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BEIRUT EXPLOSIONS

Six Months on the Ground

February 2021

UNICEF's response to the devastating explosions that struck Beirut on 4 August 2020 has reached thousands of children and families affected by this tragedy. In the face of extensive challenges and a complex operating environment, the international community and our partners have managed to respond effectively and coherently to the immediate needs of vulnerable sectors of the population over the past six months.

Occurring amidst multiple crises facing Lebanon – a deteriorating socio-economic situation nearing collapse, further hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, worsening security situation and nearly exhausted health facilities operating at full capacity – the explosions plunged the country further into the abyss.

This multi-crisis scenario has deepened vulnerabilities across the country, and levels of poverty have dramatically increased. Today, more families are in greater need of crucial support, and children face unprecedented challenges surrounding their safeguarding and wellbeing. Simultaneously, access to quality education has been disrupted, and negative coping mechanisms are on the rise again, including child abuse and exploitation. Despite this unprecedented situation, UNICEF and partners have continued to provide urgent and life-saving support to children and families affected by the explosions, and we are contributing to the reconstruction efforts.

This brief report highlights UNICEF's multi-sectoral results over the past six months due to our Beirut explosions response. While much has been accomplished, much more is yet to be achieved as we continue to deliver humanitarian assistance to affected children and families. UNICEF is pushing through despite the challenging environment and financial gaps and, with the support of our donors and partners, we will continue to uphold our mandate, together, for every child in Lebanon.

- UNICEF reached over 35,000 children, parents and primary caregivers with community-based mental health and psychosocial support.

- More than 7,200 children, parents and primary caregivers have been reached with mental health and psychosocial support services through child-friendly spaces established in affected areas and peer to peer sessions.

- 1,571 girls and women have received psychosocial first aid, psychosocial support and information on safety and gender-based violence risks; in addition to referral to mental health services.

- 5,000 packs of sanitary pads and 2,500 mini hygiene kits have been distributed. These included COVID-19 prevention items and updated information on sexual and gender-based violence referral pathway.

- 1.7 million doses of vaccines were saved from the Central Supply Warehouse in Karantina. Part of this number is currently being used in the national measles campaign.

- Over 45,700 children under 5 received essential nutrition supplements including Vitamin A, high energy biscuits and emergency food rations.

- 3 damaged primary health care centers rehabilitated, and health staff recruited.

- 16,610 primary caregivers of children 0-23 months received counselling and awareness on infant and young child feeding.

- 2,041 affected children provided with routine vaccination (per month)

- The assessment of 13,000 buildings was completed.

- 23,100 people benefited from water supply connections that were re-established in 1,205 buildings.

- 4,882 water tanks were installed, including 111 in the three heavily affected hospitals at Karantina, Wardiya, and Geitaoui.

- 16,456 hygiene kits, 790 baby kits and 1,858 infection prevention control kits have been distributed.

- Critical humanitarian supplies and COVID-19 protection and hygiene items worth US$3.7 million were distributed to partners. 80 per cent of the supplies were procured locally.

- Almost 80,000 children and vulnerable people benefitted from the UNICEF-designed and rolled-out Emergency Cash Grant.

- 18,692 families received hot meals prepared and distributed by 398 young people as part of the UNICEF cash for work programme.

- 2,150 young people were engaged in a community-based response focusing on cleaning, minor rehabilitation of houses, and the preparation and distribution of meals to vulnerable families.

- 613 young people, previously trained in rehabilitation and construction as part of UNICEF's technical and vocational education and training courses, were provided with material and equipment to support minor rehabilitation of 557 damaged houses.

- 580 young people accessed employment or income-generating opportunities

- 90 public schools will be refurbished, and their damaged furniture and laboratory equipment replaced.

- Four primary public and nine private schools will be rehabilitated with UNICEF's support.

- Children enrolled in non-formal programmes with UNICEF NGO partners continue to be reached via online platforms.



Health and Nutrition

The Beirut explosions heavily damaged warehouses around the port, hospitals (including the specialized paediatric hospital and the Central Supply Warehouse in Karantina), and primary health care centres in the city. In an immediate response, UNICEF teams rushed to save and relocate vaccines in the damaged warehouse. Over 1.7 million doses of vaccines were moved to alternative cold rooms in the city, and maintenance and solar power support were provided to cold rooms at the Rafic Hariri University Hospital, one of the city's largest public hospitals.

UNICEF trained 65 frontline workers who reached 40,000 caregivers through direct community engagement by providing referrals to quality Maternal Newborn Child Adolescent Health (MNCAH) services. Also, UNICEF has rehabilitated three primary health care centres. Additionally, and as a result of the destruction of ten WHO containers of personal protective equipment (PPE) in the explosions and amidst increasing COVID-19 cases, UNICEF purchased and distributed PPEs and infection prevention and control (IPC) items worth over US$3.7 million to cover additional needs due to the explosions.

UNICEF is also part of the rehabilitation plans of the new Karantina hospital building, the dry store in the central warehouse and the cold chain in the rehabilitated warehouse. UNICEF mobilized funds for these three projects to plan for the reconstruction of the dry room, a new-born unit and a maternity and obstetric ward within the new building, to ensure the continuation of emergency care for mothers, new-borns and children.


