

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY RESPONSE  
IN LEBANON: THE CASE OF BEIRUT PORT EXPLOSION

by  
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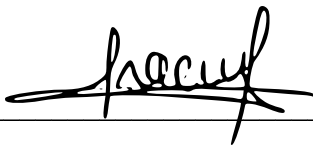
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ABSTRACT  
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Lebanon is at a high risk of both natural and manmade disasters. Unfortunately, the lack of preparedness to face a disaster and the lack of an adequate emergency relief plan are causing Lebanon to suffer more and more with each disaster, thus having a toll on both the private and public sectors. Therefore, the weakness of the state in facing disasters and the historic Lebanese reliance on the non-profit sector to compensate for the state's incompetence to face disasters pose the question of the role of both state and non-state actors during disasters.

This thesis will study these roles in light of their inter-organizational relationship during disasters, particularly the case of the Beirut port explosion on August 4, 2020. The effectiveness of inter-organizational relationships in response to disasters in Lebanon will be thoroughly analyzed from the aspect of the role of the local community in responding to the blast, the reasons behind the state being unable to respond, and whether the local community is replacing the state during disasters.

Twenty-five interviews were conducted with the head of the response teams of NGOs and initiatives involved in response to the blast. The findings suggest that the lack of coordination between NGOs and the state is due to the state's lack of leadership and trust. These findings also demonstrated a lack of public and private sector preparedness. Therefore, inter-organizational relationships are needed in response to a disaster in a weak state.

This study helps in dissecting the basis of this issue. Furthermore, it aids in confronting future disasters by shedding light on both what went wrong and what went well in response to the Beirut port explosion to build on if such another unfortunate event occurs again.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CNRS	National Council for Scientific Research
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UNISDR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **A. Introduction**

Disasters are either man- or nature-made incidents, leading to harsh consequences. Disasters could be earthquakes, floodings, forest wildfires, landslides, tsunamis, winter storms, drought, or environmental, technological, and biological hazards. Most of these disasters occurred previously or in Lebanon: Lebanon is at high risk of living fires and floods and rare seismic risk (Baaklini 2019). However, political conflicts, urban deformation, and conflicts in a country like Lebanon made man-made disasters much more important than natural ones.

Disaster management experiences differ from one country to the other. The role of the government is mainly in the prevention of disaster. This role is centered on enacting policies and ensuring the maintenance of the infrastructure. However, the government faces difficulties responding to the disaster due to the lack of effort done in the pre-disaster phase. These difficulties amplify in a corrupted and failed state. In this type of state, the local community composed of volunteers, citizens, and non-governmental organizations, are the entities trying to put effort into responding to the disaster<sup>1</sup>.

The most recent man-made disaster was the Beirut explosion on the 4th of August 2020. After eight years of storing ammonium nitrate in the port of Beirut, two explosions resulted. Two waves were enough to cause physical and mental damage all over Beirut

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<sup>1</sup> Local community in the Lebanese context is defined as a group of people working on a certain initiative while non-Governmental organizations are formal organizations working on a bigger plan. In this thesis, local communities are NGOs that are working on the ground and initiatives that were launched during Covid 19 and after the explosion.

and its boundaries. Responding to the disaster was out of the government's scope and resources due to political and economic instability. The timing of the explosion coincided with the battle against the Covid-19 and the combat against corruption and financial fluctuations. A few hours after the disaster, people searched for each other on the streets, helped others reach hospitals, or communicated with family members; some started repairing while others did not. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) emerged, and different groups went on the ground, making the recovery of Beirut their responsibility. They created a network. The international community expressed its willingness to help the Lebanese population directly by giving aid and funds to non-governmental organizations. However, the local community in Lebanon had a key and significant role in response to the disaster.

## **B. Beirut Blast, Events, and facts.**

Beirut's blast on the 4th of August 2020 was a turning point for Lebanon's "stability." It gave people the strength to search for the truth, to question the political system and the bureaucracy. As a result, the Lebanese population and international community lost trust in the political system and tried to fill the gap caused by its imperfections. The cumulation of the events that the Lebanese experienced in the past two years proved the absence of a state and proper disaster management. During the past two years, the local community tried to take the lead in responding to a crisis and helped the recovery.

Since the 17th of October 2019, the Lebanese people have been revindicating transparency and accountability from the government and politicians. After the accumulation of increased taxes and economic instability in the state, they went down to

the street and asked the government to resign. In parallel, the Lebanese lira drastically devaluated, and the banking sector started deteriorating, leading to a high amount of unemployment in Lebanon. Prices increased and living became more challenging with the financial and economic struggles as the middle-class faded. As a result, poverty rates increased, creating a space for the local community to accentuate their efforts and help people in need to survive this phase.

Before the 17th of October, a vast forest fire devastated a large surface of Lebanese forests. However, the resources available were not sufficient. The civil defense asked for help as there was not an adequate number of trucks ready to face this type of fire. Furthermore, the donated helicopters were not functioning due to the lack of maintenance and high cost, which pushed the government to ask for help from foreign countries. During this fire, a network was created. People all over Lebanon began sharing locations and shelters for families forced to leave their houses due to the fire.

On the 21st of February, with the first case of Covid-19 confirmed in Lebanon, the healthcare sector started its new battle. The focus shifted from political instability to healthcare instability. The country went on a total lockdown in May 2020 as the number of cases increased and went out of control (BBC News 2020). This lockdown impacted Lebanon's economy, and as the year passed, the financial and economic sectors were deteriorating. In July 2020, the airport opened again, and the number of cases scored the highest back then, leading to a disaster in the healthcare system after the explosion (El Sayed 2020). Even with the pandemic, civil society and non-profit organizations continued helping the community, and a network to ensure quarantine houses for first medical staff and people with covid-19 was created.

The Beirut port explosion happened on the 4th of August, and the healthcare system was the most affected (World Bank Group 2020). Hospitals were destroyed, and the most significant medical storage in Karantina was damaged (El Sayed 2020). A few hours after the explosion, volunteers and affected people from all over Lebanon went down to the streets and started helping and searching for missing people and removing damages. Volunteering took different forms; some volunteered from home, asking for help via social media, while others went on the ground either individually or with a group of friends or with a non-governmental organization (NGO) that they are engaged with. (Chehayeb and Sewell 2020)

A week after the explosion, the government enforced a rule to manage and control NGOs working on the ground. All NGOs should be registered and present their papers to the Lebanese Army managing the donations and response to get permission. The explosion led to an expansion of NGOs in Lebanon. NGOs serving the recovery of the capital were diverse, from different backgrounds and fields. Many were launched after the financial crisis, the pandemic, and especially after the explosion. (Chehayeb and Sewell 2020)

The explosion of Beirut port was due to the stocking of a large quantity of ammonium nitrate at Beirut port since 2013 (Gibbens 2020). The storage of this substance for around eight years created a polemic since the ship was not for Lebanon. Legal complications hindered the shipment of the 2700 ammonium nitrate to Mozambique and were the cause of the ammonium nitrate remaining in Warehouse 12 at the port (Seibt 2020). Moreover, a few hours after the explosion, the Lebanese Army stepped into the location, ensuring security at the explosion scene for further investigations and preventing chaos. The Lebanese Army, still trusted by the Lebanese people, mainly because it is

considered apolitical, was responsible for managing donations and security on the ground instead of the High Relief Committee directed by the Prime minister. (Antonios et al. 2020). After considering Lebanon as a disaster city and declaring a state of emergency, international armies headed to Lebanon and helped the Lebanese Army in the research for missing people. Aside from the military role, the Lebanese Army played a social function since they were in charge of the donations management by receiving and distributing donations. (Antonios et al. 2020) After declaring a state of emergency seven days after the blast, the government resigned. The Army took charge of the management of the crisis with the aid of many non-governmental organizations and initiatives. Like the Lebanese people, the international society did not trust the ruling class accused of corruption and lack of transparency, so they decided not to donate to the government but via local NGOs. The lack of trust for the ruling class in one of the most needed periods was reflected by the lack of confidence in how the government would spend the money attributed for recovery (World Bank Group 2020).

This disaster shed light on the Lebanese bureaucracy problem rooted in corruption and negligence within the system, making Lebanon rely on its population represented by NGOs and the Lebanese Army.

### **C. Research Question**

This thesis will focus on disaster management in Lebanon and the role of the local community, particularly NGOs and Initiatives, in responding to the Beirut explosion on the 4th of August. In line with the disaster management perspective, the thesis studies how can inter-organizational relationships effectively respond to a disaster in a weak state?



In undertaking this question, the thesis will answer the following three research questions:

- What role did the local community (volunteers, non-governmental organizations, and initiatives) play in responding to the Beirut blast?
- Did the local community replace the state's role in the response?
- What made the Lebanese government unable to respond?

The theoretical importance of the thesis adds to the scarcity of literature about the role of community response which will be studied considering the weak state.

