



ACTED

August 7, 2020

Beirut Blast Rapid Needs Assessment Report

Karm el Zeytoun, Karantina, Bourj Hammoud, Geitawi & Nabaa neighborhoods

LEBANON

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and context

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study neighbourhoods

2.2 Data collection

2.3 Limitations

3. MAP OF ASSESSED LOCATIONS

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Populations affected

4.2 Shelter

4.3 Food

4.4 Health Care

4.5 Water and Sanitation

4.6 Protection

4.7 Livelihoods

4.8 Cash & Markets

4.9 Logistics

5. ACTED IN LEBANON

ACTED HQ
33, rue Godot de Mauroy
75009 Paris, France
Tel: +33 1 42 65 33 33
gmu@acted.org

ACTED Lebanon
Eshmoun Building, 9th Floor, Damascus
Street, Beirut, Lebanon
hart.ford@acted.org



Street in Mar Mkhayel, August 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Context

At least 154 people were killed (MoPH) and 5,000 wounded following two explosions that erupted in Lebanon's capital on Tuesday August 4th at 6 pm. Hundreds have been reported missing in the aftermath of the blast, raising fears that the death toll will rise. The second explosion's shock wave raced from the site of the blasts, Beirut's industrial waterfront, into the city's densely populated residential neighborhoods and shopping districts downtown. Dozens of nearby buildings collapsed or were severely damaged. Broken glass and debris could be seen two miles away, encompassing an area where more than 750,000 people live.

The damages were compounded by the destruction of key supplies stored in the port area, including Lebanon's national wheat silo, which was destroyed. The silo contained essential grain reserves including wheat, corn, and barley. Lebanon is dependent on imports to satisfy around 85 percent of its food needs. The country was already in a precarious food security situation, as inflation has seen the cost of goods skyrocket throughout 2020, and importers have struggled to secure enough dollars in the cash-strapped country to pay for their imports.

The blast came at a sensitive time for Lebanon, which is struggling through a severe economic and public health crisis. Since October 2019, Lebanon has faced dramatic political and financial challenges which have culminated in an unprecedented economic recession, further compounding existing vulnerabilities among the country's population – Lebanese and refugees alike. The value of the LBP has tumbled, losing 85% of its value, as of end of July 2020.

Against this backdrop, the COVID-19 outbreak and related containment measures have largely affected all population cohorts. As a consequence of the economic crisis and country-

wide lockdown, nearly one out of every three Lebanese was pushed into unemployment, while approximately 20% of the remaining population saw their salary being reduced (WFP, June 2020). On August 4th, Lebanon's main coronavirus hospital announced being on the verge of reaching full capacity in its critical care ward. The number of COVID-19 hospitalizations has increased sharply since the beginning of July, with new cases exceeding 100 per day, and 5,062 cases confirmed as of 5th August 2020. Pressure on both public and private hospitals is at an all-level high, with the number of new cases surging rapidly.

Following the port blast, the Lebanese Cabinet declared a two-week **State of Emergency** in Beirut on August 5, 2020. The gravity of the disaster and the **pre-existing crisis conditions** in which it occurred calls for immediate life-saving action aimed at providing relief assistance to those households affected by the disasters, and who **lack means and resources to absorb the shock**.

In response to knowledge gaps and rising needs, **ACTED deployed a rapid assessment team** on August 6, 2020 to collect community-level information about **Geitawi, Karantina, Bourj Hammoud, Nabaa and Karm el Zeytoun** neighborhoods to get a preliminary overview. The focus on those neighbourhoods was due to pre-existing vulnerabilities, location near to the explosion location, and availability of key informants.

This assessment provides information to prompt and inform aid agencies to provide emergency humanitarian support to populations most-affected by the Beirut explosions.