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Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

In addition to damages sustained by health facilities, over 9,700 residential buildings were heavily damaged or destroyed, and the water network, already weak, suffered from sporadic leakages and discontinuation of services across the affected areas. While most residents fled their homes due to the explosions, many remained in their demolished homes for lack of available alternative shelters, and many started to return a few days after to pick up what was left and check on what remained of their homes.

UNICEF and partners responded quickly by assessing damages. Since 5 August, UNICEF with partners re-established water supply connection in 1,205 buildings, reaching, 23,100 people in 4,646 houses, and installed 4,882 water tanks (111 of the water tanks were installed in the three heavily affected hospitals- Karantina, Wardiya, and Geitawi) and 345 pumps. While infrastructural work and support at building level were completed in November, Water Sector partners continued distributing hygiene and baby kits for the most vulnerable people affected by the explosions. A total of 16,456 hygiene kits and 790 baby kits were distributed.

Adolescents and Youth

The community response to the explosions, despite the COVID-19 restrictions, was immediate and non-stop. Civil society organizations, international governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as individuals from across the country, rushed to remove the rubble and provide humanitarian relief to individuals and families stuck amidst the destruction. UNICEF mobilized its over 1,900-person youth network and provided community-based response focusing on cleaning, minor rehabilitation of houses, and the preparation and distribution of meals to vulnerable families in and around the affected areas.

The Youth network volunteers visited over 1,907 houses, assessed their needs, and rehabilitated 1,888 sites by removing rubble and shattered glass, installing temporary window shields and recycling collected glass in collaboration with the Municipality of Beirut. Moreover, over 20,000 families affected by the explosions received hot meals prepared and distributed by 236 Youth network members as part of the UNICEF cash for work programme, using this as an opportunity to practice and apply skills acquired from UNICEF's food and beverage vocational training.



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Child Protection

Healing the hidden scars and trauma of an explosion with such a magnitude was unlike anything that humanitarian workers have faced in Lebanon's history of crises. This tragic event affected children and adults alike and required immediate intervention at the community level. UNICEF and partners prioritized working with the families that remained in and around the affected areas, transforming small public gardens into child-friendly spaces where children could access mental health and psychosocial support. UNICEF and partners have reached more than 35,000 girls, boys, women and caregivers with quality child protection and gender-based violence interventions and continued providing critical prevention and response services to around 2,000 people.

Social Policy

Given the lack of national cash transfer programmes in Lebanon, UNICEF built one in the days following the blast. Our Emergency Cash Grant supported almost 80,000 people, including families with children, persons with disabilities, older people, and women-headed households living in the most vulnerable areas affected by the explosions. Each family received an amount of US$120 per child/individual, up to a cap of three people per household. With a solution for the dire economic situation in Lebanon nowhere in sight and as its people continue to face the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, cash assistance is seen as one of the most important assistance programmes in the country.



Education

By February 2020, with the first case of COVID-19 identified in the country, children had already started to face an even gloomier scenario regarding access to education. Whilst before COVID-19, Lebanon's most pressing challenge was to accommodate all school children in public schools, operating on double shifts, the explosion extended needs for intervention to private schools as well.

Over 135,000 public and private school students suddenly saw their schools blown apart, with many facilities suffering severe and minor damage. UNICEF worked on assessing the rehabilitation needs of affected schools and provided quick fixes to classrooms that suffered light damage. Plans are yet to be rolled out to refurbish four public primary schools, including replacing damaged furniture and equipment, catering to non-Lebanese students in the afternoon shift, and nine private schools with some serving the most vulnerable children, including refugee children.

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Funding Overview

UNICEF's current Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) to respond to children and their families' immediate needs in the aftermath of the explosions in Beirut stands at $50 million and is in line with the joint UN Lebanon Flash Appeal.

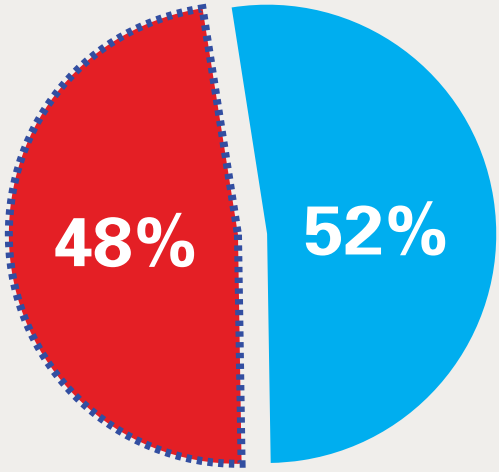
So far, UNICEF has received $26.16 million in funding from public and private donors. UNICEF is extremely grateful for the timely and flexible contributions, while flexible funding remains essential for UNICEF and partners to continue responding to urgent needs that will be updated under the Lebanon Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal 2021.

FUNDING RECEIVED:

$26,158,391

FUNDING GAP:

$23,886,157



Additional funding needed for response.