#### **D. Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis will be structured like the following. The second chapter will explore the literature review on disaster management in Lebanon and the role of the local community, particularly NGOs and initiatives, in post-disaster response in a weak state. First, it is essential to go back to the literature to see how disaster management and community response in a weak state occurred through the years. Second, to discover what led Lebanon to this stage and its previous disaster management experiences. Moreover, third, to understand the history of NGOs in Lebanon stepping in through the years and filling the gap of the state's weakness. This chapter will also tackle the conceptual framework of the study.

The third chapter will explain the methodology followed by the researcher in this study. It will enumerate the unit of analysis, research sample, data collection process, coding and analysis, and the limitation encountered in the research.

The fourth chapter will develop the research findings, which help answer the research question. This chapter will

- Introduce the background of the NGOs and Initiatives by describing their field of intervention and mission,

- Introduce the culture of volunteering in Lebanon.
- Evoke the lack of coordination with the state due to the lack of leadership and trust.
- Describe the level of preparedness of the state and non-governmental organizations and their planning of the response.
- Reveal the assessment of the collaboration between NGOs and Initiatives and the type of collaboration detected.

The fifth chapter will analyze the finding in a way to answer the questions asked at the beginning of the study. This discussion will be followed by the recommendations deduced from the study of the findings.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature will highlight the importance of the non-profit sector in the absence of the public sector. It will first describe disaster management in a weak state and second will expand the role of the community by evoking the theories of social capital and networking. The literature review aims to understand what causes the ineffectiveness of disaster response and to see how much networking and collective effort are important for an active response. The literature will also tackle failures in response to a disaster worldwide. Finally, it will enumerate the different phases that Lebanon passed through in the disaster management process, whether the government initiatives or the non-profit sector efforts, to analyze how the response to a disaster in a weak state can be effective.

#### **A. Disaster management in a weak state**

##### ***1. The correlation between disaster management and corruption***

Many definitions have been proposed to define a disaster. According to Sieh (2000), natural hazards are caused by nature or scientific incidents. However, a natural disaster is a human action intertwined with a natural hazard. For example, a minor earthquake can have a harsher outcome than a big earthquake on a surface with no population on it (Sieh 2000). Escaleras (2016) expressed that, natural hazards can turn into a disaster in a country where the public sector is corrupt (Escaleras and Register 2016). Corruption in a state leads to more damage during disasters. This correlation indicates that it is most likely to witness damages and an increase in deaths in corrupted states than in non-corrupted states after a natural hazard or disaster (Escaleras, Anbarci,

and Register 2007). Escaleras et al. (2007) expended types of corruption, explaining the harsh consequences. The consequence of a disaster can be due to the accumulation of corruption throughout history and the non-application of international and national codes and rules related to disaster prevention, such as misconducting with the code of building or misusing estimated disaster zones.

Moreover, corruption sometimes leads to causalities that could have been avoided. Different works of literature show that corruption can make a disaster have a worse impact and a worse response to it. Corruption embedded in the public institutions of a country is, as Klitgaard (2004) described, the result of a "monopoly power" added with "discretion" and a lack of "accountability"(Escaleras and Register 2016, 750).

A corrupted state and its institutions can hinder social trust and the response to a disaster. According to Toya and Skidmore (2014), there is a positive relationship between social trust and disaster, especially the action that preceded a disaster (Toya and Skidmore 2014). Even though corruption has harsh consequences after a disaster, a disaster can also lead to corruption, especially when distributing medical help, aid, and recovering destroyed buildings and lives (Escaleras and Register 2016). Corruption leads to disasters and contributes to switching a natural hazard to a natural disaster. Any natural hazard can be turned into a disaster if humankind is the cause. Governments are responsible for investing in preventing a disaster. According to Neumayer, Plumper, and Barthel 2014, when there is a high disaster propensity, the cost for the Government will be lower than if there is a low disaster propensity in a country. Because when there is a high level of disaster propensity, the Government will invest more in preventing a disaster, so the consequence will not be as costly as if there were not enough investment to prevent a disaster. Usually, the attention goes more to the post-disaster policies and rules instead of

the prevention for the citizens (Gasper and Reeves 2011). There is always a higher need to invest in prevention to diminish the damages once the disaster occurs.

According to the "All-hazard emergency management approach" described by Kapusu, Arslan, and Collins (2010), emergency response is divided into four phases. The first phase is mitigation, in which measures are taken to prevent a disaster (Kapucu, Arslan, and Collins 2010a). The second phase is preparedness which involves awareness and the "know-how" to the response. The third phase is the response which comes immediately after a disaster, the first action taken, and the fourth phase is the recovery which is the long-term healing process. The Government is a key actor in these phases but not the only one. The Government is the entity responsible for enacting policies and laws to prevent disasters. Normally, the first thing to be damaged is the infrastructure, whatever the type of disaster happens. The Government oversees ensuring that the quality of construction is respected according to the norms (Paul 2011) and managing operations, especially in regions and surfaces with risk of disaster (World Bank Group 2011). This is ideal for a country whose population is heterogeneous, for a corrupted government, for a weak or failed public administration.

Furthermore, one primary variable in response to a disaster is the population's expectations about government role and response after a disaster. These expectations shape the decision of the population to engage or not in the disaster response and recovery (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2010). According to Chamlee-Wright and Storr (2010), the literature is divided into two main concepts: public choice and institutional racism. These two works of literature focus on the optimistic or pessimistic view that the population has for their government intentions and capacities. Public choice literature reflects the naively

optimistic view whereby people see the intention and capacity to respond to a disaster in the Government.

The institutional racism literature reflects the naively pessimistic view, which reports that people see the Government's capacities but not the Government's intention to respond to a disaster. However, on the ground, these two concepts are not applicable in all cases. The Ninth Ward community, a poor community severely damaged in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, proves that these naive perceptions are not applicable, and, in this case, the Ninth Ward community, even though disappointed, was not surprised by the Government's attitude. Chamlee-Wright and Storr (2010) reveal that expectations are essential in determining the actions and behavior of community members, and expectations differ between a developed country and a developing country. The main variables of people's expectations from the Government are optimistic intentions or pessimistic intentions and optimistic capacities or pessimistic capacities. These expectations impact the steps and strategies taken in post-disaster response, such as rebuilding or relocating or waiting for government intervention or rebuilding and intervention of the Government.

In these cases, disaster management particular response to a disaster should be studied from two perspectives as reported by Patterson, Weil, and Patel (2010): the role played by the Government, and the role played by the community, which reflects the social capital phenomenon and its amplifier in disaster response nowadays (Patterson, Weil, and Patel 2010).

## ***2. The role of the local community: the notion of social capital, networking and inter-organizational relations***

In the absence of a state, a weak government, and its public administration, social capital seems to be the variant responding to the disaster. Putnam (1995) developed the idea of social capital, defining it as the engagement of individuals in a network and working together to respond to a disaster (Putnam 1995). Literature shows that social capital refers to the resources that individual gains while engaging in a network. These resources help in response to a disaster. However, the type of society affects the implication of social capital to the response. It differs between a homogeneous society where people are all together and a heterogeneous society known for its divisions. According to Storr and Haeffele-Batch (2012), a homogeneous community is better prepared to solve community problems than a heterogeneous community. The response to hurricane Katerina, the most significant hurricane in 2012, is an example of government institutions' failure to face a disaster. After each disaster, recovery is unequal for victims because some can recover or have received help. (Storr and Haeffele-Balch 2012). However, after hurricane Katerina there was a lack of immediate response. Moreover, the state's failure to respond to the disaster was witnessed in the planning and coordination between international NGOs and different institutions. This failed network made the work of the volunteers way harder. (Eikenberry, Arroyave, and Cooper 2007) Social capital, especially the bonding type, is important in a heterogeneous community to strengthen the network and ensure post-disaster recovery. However, the difficulty remains in the distance between the volunteers first. People are afraid to expect things from people they do not even know. (Storr and Haeffele-Balch 2012)

These networks were built due to community-based organizations that played a crucial role in creating the connection and collecting the necessary data. In addition, the

community-based organization helped in combining a divided community. The strength of this type of network is that the response and help go directly to people in need after the hurricane. The community-based organization helped ensure necessities for people with low and medium incomes. Furthermore, they were effective in lobbying and asking for resources. Throughout the years, community-based organizations have taken a bigger ampler and are the key protagonists in response to a disaster. In parallel to the administration failure that coincided with hurricane Katerina, INGO and community-based organizations took the lead and were seen as an entity to respond to any disaster (Eikenberry, Arroyave, and Cooper 2007).

The literature focuses on the role of the collaboration between sectors, "cross-sector collaboration," in response to a disaster. Simo, Bies (2007), and Kapucu (2007) emphasize the need for collaboration during an extreme event and disaster (Kapucu 2007; Simo and Bies 2007). Even though coordination between the public and non-profit sectors is established before a disaster, Comfort asserts that extreme events need extreme coordination more than regular events involving coordination between sectors in a routine-based manner. (Kapucu 2007, 522)

The literature highlights the necessity of emergency management and the role of collaboration between different sectors to be effective while dealing with a disaster. (Kapucu 2007)

What pushes for collaboration, especially in extreme events, is the shared goals between different actors (Agranoff and McGuire 2003). Kapucu (2011) stressed the idea that "emergency management is historically collaborative."