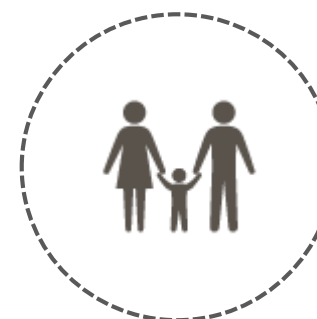
Three Assessment Objectives

ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES



Determine the impact of the blast on access to basic services in vulnerable neighborhoods of Beirut, to respond to **emergency needs**

GROUPS MOST IN NEED



Understand the differentiated impact of the blast on **Lebanese, refugees from Syria and Palestine** and other groups, to coordinate and respond to their **needs**

FEASIBILITY



Determine the **feasibility** and identify any major barriers to an emergency **humanitarian** response, taking into account the impact of the blast on key infrastructure, services and network

Key findings at a glance

For communities located near the site of the blast, the urgent need for **cash** assistance to **access basic services** is made clear through findings in this report. Widespread multisector humanitarian needs were identified, notably in terms of **shelter, food, reconstruction, livelihoods** and **psychological** support. Needs are higher in **Karantina, Karm el Zeytoun** and **Bourj Hammoud** neighborhoods, located close to the port.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study neighbourhoods

The assessment was conducted using key informant interviews (KIIs) and direct participant observations. It was administered in **five neighbourhoods of Beirut: Geitawi, Karantina, Bourj Hammoud, Nabaa and Karm el Zeytoun to obtain in-depth community knowledge as well as gather broad data on the neighbourhoods.** These locations were selected on a pragmatic basis, prioritizing areas with highest pre-existing vulnerabilities as well as their proximity with the site of explosion. ACTED's methodology for this assessment covered as many neighbourhoods as possible in light of time and resource constraints. Prior to field data collection, ACTED conducted desk review of available secondary data; relevant information is integrated into this report where possible.

2.2. Data Collection

The quantitative key informant questionnaire was developed by ACTED's Appraisal, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (AMEU) in collaboration with country coordination and technical units. Data was collected in English on ODK by a field team of trained male and female enumerators on August 6, 2020. The data submitted was then cleaned and cross checked with secondary data sources.

Participants in the KIIs were selected based on purposive sampling. ACTED's team arranged meetings with five neighbourhood Mukhtars to obtain a broad overview of the area. **This strategy was employed to capitalize on local knowledge and ultimately to involve key community leaders in the planning of the emergency response of their respective areas.**

When possible, key informants were contacted by phone ahead of the interview, to determine their whereabouts and ask them if they would be available to respond to the study.

Prior to launching the assessment, the team supervisor ensured staff, drivers and enumerators were properly informed of all social distancing and hygiene requirements. As much as possible, the assessment team implemented Covid-19 prevention measures; wearing protective masks and ensuring no prolonged contact between people (i.e. staff or respondents) at less than 1 meter for more than 15 minutes (social distancing).

Ten KIIs were conducted: six with neighbourhood Mukhtars (community leaders), one with the Head of the Municipality Social Affairs, one with a Police Officer, one with the Director of a Social Development Center (SDC), and one with the Head Nurse of Gitawi Hospital.

Information was also collected from civil society organizations, as first community responders, as well as with cash service providers ACTED already has operational contracts with.

In addition, ACTED reached out to additional Mukhtars in **Gemmayze, Basta El Tahta, Mdawar, Mar Mkhayel** as well as municipality police and municipality representatives. However, most had already evacuated the area, and/or were overwhelmed by the emergency and unable to provide estimations of the scope of the damages.

Throughout the report, information is disaggregated by target neighborhoods. Differentiated information by age, gender and nationality was included as available and relevant.



2.3. Limitations

Karantina neighbourhood could not be physically accessed after having been declared a crime scene by the Lebanese army. In addition, the current Mukhtar could not be located. Hence the former Mukhtar, who was present in the neighbourhood when the explosion occurred, was interviewed over the phone.

The assessment was designed as a rapid tool using the methods outlined above and not including structured statistical household surveys. While quantitative KIIs with community leaders do not produce representative data about the entire population, KIIs provided the best source of estimation for key indicators.

It is important to highlight that key informants tended to provide estimates rather than exact data

– a data quality point to consider when interpreting the findings.

