

# LEBANON

Explosion adds to spiraling economic crisis



## KEY FACTS

Population: **6.9 million**

**1 million** people in need of humanitarian aid (after Port of Beirut explosion)

**1.5 million** Syrian refugees hosted

**-25%** projected change in GDP in 2020

**85%** increase in consumer prices (annual change)

**73rd** (of 195 countries) for capability to prevent and mitigate epidemics

**146th** (of 167 countries) for women's equality

**110th** (of 181 countries) for resilience to climate change

**2/5** score for severity of access constraints

**45%** of funding received for 2020 Lebanon Flash Appeal

Above: Mariam and her husband fled war in Syria for Lebanon eight years ago. She now lives in Bekaa, Lebanon and works as a community educator and Women's Rights advocate with the IRC.

## PROBABILITY

**6** HUMAN THREAT

**5** NATURAL THREAT

## IMPACT

**4** CONSTRAINTS ON COUNTRY RESPONSE

**5** EXISTING PRESSURES ON POPULATION

**Lebanon was already in crisis when the August 2020 explosion in Beirut pushed the country to a breaking point, with wide ranging political, economic and humanitarian implications.**

Before the explosion, Lebanon already faced a spiraling economic crisis, a rampantly spreading COVID-19 outbreak, rising social unrest and the spillover effects of the protracted conflict in neighboring Syria. The explosion and arrival of COVID-19 have both placed enormous pressure on the highly vulnerable population. The Lebanese population and large Syrian refugee populations hosted are now more likely to be impoverished and food insecure heading into 2021. Ongoing political and economic crises show no signs of progress to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in the immediate term.

"The crisis in Lebanon is unprecedented in complexity. Responding as both an aid worker and a Lebanese citizen is very challenging. We work to address the crisis as professionals but we are also experiencing it ourselves and seeing the repercussions on our own communities and families. It has been hard for people in Lebanon to imagine how life can be made better going forward so I feel privileged to be able to contribute to solutions and support people in need through IRC's work."

- Dima Wehbi  
Policy, Advocacy and Communications Advisor,  
IRC Lebanon



## HUMANITARIAN RISKS IN 2021

- ▶ **The port explosion has created significant immediate humanitarian needs that will continue to shape 2021.** The explosion, equivalent to a [3.3 magnitude](#) earthquake on the Richter scale, occurred at the Port of Beirut on August 4th and caused up to USD 4.6 billion in damage, with up to USD 1.46 billion required in 2021 alone for reconstruction and recovery ([World Bank](#)). The explosion left over 300,000 people displaced, one-third of them children, destroyed thousands of homes ([UN](#)) and damaged two hundred schools ([UNICEF](#)). The crisis creates particular risks for women and girls, especially those in overcrowded shelters or living in insecure living conditions in damaged homes where they are even more vulnerable to sexual violence, exploitation and abuse. The IRC estimates a quarter of children in Beirut are at risk of missing out on an education due to the scale of damage to schools ([IRC](#)).
- ▶ **The explosion and COVID-19 are exacerbating the country's economic crisis.** The Lebanese pound lost 80% of its value in 2020 and 45% of the Lebanese population is at risk of becoming impoverished in the coming months due to COVID-19 and the explosion ([World Bank](#)). The estimated [1.5 million](#) Syrian refugees living in the country, in addition to migrant workers and other vulnerable populations, will be particularly affected and among those least equipped to handle these latest crises. An IRC survey found concerning increases in child labor and persistent reports of forced and early marriage of girls, as well as other negative coping mechanisms as economic conditions worsened. ([IRC](#)).
- ▶ **A food insecurity crisis is looming for 2021.** The price of a monthly food basket more than doubled in 2020, making it even more difficult for people to afford food as they simultaneously face lost incomes. On top of this, Lebanon's economic crisis means the Central Bank will [reportedly](#) be unable to continue subsidizing basic commodities into 2021, suggesting the price of fuel, wheat and other essentials may increase by 50%. Refugees will be particularly vulnerable; within the first month of COVID-19 lockdowns, the IRC found that the number of Syrian refugees reporting they were in critical need of food had risen from 32% to 90% ([IRC](#)).
- ▶ **Social unrest and political uncertainty are likely to continue.** Socioeconomic grievances sparked persistent anti-government protests throughout 2020 that have only grown since the port explosion and are likely to characterize 2021 as well. The government's resignation following the Beirut port blast creates new uncertainty over the country's future as a new government takes power and faces a rapidly deteriorating situation. The country requires significant investment in recovery and reconstruction that is unlikely to happen without major progress in political stability and efforts to root out corruption.

### THE IRC IN LEBANON

The IRC provides support to both Syrian refugees and the Lebanese communities hosting them. We have been providing economic support, cash assistance, legal services, education, and protection for the most vulnerable, including the elderly and people with disabilities, since 2012. Together with Sesame Workshop (the nonprofit, educational organization behind 'Sesame Street'), IRC has created [Ahlan Simsim](#), an innovative education program for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon and other host countries. After the Beirut Port Explosion on August 4th 2020, the IRC launched an emergency response to provide immediate cash, protection and economic assistance to those impacted and displaced by the explosion in Beirut. Learn more about the [IRC's Lebanon response](#).



• BEIRUT