Two main reasons are behind this need for collaboration between sectors. First, government agencies are not able to do everything on their own. This collaboration is



considered by Bier (2006) as a necessity in order to fill the gap and help agencies in fulfilling their responsibilities. (Kapucu 2007) Second, Kapucu and Garayev (2013) argue that the nature and the uncertainty left by a disaster emphasize the need to collaborate to respond. (Kapucu and Garayev 2013)

Although the literature covers the collaboration between multiple sectors in response to a disaster, this framework englobes network theory and social capital theory. According to Chrislip and Larson (1994), these theories explain the collaboration between the public and non-profit sectors. (Chrislip and Larson 1994)

Even though collaboration between sectors is a critical component in responding to a disaster, the literature mentions the challenges that these collaborations might face. For example, Simo and Bies (2007) claim that the relationship between organizations can face control and coordination problems, making it fragile. For this reason, utility and desirability are two essential characteristics needed in these collaborations (Agranoff and McGuire 2003).

Demiroz and Hu (2014) developed a model to explain how to build community disaster resilience. Sharing information between the non-profit organizations, social capital specialized by the exchange of resources while being engaged in a network, "formal inter-organizational structure" and planning, the capacity of organizations, leadership skills, and prior collaborative experiences are components that help the engagement of non-profit organizations in the response building a community disaster resilience. (Demiroz and Hu 2014)

Ink (2006) states that administrative failures leave harsh consequences and more deaths, which attests to collaboration and networking to respond to a disaster effectively. (Simo and Bies 2007) Moreover, the role of these intersectoral and inter-organizational

relationships is not specific only to post-disaster recovery; they should work on preparedness to confront a disaster. Early relations between organizations are essential. They help communities, as Kapucu (2007) explained, in facing a disaster effectively.

The case of Lebanon is kind of similar to the Hurricane Katerina disaster in terms of response. The main problem in both responses is the lack of communication and inter-organizational effort to respond. The response to Hurricane Katrina can be considered better than the Beirut blast response because efforts were made in the pre-disaster phase. However, efforts were not sufficient. Hurricane Katrina had a broader devastating consequence than expected, which destroyed the communication infrastructure that was in place (Comfort and Haase 2006). In Lebanon, minimal is the effort of preparedness for a disaster.

This literature reveals how related corruption and disaster management are. The literature stressed the importance of the prevention and preparedness phase. These phases are significant and involve different sectors collaborating to achieve a successful outcome in decreasing the damages and number of deaths. Furthermore, non-profit organizations and the local community are the basis of a disaster response since individual initiatives and groups collaborations facilitate and accelerate the response. Both the government and local community are primordial to face a disaster. The literature developed the notion of cross-sectoral and inter-organizational relationships in disaster response. However, lack of communication caused the failure of response, which was experienced in several disasters worldwide, precisely Hurricane Katrina.

The literature did not show how the response to a disaster should be in a state whose population does not trust its government. The literature did not shed light on the position of a corrupted state in the response, whereby should the Government be part of the

response or not. Non-profit organizations are vital players in responding to a disaster. However, individual interventions are not enough to respond, and collaboration in a heterogeneous society is complex. With the lack of government capacities, interest, and the lack of organizational collaboration, the response to a disaster does not seem as described in the literature.

## **B. Disaster management in Lebanon**

Before going through the emergence of the non-profit sector and the community response to all disasters, it is necessary to draw the path of disaster management in Lebanon and the critical instabilities that hindered the emergence of appropriate disaster management.

### ***1. Historical overview of disaster management efforts in Lebanon.***

Arab countries manage disasters in different ways. Some have good disaster management others do not. However, whether the countries are poor or rich, they lack tools for coping and adapting to a disaster, and there are weaknesses in facing a disaster. Among Arab countries, Lebanon was ranked in the lowest cluster and had the lowest level of preparedness for a disaster compared to other countries. (El-Kholei 2019)

According to El-Kholei (2019), during a disaster, the most crucial factor is the relation between two main actors: local authorities represented by public institutions and the local community, particularly nongovernmental organizations, and syndicates. This relationship ensures collaboration and preparedness for a disaster in conviction with the recommendation of the Hyogo framework.

In Lebanon, the path of disaster management and preparedness was hindered by different obstacles. Therefore, it is essential to revisit the different steps and incidents that pushed the interest of the Government and international entities to establish and implement strategies to reduce disasters. Disaster risk management was not a priority for Prime ministers' long time ago, until 2002 and 2003 when winter came too hard and caused several damages. Since then, some building codes have been implemented, specifically earthquakes and fires for buildings higher than three stories (Peters, Eltinay, and Holloway 2019)

In 2005, the Hyogo Framework for Action was adopted worldwide after the World Conference on disaster reduction. This framework gave Lebanon the outline to "plan, implement and coordinate disaster risk reduction" (UN News 2020)

The Hyogo framework for action (2005-2015) comprehensive agenda englobes five main actions on a horizontal and vertical level. It is mainly centered on integrating disaster risk reduction (DRR) across different sectors, for instance, health, education, media, and institutions from the private sector. Furthermore, it aims to spread DRR from the "highest political level" to the "decentralized level" (UNISDR 2012). However, due to the war in 2006 with Israel, the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for action was interrupted. The period between 2017-and 2019 witnessed many forest fires and internal disasters, which shed light and intensified the interest in developing disaster response coordination between sectors in Lebanon. In 2009, the UNDP established the "Strengthening Disaster Risk Management Capabilities in Lebanon" project focused on disaster risk management. This project aims to implement a disaster risk management unit and a national strategy to reduce disaster risk.

Furthermore, the project aimed to raise awareness of disasters and create gender equality initiatives. By establishing this project, the UNDP created a disaster risk management unit attached to the Prime Minister's office (Peters, Eltinay, and Holloway 2019). Moreover, the Hyogo framework for action created a National Committee for Disaster Risk Reduction. One of the prominent roles of this national committee is to help the coordination of national and multinational sectors, whether it is vertical or horizontal coordination. On the local level, this committee works among municipalities (UNISDR 2012) and pursues collaboration between regional, international and local levels, ensuring the participation of the municipalities in the UNISDR Global campaign for Making cities resilient (UNISDR 2012). This UNISDR Making cities resilient campaign involved 255 cities, and some of them marked success in integrating disaster risk management (DRM) into their programs. For instance, the municipality of Tripoli integrated DRM into the urban development planning program (Peters, Eltinay, and Holloway 2019). Thus, the municipality of Tyre, South Lebanon, was the first to create a DRM unit within the municipality in 2010, and the municipality of Saida worked on different levels: the protection of heritage and coastal economy, developing an Urban Sustainable Development Strategy, and sharing DRR knowledge with these Cities (Peters, Eltinay, and Holloway 2019). Furthermore, Mount Lebanon has three entities aligned with the UNISDR campaign: A Disaster Management Committee, a Disaster Operations Center and emergency vehicles (UNISDR 2012).

The National Disaster Coordination committee adopted measures and procedures to coordinate disaster response operations after being mandated in February 2013 by decree no 41.2013. This committee includes the Supreme Council of Defense secretary and members from the DRM Unit annexed to the Prime Minister (Zaarour 2015). In

addition, the Disaster Risk Management Unit (UNDP), the National Committee of disaster management, and the UNISDR opted to create a Crisis Operation Room with the Ministry of Social Affairs in order to develop a common language of disaster management by developing regional and sectoral response plans (UNDP 2015).

The UNDP project between 2009 and 2012 was not fully implemented, which led to its expenditure of three more years, from 2013 to 2015, to finish implementing the first phase of the project and enlarge its scope. In addition, several factors hindered the implementation of the project or decelerated. These factors are now hindering these kinds of projects.

The first factor is the lack of funding (UNDP 2015). The sizeable economic deficit in Lebanon narrowed the number of ministries that have a budget specific to disasters management. Disaster risk management is not a governmental priority, so there is not enough budget. The institutions or ministries that have a budget according to the National progress report on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for action for 2013- 2015 are the High Relief Committee, the Ministry of public work and transportation, the Ministry of energy, and water, and the CNRS. However, even though a budget is allocated for some ministries, the problem remains in managing the allocated budget. In September 2015, the Minister of energy and water asked the Minister of Public Works and Transportation to clean roads before the winter season because there was no more budget within the Ministry to repair since the budget is invested in 25 other projects. So, there was no more budget allocated for the crisis before the end of the year and before the winter season. In Lebanon, ministries and politicians blame one another instead of working with one another (Issa 2019).

Second is the shifting political scenario in Lebanon (Zaarour 2015).