Readers of this report should bear in mind that the assessment represents responses given by local community members and leaders. While the exploratory team endeavors to create an open dialogue to collect objective responses, the subjectivity and possibility of biased answers should be taken into consideration.

Lastly, given the short timeframe available, only a limited number of KIIs could be conducted.

3. ASSESSMENT LOCATIONS

Areas colored in green on the right-hand side of the map below highlight the **neighbourhoods of Beirut** that were assessed by ACTED’s AMEU on August 6, 2020.



4. FINDINGS

4.1 Populations affected

Beirut's city governor Marwan Abboud reported on August 5th that between 250,000 and 300,000 people lost their homes and are currently in need of food, water and shelter assistance. The area surrounding the port is densely populated, with a high concentration of Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian households living in some of the most vulnerable urban neighborhoods of Lebanon's capital, just few kilometers away from the blast site.

In the blast rayon area, ACTED estimated that at least **150,000 people are currently in need of urgent humanitarian assistance**.

These notably include:

- **Karm el Zeytoun** in the residential area of Achrafieh, a high-density poor neighborhood where many Syrians found refuge thanks to the affordable prices and opportunities for informal employment;
- The municipality of **Bourj Hammoud**, in particular the highly vulnerable neighborhoods of Nabaa, Arax, Maraache and Adana, located north-east of Beirut in el Metn district (Greater Beirut). Those areas are characterized by a chaotic urban structure, with shelters built haphazardly and not connected to the government's services where a high concentration of Syrian refugees have settled;
- **Karantina**, a low-income commercial and semi-industrial neighborhood lying east of the Port of Beirut, adjacent to the North-South highway.

The explosions come as the last of a **long chain of socio-economic shocks** that affected the low-income families residing in these neighborhoods. The affected households already **exhausted all coping mechanisms** and are in **need of immediate assistance** in order to absorb the immediate impacts of the disaster.

Key informants estimated that between **70% to 100% of the population living in their neighbourhood has been affected by the disaster**.

In all assessed neighbourhoods except Karantina and Bourj Hammoud, no relief assistance was provided following the blast. Karantina received hygiene kits and food rations. In Bourj Hammoud, Saint Joseph Church provided food.

When asked about the **most pressing needs, shelter / accommodation** was mentioned as the **top priority** in Nabaa, Bourj Hammoud, Karantina and Geitawi neighbourhoods, as well as by the Municipality KI. In Karm el Zaytoun, when compiling the responses provided by the two KIs, food was identified as the top priority, while this is the second most pressing need in other neighbourhoods.

Access to household goods and non food items, health care, livelihood and businesses, as well as cash assistance, hygiene, water and psychological support were also repeatedly mentioned.

4.2 Shelter

Widespread structural damage is reported at the harbor and in surrounding neighborhoods, with collapsed buildings, others at risk of collapsing, damaged infrastructure / windows, and lack of access to basic services. According to the Municipality KI, 11,160 buildings were damaged.

In **Bourj Hammoud**, 70-90% of the houses / dwellings are reportedly **destroyed or partly destroyed**. 50-90% of the neighborhood population currently lives in a partially damaged house / dwelling, refusing to leave.

This figure raises up to 80% in **Karantina**, which is located nearer to the blast site, with a large share of those **not inhabitable**, and 20% of the neighborhood population currently living in a partially damaged building. Displaced people were reported in Karantina in designated evacuation centers (1,000 individuals, mostly Lebanese), with an estimated 70% of the population having left the area.

In **Karm el Zaytoun**, 70% of houses are partly destroyed.

In **Geitawi**, 95% to 100% of the neighborhood population currently lives in a partially damaged building. The KI indicated that affected people refuse to leave their houses.

In **Nabaa**, no dwellings are reported destroyed, while 70% were damaged and still considered habitable.

Affordability and availability of construction materials are the main concerns with meeting shelter accommodation needs today across assessed neighborhoods, as well as the lack of basic domestic items.

Population groups living in the same area were affected in similar ways, with vulnerabilities among Lebanese and refugees from Syria

4.3 Food

Most KIs reported that people currently have access to food and local markets in their neighborhood, with exception of Karantina, where the market was destroyed by the blast.

