts towards COVID-19 prevention and response interventions.
- UN launches flash appeal requesting \$565 million for humanitarian and reconstruction activities, aiming to reach 300,000 people affected by August 4 explosions.
- USAID/BHA provides approximately \$15.1 million to support populations affected by the August 4 explosions in Lebanon, including through food, health, and shelter assistance.



TOTAL U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN FUNDING For the Lebanon Response in FY 2020	USAID/BHA <sup>1, 2</sup>	\$15,100,000
		DoD <sup>3</sup>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$18,100,000<sup>4</sup></b>

<sup>1</sup> USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA). Figure reflects announced funding as of August 19, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Total USAID/BHA funding includes non-food humanitarian assistance from the former Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and emergency food assistance from the former Office of Food for Peace.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Defense (DoD)

<sup>4</sup> This total does not include approximately \$41.6 million in supplemental funding through USAID/BHA and U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM) for coronavirus disease (COVID-19) preparedness and response activities or State/PRM funding for refugee response activities in Lebanon. Existing State/PRM partners have reoriented activities to respond to the needs of individuals affected by the August 4 explosions.

## TIMELINE

**Aug. 4, 2020**

Concurrent explosions occur at a warehouse near Lebanon's Port of Beirut.

**Aug. 5, 2020**

U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Dorothy Shea declares a disaster in Lebanon due to the humanitarian impacts of the explosions.

**Aug. 7, 2020**

USAID deploys a DART and activates a Washington, D.C.-based Response Management Team (RMT). USAID/BHA also announces \$15.1 million to support emergency response activities in Beirut.

**August 9, 2020**

Urban search and rescue operations cease and response efforts shift to providing immediate humanitarian assistance to those affected by the explosions, per GoL request.

**Aug. 9, 2020**

U.S. President Donald J. Trump attends virtual donor conference, during which 30 countries pledge \$298 million in assistance.

**Aug. 10, 2020**

Acting USAID Administrator John Barsa arrives in Beirut to highlight USG's commitment to addressing the needs of the Lebanese people.

**Aug. 14, 2020**

UN releases flash appeal for humanitarian and reconstruction support.

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

### UN Releases Flash Appeal for Humanitarian and Reconstruction Activities

The UN released a flash appeal on August 14 requesting \$565 million to provide assistance to approximately 300,000 people affected by the August 4 explosions in Lebanon. The appeal identified two strategic response objectives: meet immediate needs with humanitarian aid—such as health, shelter, and protection assistance—and provide early recovery support to restore education, food supply chain, health care, and market capacity in Lebanon's capital city of Beirut. As of August 14, the August 4 explosions had resulted in at least 178 deaths and 6,000 injured persons, and more than 30 people remained missing, according to the Government of Lebanon (GoL) Ministry of Public Health.

### Primary Health Needs Shift as COVID-19 Cases Increase in Lebanon

According to the UN, the reduction in trauma cases in recent days has shifted the focus of health response activities from immediate care for victims of the explosions to COVID-19 treatment. From August 16 to 17, the GoL recorded 456 new COVID-19 cases, bringing the total number of cases reported to date to 9,337 with 105 associated deaths since the outbreak began in the country on February 21. By comparison, state media reported 182 new COVID-19 cases on July 29. Due to the spike in cases, the GoL is implementing a two-week countrywide lockdown, according to international media.

The UN has raised concerns that hospitals in Beirut lack sufficient intensive care unit (ICU) beds amid the increase in COVID-19 cases. As of August 17, Rafik Hariri University Hospital—the largest public hospital in Beirut—had reached its maximum ICU capacity, while the hospital's COVID-19 ward was at 90 percent capacity. Moreover, relief actors report that cases will likely increase further as many individuals continue to help with necessary debris removal and reconstruction efforts, hindering social distancing protocols, the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) reports. Additionally, many households displaced from homes damaged from the August 4 explosions are sheltering with relatives throughout Lebanon, increasing the risks of transmission.

As of August 18, health actors were prioritizing COVID-19 prevention and response efforts, reestablishing health centers' capacity to treat chronic illnesses, the early rehabilitation of primary health care centers, and the provision of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), according to international donors. The U.S. Government (USG) has provided \$41.6 million to support COVID-19 response efforts in Lebanon, in addition to the \$18.1 million provided to support the August 4 explosions response.

## An Estimated 171,600 People Affected by Damaged Shelters

As of August 13, the Shelter Sector estimated nearly 29,800 apartments had sustained minor damage, 17,100 apartments had sustained moderate damage, and more than 1,100 buildings had sustained heavy damage, affecting a total of 171,600 individuals. Relief actors note that primary shelter assistance needs are construction materials, most of which are locally available; rent support; and the replacement of household water tanks. While water infrastructure remained mostly intact or sustained only minor damage, some houses do not have a working connection to water mains, raising drinking water and sanitation concerns, according to the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

## GoL Waives Import Fees on Humanitarian Goods

To facilitate the importation of humanitarian commodities, the GoL has waived custom taxes and duties on incoming relief goods through August 2021. The decree applies to donations and aid provided to Lebanese public administrations, institutions, municipalities, municipal unions, and other public entities, as well as organizations that are granted exemption letters by the GoL High Relief Commission. As of August 18, humanitarian actors report that while most UN agencies were able to obtain the exemptions, some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are experiencing difficulties securing the necessary GoL approvals. The DART continues to monitor the effect of the decree on incoming international humanitarian assistance in Lebanon.

# NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL, AND U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

## KEY FIGURES



**300,000**

Number of people targeted to receive USAID/BHA food assistance

## FOOD SECURITY

Food security was a major concern in Lebanon prior to August 4, and silos at the Port of Beirut that held up to 120,000 metric tons (MTs) of grain were destroyed by the explosions, the UN reports. In response, USAID/BHA has provided \$10.5 million to the UN World Food Program (WFP), aiming to improve food security conditions for 300,000 people affected by the explosions.

WFP plans to send 50,000 MT of wheat flour—sufficient to feed 3.3 million people for one month—to Lebanon in the coming week. The first shipment of approximately 12,500 MT of wheat flour arrived at the Port of Beirut—which is operating at 30 percent capacity—on August 18. Relief actors also continue to conduct food security assessments and distribute hot meals to first responders and households without functioning kitchens. As of August 10, NGO Caritas had distributed 20,000 hot meals and 400 food boxes to people affected by the explosions.



**6**

Number of USG-procured IEHKs delivered to Beirut

## HEALTH

Relief actors continue to meet health needs in Beirut, providing essential supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE), deploying mobile medical units (MMUs) to help absorb the caseload from damaged hospitals, and mobilizing additional medical staff. To date, UNICEF has contributed 3.5 million surgical masks, 2.6 million pairs of gloves, nearly 125,000 gowns, and 10,000 tetanus vaccines to health actors in Beirut. Additionally, UNICEF had

provided MHPSS services to more than 700 households with children as of August 13. Caritas had also contributed 2,000 medicines, provided first aid to nearly 200 people, and offered psychosocial support services to nearly 60 people as of August 10. On August 13, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) delivered 10,000 PPE items to Beirut, and the EU—in coordination with Médecins Sans Frontières and UNICEF—sent 17 tons of medical supplies and medicines to Beirut.

Multiple relief organizations—including the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) and International Medical Corps (IMC), a State/PRM partner—have deployed MMUs to address health needs, providing MHPSS services, minor trauma care, referrals, and vaccinations. As of August 11, LRC MMUs were active in Beirut’s Ashrafieh neighborhood, with the capacity to treat approximately 200 people per day. The LRC had also mobilized nearly 380 emergency medical teams and 80 ambulances as of August 7 to assist populations affected by the explosions. Additionally, IMC MMUs had provided more than 530 medical consultations and 450 mental health consultations in affected neighborhoods as of August 17. IMC has also delivered 23 shipments of medical supplies and PPE—including gauze, gloves, and masks—to 19 primary health care centers and eight hospitals in Beirut, and distributed PPE and health supplies to approximately 1,000 responders and local volunteers to support the provision of immediate assistance and debris removal.

On August 11, USAID/BHA coordinated with DoD to airlift six USAID/BHA-procured interagency emergency health kits (IEHKs)—containing critical medical commodities sufficient to support up to 60,000 people for three months—to Beirut. The kits were distributed to the American University of Beirut (AUB) and Lebanese American University to support life-saving health interventions.



**48,000**

Number of apartments  
and buildings damaged by  
August 4 explosions

## **SHELTER**

Relief actors have identified shelter rehabilitation as an essential need following the August 4 explosions, particularly in Beirut’s Ashrafieh, Gemmayzeh, Karantina, and Mar Mikhael neighborhoods. In response, USAID/BHA is supporting Lutheran World Relief to assist with critical repairs to ensure that damaged homes are safe, secure, and habitable for the most vulnerable explosion-affected households.

Humanitarian organizations continue to conduct rapid needs assessments, distribute shelter kits, mobilize emergency shelter materials, and support repair and rehabilitation efforts, according to the UN. As of August 17, Shelter Sector partners had conducted more than 5,500 emergency needs assessments and delivered more than 2,430 shelter kits, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The UN Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) is also conducting assessments in Karantina and Mar Mikhael and plans to support 800 of the most vulnerable households evacuated from damaged neighborhoods by providing cash for rent to allow individuals to meet basic needs while houses are repaired. Additionally, the Qatar Red Crescent

Society is working with the LRC to repair 500 houses damaged by the explosions.



**24**

Percent of households  
lacking connections  
to main water  
supply networks

## **WASH**

Although most of Beirut’s water supply infrastructure remains functional, some households lack access to water due to damaged water lines connecting houses to supply networks. Additionally, many households in affected neighborhoods typically purchase water—either bottled or trucked—and face challenges accessing water services. The Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Sector has surveyed 560 buildings, an estimated 340 of which are occupied and nearly 230 of which do not have functional water access systems.

In response to WASH needs, USAID/BHA is partnering with AUB—in coordination with LRC—to distribute emergency hygiene kits to those affected by the disaster. Meanwhile, State/PRM partner IMC has distributed 190 hygiene kits in affected neighborhoods. Additionally, Caritas had distributed hygiene kits to more than 130 people as of August 13, while the LRC had distributed 250 WASH kits as of August 14.

## **LOGISTICS AND RELIEF COMMODITIES**

From August 6 to 9, DoD delivered five flights of relief commodities, including nearly 230 MT of meals-ready-to-eat, medical supplies, and safe drinking water, to Beirut as part of the USG’s disaster response efforts.

---

## PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making monetary contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting monetary support for disaster responses around the world can be found at [interaction.org](https://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages monetary contributions because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
  - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: [cidi.org](https://www.cidi.org)
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://www.reliefweb.int).

USAID/BHA bulletins appear on the USAID website at [usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work](https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work)