Furthermore third, the Syrian Refugee Crisis changed the governmental and crisis priorities. Lebanon has, since March 2011, welcomed over 1.2 million Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR (more are still uncounted) has not been able to mitigate nor respond to the impact of the disaster because of its weak hosting capabilities for the Syrian displaced due to the lack of needed funding and incapability to provide its citizens with services (Cherri, Arcos González, and Castro Delgado 2016). As Atzili expressed, a wealthy state is not the proper place to welcome refugees since it cannot control the flow of a large population (Atzili 2010). While the Lebanese government did not consider them as a refugee but displaced, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the leading acting body in this matter (Cherri, Arcos González, and Castro Delgado 2016). Between 2010-and 2012 marked, different initiatives emphasized preparedness for a disaster. The initiatives varied between awareness, engagement of several donors, preparing Hyogo framework for action reports, and preparing training and national risk assessments (UNISDR 2012).

In 2015, the Sendai Framework (2015-2030) came with a more restricted definition of a disaster. It is the result of a conflict and a hazard-related disaster. Conflict is since included in several countries' disaster risk management frameworks (Peters, Eltinay, and Holloway 2019). Moreover, the Sendai Framework focuses on preventing risks and dealing with occurring risks. It charged states to identify the risks and finalize their risk reduction strategy (UN News 2020). After the Beirut blast on August 4, 2020, many questions were raised about storing substances and the poor infrastructures at the port. According to the Sendai framework, problems remain in applying the rules and regulations related to infrastructure and substance/material storage at the port (UN News 2020).

Disaster risk management strategy is not focused on ministries' work only. However, several institutions are involved and are helping in the process. *For example, flooding* is a recurring disaster that occurs each year due to Lebanon's weak infrastructure. The CNRS- National Council for Scientific Research is doing a flood map for the country on a scale of 1:1,000 (Peters, Eltinay, and Holloway 2019). The CNRS works on a different level, ensuring technical support to four multi-hazard risk and national flood risk assessments.

Furthermore, the CNRS delivered several training sessions to ministry staff, army, and security forces (Peters, Eltinay, and Holloway 2019). Lebanese red cross and the Lebanese civil defense are two active entities during disasters and are responsible for responding to disasters. The Lebanese Red Cross collaborates with ministries and other institutions, communicates with stakeholders, and adopts participatory tools to include the community in the disaster risk response and awareness (Peters, Eltinay, and Holloway 2019). After the Beirut blast, a proliferation of new and existing NGOs changed the norms of responsiveness to a disaster. People are more aware nowadays of what can happen than they were previously. However, in terms of preparedness for a disaster, the difficulty remains in implementing the risk-prevention mentality in ministries (Baaklini 2019) and people. Preparedness for different types of disasters differs in the population's living memory. Lebanese are more familiar with disasters that occur each year instead of disasters that are nature-made, whereby they did not live a tsunami or an earthquake in their lives (Peters, Eltinay, and Holloway 2019). For instance, the Beirut blast was not a disaster that any Lebanese could have expected, so preparedness for such type of disaster was not a priority.



Furthermore, in the previous two years, Lebanon faced different severe, directly, or indirectly manufactured disasters. For example, the forest wildfires in October 2019, the recurring flood with the start of winter each year, the garbage crisis, and recently the response to the Beirut blast proved and showed the lack of tools and materials, regulations, strategies to respond to these types of crisis and to prevent them.

## ***2. Lebanese public administration and its implication on disaster management***

Lebanon is a fragmented society divided into 18 religious sects. Although Lebanon is considered a consociative democracy (Haddad 2017), this religious division became embedded in the action and performance of public institutions. This fragmented governance hindered the implementation of DRR measures and the response to a disaster. Political compromises are fragile and lead to weak governance.

The political system in Lebanon is associated with corruption, clientelism, and nepotism. The Government does not serve the public interest as much as political parties and sectarian interests (Atzili 2010). The political system in Lebanon was the fruit of the National Pact of 1943. The national pact of 1943 enlarged the role of sectarianism and embedded the representation of religious groups in public administrations (Parle and Kisirwani 1987). The civil war 1975-1990 accentuated this interference of religious groups in public administration, especially with the proliferation of political parties defending each their interest.

As mentioned above, infrastructure is a crucial component of disaster management. Investing in infrastructure is necessary to diminish the impact of a disaster. However, in Lebanon, infrastructure is subject to corruption and political parties' race to power. Since 2019, Lebanon's rank on the Corruption Perception Index has increased. In

2021, Lebanon ranked 154 out of 180 countries compared to 139 over 180 in 2019 with 28 over 100. (Transparency International 2021)

The Beirut port explosion was preventable. Following the explosion, evidence showed that the blast resulted from a corrupt system, corrupt public sector employees, and corrupt public administration (Al Moghabat 2021). The presence of ammonium nitrate found at the port was illegal. The investigation regarding who was responsible for stocking the ammonium nitrate at the port is still ongoing. Public servants in charge of the port and Lebanese customs agents are politically affiliated, making the investigation difficult (Cortés, Kéchichian, and Salvador 2020). Six years before the explosion, 2750 tons of ammonium nitrate were left at the warehouse 12 in Beirut port in a hazardous way by a ship called “Rhosus” who was going to Georgia. And since then, negligence and corruption of the port authorities in particular the customs authority, the security agencies, political leaders and all who knew about the ammonium led to this disaster. (Leenders 2020)

Over the years, wars damaged Lebanese infrastructure, and repairing it increased public debt. Moreover, according to Khan, countries under colonialism witnessed a political system based on clientelism. (Khan 1996)

Infrastructure in Lebanon was always related to political clientelism that flourished during the municipality and parliamentary elections (Issa 2019). To collect votes, candidates have picked up the habit of including infrastructure maintenance of roads prior to election dates as part of their electoral campaigns. However, the accumulation of weak and lousy infrastructure has made it difficult for current ministries

to be repaired, especially with Lebanon's economic crisis today. Therefore, public works on strengthening the infrastructure are only emphasized during election periods and forgotten during regular periods. It is a tool and a race for political parties to access resources and secure their place in the Government.

These incidents and needs emphasize the essential role NGOs play on the ground and the government gap they are filling. In fact, throughout the years, NGOs have tried to fulfill the needs and services of the population that the Government should fulfill.

### ***3. State's weakness and the non-profit sector role through the years.***

Lebanon is considered a weak state. A state is allocated the weak qualification dependably on its sovereignty and participants' involvement in the decision-making process. (Fregonese 2012) According to Atzili, state weakness has two components on the institutional and legitimacy levels. Institutionally, weakness can be due to bureaucracy, the system of taxation weakening the functioning of the state, and the question of the legitimacy of power in terms of the absence of a monopoly of power to control violence. Institutional weakness usually witnesses a minimal implication for public institutions in civil society. On another level, the weakness of the state can be measured by the population's perception of the state's legitimacy and whether they identify themselves with the state or not. (Atzili 2010)

Lebanon is considered a weak state for several reasons regarding what is mentioned above.

Bureaucratic procedure dominated the institutional work in the public sector, slowing down the access of services to the public. The emergence of NGOs in Lebanon

and their role was not always idealistic as it may seem. In fact, in different phases, the Government interfered and tried to control the work of NGOs intentionally or indirectly. In order to understand the role of NGOs in Lebanon, it is essential to review the political and economic aspects of the country. For over 400 years, Lebanon was under the Ottoman Empire's rule (AbouAssi 2015), and till now, the non-profit sector in Lebanon is based on the Ottoman law of association of 1909 (Haddad 2017). The French mandate shaped the socio-political and economic norms of the country. The French mandate gave birth to the consociative democracy, which explains the political instability (Lijphart, 1969). Lebanon was born as a weak state, and since its independence, Lebanon is still trying to develop. (Atizili, 2010) Therefore, religious leaders intervene in politics and citizens' civil lives, which attests to the non-separation of religion and politics. (AbouAssi 2015) . Even during elections revealed to be unfair and not independent, civil organizations were not allowed to monitor the elections, and citizens stepped back.(AbouAssi 2015) what distinguishes Lebanon from other weak states is that it is an open political system with the potential of developing economically (Atzili 2010)

It is easy to form an NGO in Lebanon since the Government has no direct control over it. As Bou Assi (2015, p. 221) stated, legally, each NGO must submit a "written mission statement to the Ministry of Interior," and the procedure is not expensive. NGO's work is based on the fund, whether from national or international donors. Furthermore, the subject tackled by NGOs is not always partisan with the Government, and it can be against the Government.

In some phases, it becomes challenging to separate state and non-state actors in terms of their presence on the ground.

Two significant incidents categorized as disasters marked the interference of NGOs in disaster response.