It is however feared that in the absence of assistance, **some shops and local markets will close** in a near future due to the unaffordability and unavailability of repair materials.

The **amount of food intake** since the disaster is reportedly **decreasing**, with the majority of each area's populations in need of food assistance (50% in Nadaa, 70% in Bourj Hammoud, 80% in Karantina, 95-100% in Geitawi, and 70-90% in Karm el Zaytoun). This percentage raises up to 100% according to the Municipality KI.

Caritas and Farah Social Institution are the only two actors reported as providing food assistance in a 1 km ray of the explication location.

In Nadaa and Karm el Zaytoun, the main food source since the disaster is the local market, while in Geitawi, Bourj Hammoud and Karantina, households mainly rely on their food stocks.

The main concern related to access to food is the **lack of financial resources**. Fuel availability and access to cooking facilities / utensils are also major concerns.

WFP announced that the country wheat stock was destroyed in the explosion. Supply of wheat / grains is expected to last between 1 month and 1 month and a half.

The blast also occurred at a time of acute economic crisis and inflation. According to the World Food Programme of the United Nations (WFP), the price of the "minimum survival food basket" (consisting of a monthly per capita ration of the amount of food (e.g., rice, bulgur, pasta, white beans, sugar, sunflower oil, salt and canned meat) had already increased by +116% between September 2019 and June 2020 (of which +34% between May and June alone), in a context where the Lebanese pound experienced a sharp depreciation on the parallel foreign exchange market.

Two KIs also highlighted that the **elderly** are in need of food delivery at their door. This category of the population was also reported as refusing to leave their homes.

In Nabaa and Bourj Hammoud, the growing food insecurity in the country has not discriminated, with both Lebanese and refugees from Syria deeply affected by the lack of access to food.



Garbage littered the street, Mar Mkhayel – August 2020

4.4 Health Care

According to ACTED field teams and as confirmed by OCHA, multiple health facilities sustained damages.

Following the port blast, Rosair, Karantina, Saint George Hospitals were so severely damaged that they had to shut down and send patients to other facilities. Geitawi and Rizk Hospitals were damaged but remain open.

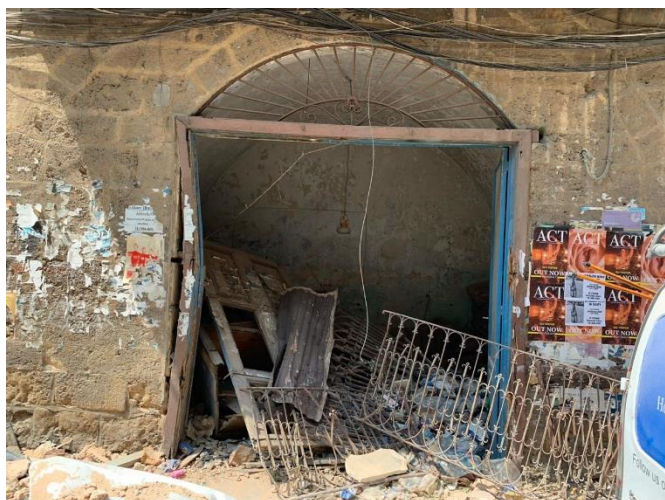
Moreover, one of the country's main vaccine and medication stockpiles was located in the Karantina warehouse near the port. Health care workers reported that hundreds of thousands of doses, used to supply health centers across Lebanon, were stored in the warehouse, in an area where other buildings were badly damaged.

Hospitals have been overwhelmed with casualties, with many intensive care units (ICUs) already near their max capacity due to COVID-19.

According to the KI from damaged Geitawi Hospital, all community groups currently face difficulties accessing health services. The existing stock of medicines/medical supplies is expected to last for more than a week.

The first military mobile hospital was set in Cite Sportive area on August 6. More are expected from Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait and France and are to be set around Beirut.

NGOs that are already responding flagged their need of masks, gloves and cleaning tools so they can move the debris.