First, the Lebanese civil war was a step toward the proliferation of NGOs. In fact, for fifteen years, the NGO sector was providing services instead of the Government (AbouAssi 2015). This substitution of tasks continued throughout the years will all the instability that Lebanon was enduring. All the political and economic instability that characterizes Lebanon made a space for work for NGOs. During the civil war (1975-1990), the role of association was specific to certain groups and religious groups due to the division created by the war (Haddad, Haase, and Ajamian 2018). The Government tried to hinder this proliferation of the non-profit sector because the need for services and the conflict itself encouraged NGOs to be formed. The type of services after the civil war was centered on communitarian services (Haddad 2017) . the Lebanese army was weak and not enough weaponed and equipped to monopolize the power and control violence leaving a place for other participants to use power. Furthermore, the civil war was followed by states' weakness in developing illegal economic development instead of a centralized taxation system that increased the state's revenue.(Atzili 2010) In times of crisis, the interference between non-state and state actors developed what Sara Fregonese called "hybrid sovereignty," which is not necessarily a pessimist in a heterogeneous society like Lebanon. (Fregonese 2012)

The second main incident considered a disaster was the War with Israel in 2006. Chaaban (2008) stressed how NGOs shifted their missions and behaviors during this period. Some NGOs switched from advocacy work to relief activities (Haddad, Haase, and Ajamian 2018). This also led to the interruption of several projects and NGO work;

however, on the other side, the war created a bond between different organizations in terms of relief and emergency response.

One initiative that marked the Israeli war in Lebanon in 2006 is the Samidoun initiative which is still working nowadays. Many displaced families searched for refuge outside the South during the Israeli war.

Samidoun started as a relief group in the South of Lebanon, providing shelters for the displaced. This relief group took decisions that the state did not take during this phase. Samidoun settled a grassroots platform to organize types of relief work, from need assessment and mapping of the response to ensuring shelters. For example, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education did not open schools to welcome the displaced; however, this relief group started this initiative. Moreover, volunteers were responsible for expanding this relief group during the response to the Israeli war of 2006. With time, this relief group became organized and composed of a logistic, media and communication, volunteer, administration, storage, internal displacement, medical and public health, and psychological units. These initiatives marked the response to the Israeli war. They enhanced the role of initiative and non-state actors in response to any disaster, particularly preparedness. (Moghnieh 2015)

The accumulation of incidents and corruption in the public sector in Lebanon brought citizens together. The public sector in Lebanon is defined by nepotism, favoritism, and corruption, which made fighting corruption a reason for citizens to join civil organizations (Haddad, Haase, and Ajamian 2018).

With the October uprising in 2019, as a reaction to the financial crisis and extreme level of corruption, old and new NGOs went on the ground and tried to fight corruption by raising awareness on specific topics, finding the truth behind each corrupted leader,

and pushed Lebanese citizens to fight for their rights. However, the Government had indirect control over them, especially regarding freedom of expression. After the explosion of August 4, 2020, this proliferation of NGOs continued, and collaboration between different NGOs marked the solidarity of Lebanese people, residents, and emigrants, to help each other and rebuild Beirut. Times of crisis in Lebanon highlighted the cross-sectoral relationship between non-state actors or between state and non-state actors. Lebanon remained a "constellation of hybrid sovereignties" (Fregonese 2012, 659), enriching its work during disasters and crises.

### **C. Conceptual Framework**

There are many conceptual frameworks to analyze the response to a disaster. As mentioned above, nonprofit organizations are the first to intervene in response to a disaster and are important actors in the recovery process. However, lack of data, lack of communication, and collaboration made the intervention of the nonprofit organizations not as successful as it could be. Moreover, the state started interfering in the disaster management process at the beginning of the 20th century (Kapucu, Arslan, and Collins 2010b; Kapucu, Yuldashev, and Feldheim 2018). According to Marchetti et al., the state's role after a conflict resides in inviting civil society and working together on developing strategies for reconstruction. Different are the experiences of the local community with states in terms of disaster response. This relationship depends on the political context of each country (Haddad 2017). The literature shows that inter-organizational relations are primordial and necessary to respond to a disaster.

Some consider that inter-organizational response is more robust than a one organization's response to a disaster because the solution for a big problem coming out

from an inter-organizational relation is better (Kapucu, Yuldashev, and Feldheim 2018) and collective actions combining public-private and nonprofit sector require an acceleration of the response (Kapucu, Arslan, and Collins 2010b). Previous experiences shed light on the role of inter-organizational relationships in response to a disaster because the relationship is characterized by communication and collaboration between different organizations, permitting sharing of resources and expertise between them, preventing the duplication in services during the response to the disaster, and creating a database of volunteering (Kapucu, Yuldashev, and Feldheim 2018). Thus, communities are called to work collectively and cope by sharing both pains, loss on the one hand and, on the other, sharing responsibilities (Kapucu, Arslan, and Collins 2010b). Therefore, inter-organizational relationships involve partnership that demands dedication from organizations. In order to be effective, organizations should have the capacity to be a partner in inter-organizational relations (Kapucu, Yuldashev, and Feldheim 2018). Analyzing this relationship is based on networking, how different organizations can benefit from each other, and how vital networking can lead to solid responses and inter-organizational relationships. Interorganizational relationships are primordial not only after a disaster but also before. Building a database of volunteers and resources available facilitates the response and recovery from a disaster. The collective mind found while collaborating and partnership during a disaster response develops with the development of the collaborations (Kapucu, Arslan, and Collins 2010b). These are the conceptual frameworks on the importance of inter-organizational relations in response to a disaster. However, the case of Lebanon is different. Lebanon is a state, where corruption is prominent and the question of whether Lebanon is a weak state or not is prominent. The government lacks transparency, does not have the population's trust, and its response to



the disaster of August 4, 2020 was debatable. The importance of the paper in the literature remains in the analysis of the response to a disaster in a weak state, stressing the role of inter-organizational relationships.

The conceptual frameworks developed above do not work in a state as Lebanon. Therefore, this paper introduces a new conceptual framework based on what happened in Lebanon and based on the interviews.

The purpose is to analyze a successful response in a weak state from the perspective of the local community (non-governmental organizations and initiatives active on the ground), their relationship with the state, and their collaboration. Moreover, the purpose is to see how can a state, considered as weak act in a response to a disaster and to highlight the presence of the state in the response even if it was minimal.

In order to understand inter-organizational and cross-sectoral relationships in response to the Beirut blast and how these relations can lead to effective outcomes in terms of the response, a qualitative analysis was conducted.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter will address the research methods used for this study. It will describe the Unit of analysis, the research sample, the data collection methods adopted for the study. Moreover, the chapter will define the coding method used and the analysis of qualitative data. At the end, the chapter will evoke the limitations of this research study.

#### **A. Unit of analysis**

A unit of analysis is the entity or event that will be studied; it is the "What or who is being studied"(Babbie 2013a, 94–95). It describes the "main focus of the study" (4/10) and gives an insight into its end. The unit of analysis can be factors, individuals, groups, organizations, social phenomena, policies, or sociological inquiries. (Sheppard 2020; Strang 2015). There is a correlation between the unit of analysis and the level of analysis. The level of analysis depends on how the unit of analysis will be studied (Strang 2015). For this thesis, the unit of analysis is the inter-organizational relationship in response to the Beirut port explosion. The study of this unit of analysis relies on collecting data from local non-governmental organizations and initiatives that were part of the response to the explosion, particularly the head of the response section or head of the organizations, to study the relations and networks launched after the blast.

#### **B. Research Sample**

The research sample is a representation of the population studied in the analysis. Therefore, it is part of the population chosen according to different ways. The literature

presents two types of sampling: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling consists in randomly choosing the interviewees, while non-probability sampling is the specific choice of the researcher while selecting the sample. Both models combine specific types. Probability sampling focuses on choosing the population haphazardly without developing specific criteria by the researcher. (Babbie 2013b; Strang 2015) Non-probability sampling englobe several sub-methods of choosing the population: Convenience sample or haphazard sampling, Judgemental or purposely sampling, snowball sample, quota sampling, and theoretical sampling. (Babbie 2013b; Strang 2015; Marshall 1996)

In this study, the sampling method adopted is purposeful sampling or the judgmental sample accompanied by a snowball sample. Purposeful sampling consists of selecting the most productive sample of the population. It chooses the key informants from the population studied to give information on the questions asked. (Suri 2011; Marshall 1996) The Snowball sample diversifies the participants based on respondents' answers, whereby a respondent shares characteristics and knowledge about other participants. This process helps enlarge the number of respondents and ensures diversity in the sample studied. (Suri 2011)

In this study, the respondents were selected based on two criteria—first, their NGO or initiative, and second, the level of activeness of their response.

### **C. Data Collection**

Data Collection is one of the main parts of the thesis process. There are many methods or ways to collect data for a study, whether qualitative or quantitative research. In a qualitative study, four methods are detected for collecting data. Kenneth Strang

developed the following: First, being part of a group setting or activity. Second, conduct personal or group interviews. Third, develop observation of the topic. Fourth, analyze documents and artifacts. (Strang 2015, 396)

### ***1. Semi-structured interviews***

According to Gill et al. (2008), there are three types of research interviews: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews are pre-prepared questions asked for the respondent without the chance to expand them. Usually, this is the easiest way since it is straightforward and quick. However, it does not provide further details that can expand the researcher's ideas.

Semi-structured interviews are based on key questions prepared prior to the interview by the researcher but leave the respondent free to expand their ideas. Unstructured interviews express a lack of organization from the researcher since they do not reflect any theory or idea developed by the researcher. (Strang 2015)

Therefore, this study collected the data by conducting semi-structured interviews with representatives of NGOs and initiatives who responded to the blast. The management of the data collection process is the following.