Mar Khayel, August 2020

4.5 Water and Sanitation

Safe water for drinking and cooking is not sufficient / available in Karantina. In this neighborhood as well as in Nabaa, populations currently rely on water trucking and purchase. In Nabaa, less than 25% of households have **water containers with lids**, while this share increases to 25-50% in Karantina, and more than 75% in Bourj Hammoud. Caritas and Farah Social Institution are the only two actors reported as providing water assistance in a 1 km ray of the explosion location.

Access to water is not reported as a concern in the other locations. Karm el Zaytoun, Bourj Hammoud and Geitawi continue to rely on piped water.

In Nabaa, Bourj Hammoud and Karantina, Lebanese and refugees from Syria populations groups are considered to have been affected in similar ways by the consequences of the blast.



Shop in Mar Mkhayel – August 2020



Destroyed building in Geitawi, August 2020

4.6 Protection

Non-State actors and militia were reported in Nabaa, while in Bourj Hammoud, neighborhood security groups are the main security mechanisms.

In Karantina, Geitawi and Karm el Zaytoun, the police and army / military are present. In the former two, key informants indicated that absence of rule of law and arbitrary detentions were the most severe protection concern since the blast.

In almost all assessed locations, key informants were concerned over the deterioration of social cohesion, clashes between armed groups, and tensions between displaced and host communities.

Local NGOs reported some tensions between early responders clearing rubble, and homeowners worrying about people in their house.

The psychological trauma is also very clear, especially in Karantina and Nabaa.

Women, the elderly and people with specific needs (chronically ill, persons with disability, elderly-headed households) were identified as the most in need of protection assistance across assessed locations.

Caritas is the only identified actor in the provision of psychological support.

Both Lebanese and refugees from Syria are again considered particularly facing protection risks across assessed location.

4.7 Livelihoods

Small businesses and trading / shops have been highly affected by the disaster, followed by daily work and salaried jobs.

Karantina, Karm el Zaytoun, Bourj Hammoud and Geitawi were more badly hit, with 60 to 100% of damaged shops (30% in Nabaa). Shops most urgently need **reconstruction assistance** and **capital**, as well as support to rebuild their stocks.

In Karantina, Nabaa, Bourj Hammoud and Karm el Zaytoun, KIs indicated that most shop owners **usually hold debts, and will not be able to repay** them.

One KI expressed the concern that, without external assistance, 50-60% of the shops will not be able to re-open.

According to ACTED field teams, shops beyond the initial blast site are currently functioning, even with the damage to their buildings.

Across the board, KIs overwhelmingly cited price increases and currency instabilities due to the effects of the economic crisis.

Both Lebanese and refugees from Syria are facing difficulties in terms of livelihoods, according to KIs.

4.8 Cash & Markets

According to KIs, 70% of the population in Nabaa, Bourj Hammoud and Karantina currently does not have access to cash. This information was not available for Geitawi and Karm el Zaytoun.

Preferred assistance modality is through **cash** in Karantina, Karm el Zaytoun and Bourj Hammoud, as confirmed by the Municipality Head of Social Affairs. In-kind is preferred in Nabaa and Bourj Hammoud. Both cash and in-kind modalities were mentioned by Geitawi KIs.

Local markets are functioning, as reported by KIs and ACTED field teams (except in Karantina).

ACTED's existing cash transfer service provider partners confirmed they are fully operational.

According to UNHCR, the cap for household cash assistance remains unchanged (250 USD per household).

4.9 Logistics

Telecommunications are disrupted in all assessed areas except Bourj Hammoud. In addition, internet services are not operational in Nabaa and Karantina.

The mobile network is however functioning across all locations.

According to ACTED's operational field team, US dollars can be withdrawn from ATMs from August 7 onwards, though this remains to be seen if this is possible, given the shortage of US dollars in the country.

There is no electricity in Nabaa and Karantina, while it is available less than 6 hours per day in the other neighborhoods.

Karm el Zaytoun being located in the area of the blast, physical access is difficult and in some locations only possible by foot.

Several actors are mobilized on the ground to clean debris, including individuals, civil society organizations and political actors.



Corniche I naher, August 2020

5. ACTED IN LEBANON

ACTED is an international non-profit organization registered in France and operating in 38 countries. Independent, private and non-profit, ACTED respects a strict political and religious impartiality, and operates following principles of non-discrimination and transparency, according to its core values: responsibility, impact, enterprising-spirit and inspiration.

ACTED is committed to immediate humanitarian relief to support those in urgent need and protect people's dignity, while co-creating longer term opportunities for sustainable growth and fulfilling people's potential.

ACTED staff provides aid to populations affected by crisis using an approach that is both local and global, multidisciplinary and adapted to each context. By ensuring the link between Emergency, Rehabilitation and Development, ACTED teams guarantee that interventions made in a situation of crisis are effective and sustainable, because only long term support – by remaining in the area post emergency and involving communities – can end the poverty cycle and accompany populations on the road to development.

In Lebanon, ACTED has been operational since 2006. The organization has been working closely with local authorities and civil society stakeholders implementing priority humanitarian interventions as well as long term development programming notably on strengthening multi-stakeholder governance and accountability, public service upgrades, citizen participation and increasing economic opportunities. With a coordination and operational office in Beirut, ACTED currently has a staff of 8 expatriates and over 50 national employees.

To address the impact of the Syrian crisis across Lebanese society, ACTED's holistic approach comprises three specific levels of assistance provision, which are concurrent and complementary:

- 1) Targeted household level assistance ensures that vulnerable household's basic needs are met;
- 2) Community-level support increases the capacity and willingness of host communities and civil society actors to collaborate to overcome the challenges emerging from the crisis;
- 3) local authority level support enables municipalities and local governments to maintain or improve basic service provision despite the instability and the demographic burden resulting from the influx and minimizes pressure placed on local resources and capacities.

ACTED launched emergency interventions in the greater Beirut area in 2013 in response to the Syrian crisis.

Through its programming over the past 7 years, ACTED has developed extensive relationships with key local authorities and other critical stakeholders to access the most vulnerable communities in this complex urban environment and has tackled a range of needs in the most critical urban neighborhoods of Beirut (such as Bourj Hammoud/Nabaa, Mar Elias, Karm el Zeitoun, Basta el Tahta, Zaaitrye, Cite sportive, Sabra, Chatila, Tarik I Jdide, Ghobeire, etc), with funding from UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOCHA, ECHO, BPRM and CDSC.

By building the capacity of local stakeholders from all target communities and placing them at the centre of its response, ACTED aimed to foster a strong sense of ownership for proposed activities, empowering community stakeholders to coordinate assistance provided by community members and humanitarian actors in a consistent and locally-embedded framework, to ensure cost-effective aid delivery and its sustainability.

ACTED has provided assistance to a total of 14,137 households (88,922 individuals) in 16 neighborhoods of Beirut with activities including:

- Emergency wash and shelter rehabilitations and provision of sealing off materials for households with critical living conditions, improving WASH and Shelter conditions for more than 2,000 households.
- **Provision of unconditional and conditional cash assistance for rent, basic income for the most vulnerable, and protection needs;**
- Working with municipal and water authorities to tackle critical flooding in the suburbs of Beirut;
- Fostering inclusive livelihoods through supporting 2 local technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions and providing vocational training to more than 500 individuals;
- **Supporting 8 social development centers to provide skill building and social support;**
- Provision of community-based non-clinical mental health and psychosocial support in partnership with the National Mental Health program, focused in particular on provision of support in times of crisis;
- Capacity building of 7 local civil society organizations in participatory needs assessment, support to marginalized communities and COVID-19 crisis response.



Based on its extensive track record in delivering cash assistance as part of its emergency urban programming, ACTED currently has active agreements and operational arrangements with 3 Money Transfer Agencies (MTAs) in Beirut.

2019 FIGURES

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1,332,162 beneficiaries | |
| €9,322,532 annual budget | |
| 12 projects | |
| 64 staff | |
| 13 donors & supporting NGO partners | |
| 12 partners | |