Since the respondent should be informed about the study, the research should grant ethical practices, so the respondent feels relaxed to participate; a consent form was sent to the participants before they accepted to participate in the study, whether by email or phone call. Participants were informed that their names would not appear in the study and that the information given was exclusive to it to ensure confidentiality and accountability.

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic and the perturbing phase that dominated the data collection period, and since most of the participants were still active on the ground in response to the blast, interviews were conducted via zoom. Interviews were scheduled in advance. Respondents are the head of the organization or the responsible for the response to the explosion. They received the consent form and the invitation transcript that can be found in appendix 1 and appendix 2. Most of the NGOs or initiatives were contacted by phone. The respondents were nominated by their NGO or initiative. Others were directly contacted by email. Some respondents asked for the questions before agreeing to participate in the study.

Before contacting concerned NGOs and initiatives to participate in the first phase, a set of questions was developed. As Leeuw (2008) described, questions should be both understandable and answerable, which helps the researcher develop its study. (de leeuw 2008) The questions focus on several themes: they evoke the background and mission of the NGO and initiatives interviewed, then cover the role of the state, volunteers, and NGOs in the response, in addition to their collaborations with the state, and finally englobed the collaboration between the NGOs in response to the explosion of August 4, 2020. The questions can be found in appendix 3 of the study.

Twenty-five interviews were conducted. Around 13 hours of recorded audio or video were transcribed, coded, and then interpreted. The sessions were recorded after the respondent's consent except for one interview due to the application used to conduct the interview.

#### **D. Data Coding and Analysis**

"The key process in the analysis of qualitative social research data is coding—classifying or categorizing individual pieces of data—coupled with some kind of retrieval system" (Kenneth Strang 2016)

In this study, data were coded manually, using line-by-line coding techniques. The interpretation and analysis of qualitative data can be studied in two parts: first, data management, and second, data analysis. Data analysis is the art of organizing the collection process of data and designing a system of how to store the collected data to create an analysis context based on interpretation and comparison. The data analysis is based on data reduction by choosing the themes to keep, displaying data using charts and graphs, and finally, drawing conclusions from the data. (McNabb 2013)

In this study, coding relied on three main steps. First, open coding, in which the researcher develops a line-by-line observation of the data to develop probable concepts. (Draucker et al. 2007)

The second step, axial coding, is based on combining categories under the open categories deducted from the first line-by-line observation.

Moreover, third, in selective coding, the researcher tries to deduct theories from the formed categories and regripping subcategories under one core category.

Following the steps mentioned above, the findings generated by this study are reported in the subsequent chapters.

## **E. Limitation of the Research**

Brutus, Agrunis, and Wasmer (2012) developed the importance of study limitations for a researcher. By developing the limitations, the researcher assumes the study's weaknesses and makes it credible. (Brutus, Aguinis, and Wassmer 2013)

Therefore, this study encountered three limitations. First, while using the term preparedness in the study of Lebanon's preparedness to face a disaster for both the state and the non-profit sector sample, the researcher did not detail it. The term preparedness was general without specifying the phases of readiness for a disaster: mitigation, prevention, response, and preparedness.

Second, interviews were conducted seven months after the explosion. The study focuses on the response phase. Therefore, even though respondents were present directly after the explosion, their answers might englobe their actions in the recovery phase and not only the response. Furthermore, some were still on the ground while others retired, which might affect their answers on their experiences during the response.

Third, this study answers the inter-organizational relationship in response to the explosion. The limitation is that the interviews did not englobe representatives from the state, which would have been interesting to study. It would have provided the research with the state's perspective on the collaboration with NGOs and Initiatives. Same as experts on civil society or media representatives covering the response. The researcher focused on the experience of NGOs and initiatives to the response without developing the sample studied.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter will generate the results of the interviews. The first part will explore the background of the respondents and their role during the response to Beirut Explosion. The second part will present the culture of volunteering in Lebanon and its implication on the response to Beirut port explosion. The third part reflects the lack of collaboration with the state for two reasons: the lack of leadership and the lack of trust. The fourth part will assess the level of preparedness of both the state and the NGOs and initiatives in addition to the planning of their response. The fifth and final part will describe the collaboration between NGOs in the response to the explosion.

#### **A. Background and field of intervention.**

##### ***1. Type and period of establishment of NGOs and initiatives.***

The twenty-five participants involved in this study are NGOs and initiatives present during the response to the Beirut port explosion of August 4, 2020. The participants are either local initiatives or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that intervened in response to the Beirut blast. This chart shows that out of 25 respondents, eighteen respondents are registered NGOs, and seven are initiatives initiated directly after the explosion or before the explosion but are not registered yet.



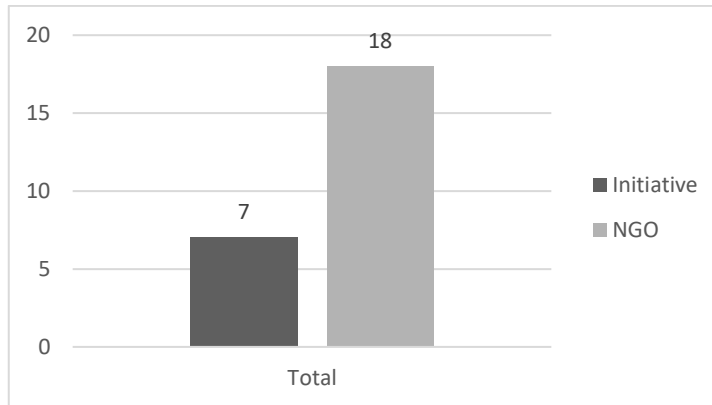


Figure 1. Type of organizations interviewed

The phase following the Beirut port explosion witnessed a proliferation of new initiatives and NGOs that responded to the blast. Out of 25 respondents, 20 respondents were present before the blast, whereas five were initiated a few days later.

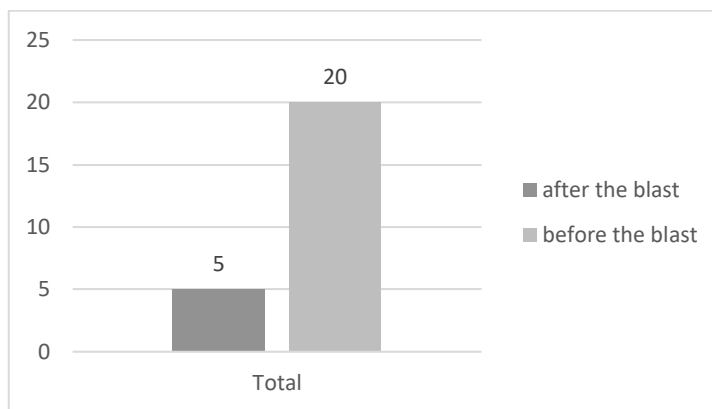


Figure 1. Period of establishment of the NGOs and initiatives

## 2. *Field of intervention*

The response to the explosion relied on services provided by NGOs and Initiatives in parallel with the state's role, tackled later in this study. Moreover, NGOs and initiatives provided diversified services and shared with other interveners the same services.

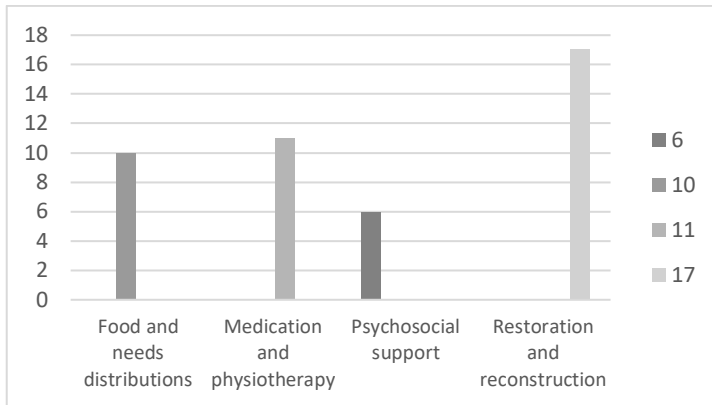


Figure 2. Field of Intervention

The diversity of services provided by the same organization is one cause of the chaos in response management.

Out of 25 respondents, 17 provided restoration and reconstruction services that included rehabilitation of houses, fixing doors and windows, and repairing glasses and rooftops. 11 out of 25 respondents provided medication and physiotherapy to the affected population and the assessment work and collecting database post the disaster.

Moreover, 10 out of 25 respondents distributed food to the affected population and other direct needs for the displaced, such as furniture, mattresses, electronics, cash assistance, and hygiene kits.

Finally, 6 out of 25 provide psychosocial support for the affected population.

Some NGOs and initiatives have a specific field of intervention. For example, respondent 9 offered legal support to the affected population while respondent 15 organized awareness campaigns to ensure psychosocial support to affected people, especially children. Others focused on financial aid by organizing fundraising projects (Respondent 14, 2021) or paying student fees. (Respondent 13, 2021) In parallel, some NGOs and Initiatives focused on helping SMEs, whether financially or by rebuilding and

repairing the business (Respondent 1, 6, and 17), while others strictly assisted other NGOs' responses. (Respondent 1 and 16)

### 3. *Mission of the NGOs and initiatives*

This theme focuses on the organization's mission after the Beirut port explosion. The following chart represents the number of NGOs and initiatives that preserved the same mission after the blast and the NGOs and initiatives that changed their mission. In addition, some NGOs and initiatives expanded their mission by adding a sector related to relief work. The ones answering no considered that the relief work fits under their initial mission.

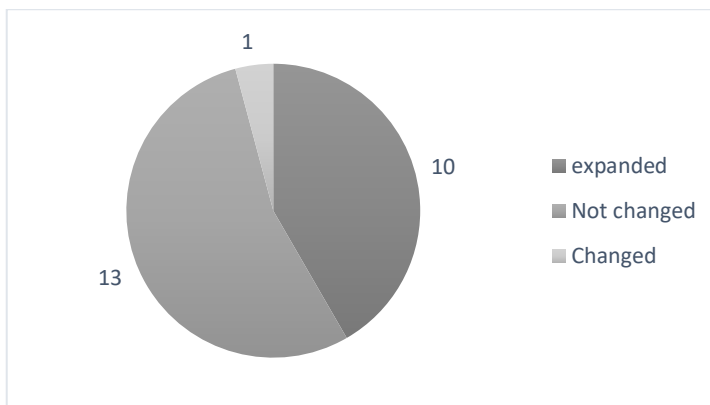


Figure 3. The preservation of mission after the blast

Out of 25 respondents, 14 NGOs and initiatives did not change their mission, while ten out of 25 respondents expanded their mission to include a Beirut port relief work section. Just one respondent affirmed changing its mission thoroughly after the blast.

## B. The culture of volunteering in Lebanon

The instant response to the blast witnessed a proliferation of volunteers in the few hours after the explosion. People of different ages, sects, and regions went to Beirut and helped remove damages and rescue affected people.

The chart below presents the respondent's perception of the culture of volunteering in Lebanon. It depicts whether volunteering was introduced, promoted, or not after the explosion.

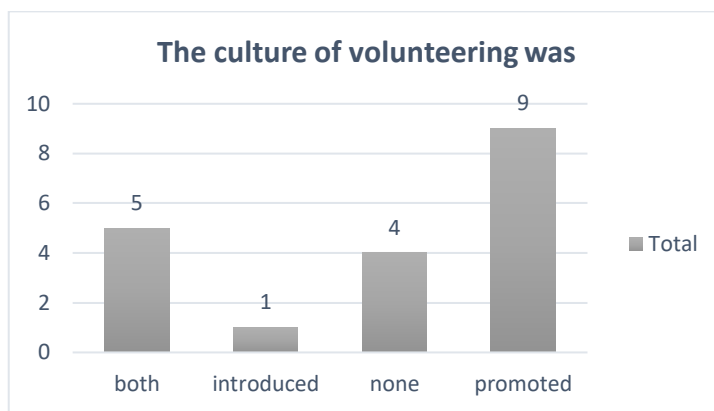


Figure 4. Culture of volunteering in Lebanon

### References:

- Both mean that the blast introduced and promoted the culture of volunteering.
- "None" means that the culture of volunteering was neither introduced nor promoted after the explosion, but it was present before.

Twenty respondents answered the question related to the culture of volunteering. The results show that nine out of 20 respondents considered that the Beirut blast promoted the culture of volunteering in Lebanon. However, five considered that it both introduced and promoted the culture of volunteering, and five others believe that the explosion did not introduce nor promote the culture of volunteering.

The equality in the two opposite answers corroborates the division in the opinion when it comes to volunteers. Some of the respondents defended volunteering in Lebanon, while others criticized it.

The explosion emphasized the role played by volunteers in responding to any crisis in Lebanon. Volunteers on the ground also marked the history of Lebanon throughout the years.

"The Lebanese population is known for its work for standing with each other in a difficult time, forgetting about sectarian problems, and helping each other" - Respondent 11, 2021

Respondent 6 (2021) referred to the reason behind the proliferation of volunteers as the spirit inherited from their parents and children.

"So, the reason you saw so many people on the streets is that all of these men and woman were whether involved in previous volunteering or their parents were. "– Respondent 6, 2021

Therefore, the Beirut port explosion revealed "how people have the initiative and how much they were ready to give their country and how they are ready to help each other and be strong" - Respondent 4, 2021). Helping people is, as respondent 19 expressed, "part of the healing process. (Respondent 19, 2021)

This culture of volunteering is reinforced by the lack of presence of the Government in tight phases of Lebanon's history. Since people stopped expecting much from the Government, they refer to volunteering and go to NGOs asking for assistance. As a result, NGOs consider that they " ran [the] country for years without the government."(Respondent 6, 2021). Moreover, people tend to rely on NGOs and volunteers to receive help such as respondent 23 expanded. "In Lebanon, the vulnerable communities in Lebanon rely on volunteer work or humanitarian efforts" (Respondent 23, 2021)

Respondents 8 and 18 (2021) describe volunteering in Lebanon as a humanitarian act whereby people get together to help each other. They also elaborated on the difference between these actions and politics in Lebanon by explaining the revolution of August 4, 2020.

"In Lebanon, helping regroups people together, and politics makes them apart. The revolution divided the people, so the explosion happened, and we came back to humanity." - Respondent 8, 2021

"The boom of NGOs and volunteering started with the revolution. with the blast, we collected the efforts done during the revolution " - Respondent 18, 2021

In parallel, some respondents criticized the culture of volunteering in Lebanon. Even though volunteers helped a lot in response to the explosion, the citizens' lack of expertise and preparedness hindered or delayed the work.

"Although there were many people on the streets, which was great, it was also dangerous because not all volunteers are trained in post-emergency or crises" - Respondent 23, 2021.

Respondent 5 declared that "one of the most significant lacks in Lebanon is a civic education and civic proper community building" (Respondent 5, 2021), which emphasized the role of preparedness for a disaster.

One of the problems that the ground faces with volunteers is that volunteers are not settled for a long time. They can work in the short term or long term. This time restriction somehow hinders the acceleration and progress of the work.

"Volunteering is beautiful, but most people, in general, will volunteer for a specific amount of time" - Respondent 5, 2021

### C. Lack of coordination with the state.

The Beirut port explosion invited people to question the presence of the State and its role in facing disasters. Respondents interviewed expressed their opinion regarding collaborating with the State and the part of the State from the response. These interviews described the State's role in leading and organizing the response. According to the respondents, the State should be prepared to face such a blast. Moreover, the State should take the lead and facilitate the funds and donations to accelerate the response and should work on regaining the trust of people and donors.

The Lebanese Army represented the State mainly on the ground after the explosion, and the Beirut municipality had a role directly after the blast.

The following charts describe the collaboration between the NGOs and initiatives with the State and the Lebanese Army representing the State.

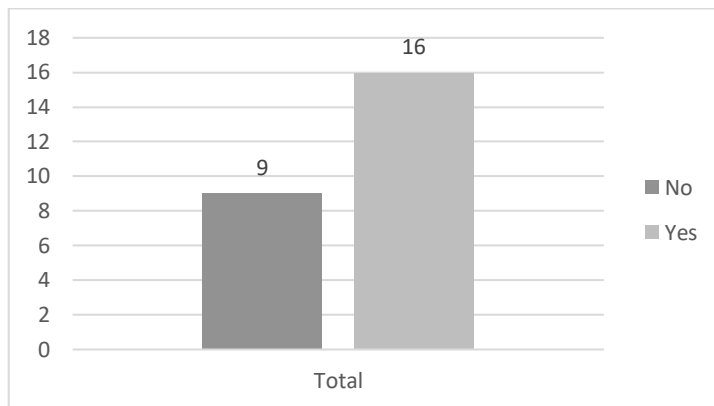


Figure 5. Collaboration of NGOs and Initiatives with the state

This chart presents the number of NGOs and initiatives that collaborated with the State. In the aftermath of the explosion, out of 25 respondents, 16 NGOs and initiatives collaborated with the State. However, nine of 25 refused to collaborate.

The hereunder chart depicts the collaboration of the NGOs and initiatives with the Lebanese Army. Out of 16 NGOs and initiatives that collaborated with the State, 12 answered that they collaborated with the Lebanese Army.

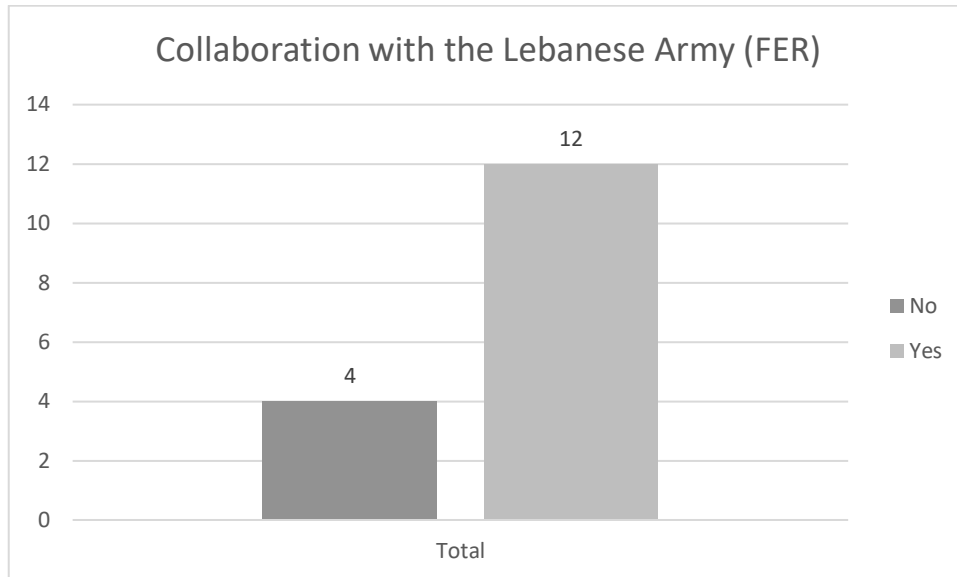


Figure 6. Collaboration of NGOs and initiatives with the Lebanese Army (FER)

The collaboration between respondents to the blast and the State was not born with the explosion. After each crisis in Lebanon NGOs and the local community intervene and fill the State's gap. Although opinions differ regarding the collaboration NGO-State, the following parts will evoke causes of not collaborating with the State. NGOs and initiatives

The reasons supported by the NGOs are that the lack of cooperation is due to the lack of leadership and organization and the lack of trust in the State.

### ***1. Lack of Leadership and organization.***

Responding to a disaster requires an organization and a leader responsible for it. For example, a few hours after the Beirut port explosion of August 4, 2020, Beirut



witnessed a proliferation of NGOs and people helping the affected population and repairing damages. However, as mentioned above, some respondents refused to coordinate with the State and criticized its decisions and actions. One of the prominent critics is the lack of organization on the ground. The State assigned the Lebanese Army to organize the work of the NGOs and initiatives. The Lebanese Army created a Forward Emergency Room (FER) to divide the zones between the respondents and supervise the work. However, this division wasn't logical for all the respondents since NGOs and initiatives were already on the ground when the Lebanese Army came and established the Forward Emergency Room. "The relief work was almost done" when the Lebanese Army settled (Respondent 10, 2021). Therefore, for this reason, respondent 11 rejected going with the Lebanese Army's directives.

"We refused the region because we started working in another zone and then took the two other areas." (Respondent 11, 2021)

The State wasn't wholly absent in the response, but its intervention via the Lebanese Army came late, as stated above. Furthermore, Respondents 3, 4, 5, 11, 12, 19, and 22 revoked the State for intervening late after the blast and causing chaos. As a leader, the State should have intervened directly and been cooperative.

"If since day 1, the Lebanese Army or any entity was placed, it would have been better"; "we hoped that public authorities would have been more present to coordinate from day 1." - Respondent 3, 2021

"Unfortunately, this type of catastrophe in any other country would have a different and more quick response - Respondent 18, 2021

Besides the leader's presence on the ground, leadership involves managerial skills. Lack of organization leads NGOs and initiatives to be resilient to collaborate with the State.

Respondent 9, 2021, stated that his reason for not collaborating with the State is the "lack of presence in terms of rapidity of the relief as well as the organization." Same for respondent 22, who viewed the "involvement of the state [as] almost inexistent and disorganized."

NGOs and initiatives expected the State to be more organized. Therefore, they revendicated a state "with good leaders" (respondent 14, 2021) and, present on the ground and encouraging the NGOs and initiatives to cooperate with it.

"The role of the state is first to act, then to coordinate with NGOs" - Respondent 24, 2021

NGOs and Initiatives refused to coordinate with the State because the State didn't organize the cooperation as they expected. For example, in the time of Lebanon's crisis, NGOs and initiatives expected the State's help in alleviating bank limits to facilitate donations and receive funding.

"The state is expected to facilitate in the monetary budget to access to funds so that the NGOs can respond" - Respondent 9, 2021

"The state was mainly absent, where needed the most: on the financial level" - Respondent 19,2021

Another type of facilitation needed is in the procedures. Some respondents refused to collaborate because of bureaucracy in organizing the response to the explosion proposed by the Lebanese Army. For example, the Lebanese Army required respondents

to present reports and data. However, since some NGOs and initiatives collaborated with the UNDP and others focused on the direct response, this task became a burden for them. In addition, small initiatives find it difficult with the restrained number of human resources to meet the Army's demands.

"It was a strain on the NGO and not very efficient to work on reports for both the Lebanese Army and the UNDP in two different formats. NGOs are short staffed and work with small teams. So, to have to report the same information to multiple fronts, it was just tiring" - Respondent 2, 2021

I had to create a team just for this in a way that instead of helping me, the Lebanese Army gave me work" - Respondent 6, 2021.

The problem with the State's organization is that it does not work for the long term but instead focuses on short-term responses.

"They don't work in the long term. It was nice to work with the Lebanese Army because they somehow have a plan. However, even the Lebanese Army told us we didn't know if they would give us more. So, they are not able to foresee because the state only thinks short term. " - Respondent 18, 2021

Moreover, whether cash assistance or another type, aid distribution witnessed a lack of transparency. Respondents accused the State represented by the Lebanese Army of lack of transparency.

"The state should help by giving donations; however, took the money, or distributed to their people or simply not doing the assessment. " - Respondent 13, 2021

"The cash-based assistance was chaotic and not clear" - Respondent 21, 2021.

"There was no follow up, no monitoring nor delegations"- Respondent 4, 2021

Moreover, throughout the years, the State relied on NGOs' interventions. Therefore, many criticized the State's position after the explosion, considering it was sidestepping its responsibility while "the State is supposed to be managing the response (Respondent 15, 2021)

"State always takes the backseat" (Respondent 1, 2021), which pushed NGOs to step in and work without considering coordinating with the State. As a result, NGOs bypassed the State, making it difficult for the State to control the response, notably the Lebanese Army. In addition, NGOs and initiatives on the ground gave themselves the authority to bypass the State and the Lebanese Army.

"There wasn't any state control on the ground. So, I can bypass them" - Respondent 8, 2021

"Regarding the Lebanese Army, they organized the response to a certain extent, but no one could limit and control NGOs." - Respondent 4, 2021.

"The State always takes the backseat, and the NGOs intervene and take control and do the responsibilities that the state should do." - Respondent 1, 2021

## ***2. Lack of trust***

On another level, people's lack of trust in the state obstructs the state's collaboration in response to the explosion. This lack of trust is due to the cumulation of disappointment over the years, which resulted from corruption, a weak system, and other elements.

NGOs and Initiatives were reluctant to cooperate with the state since the state wasn't present in the previous crisis in the way they expected. So instead, they were the entity helping in responses to disasters.

Beirut Port explosion expanded the notion of trust because many respondents considered that the reason behind the blast was the state, and for this reason, they refused to collaborate.

"The responsibility of the state is that the explosion shouldn't happen first; they are the cause of what we are living, so how to coordinate with them." - Respondent 10, 2021

Furthermore, in response to the blast, the lack of trust in the state was seen on different levels. First, people and beneficiaries don't trust the state, and therefore, they were expecting much from NGOs and initiatives. Since NGOs and initiatives took the lead, people have started demanding more.

"We also realized that people start thinking that NGOs are the state because the government is not present." - Respondent 12, 2021, Respondent 17, 2021

"Some were so demanding as we are obliged to do what we were doing. We considered what we were doing as a duty; it was all about humanity. "We did this because there was no government and no trust." - Respondent 6, 2021

"Not a single person we went to his house, had confidence with the state and asked its help"- Respondent 11, 2021

Second, NGOs and Initiatives didn't trust the state and preferred not to collaborate with the state. However, some collaborated because they needed approvals and circulars to work on the ground. The main reason defended by respondents 10, 11, 14, 16, 17, and 23 is that the state is corrupt. Corruption embedded in the Lebanese system degraded the state's image.

In addition, NGOs and Initiatives questioned the ability of the state to manage finance and money and remain transparent.

"We would have worked together more efficiently if we had a trusted government." -Respondent 6, 2021.

"They have international relations. They could have ensured donation. Everything that was donated from outside through the state doesn't know where this money has been spent." - Respondent 17, 2021

"Corruption brought us here not being able to access enough funds". – Respondent 14, 2021

Even though NGOs and Initiatives collaborated with the Lebanese, their relationship wasn't trust-based. They refused to cooperate as the Lebanese Army requested because they are linked and represent the state. Further, the Lebanese Army asked NGOs and Initiatives to provide them with the data assessment. However, it created a dilemma since they are considered personal data and don't trust the Lebanese Army.

"In Lebanon, no one trusts the state, and few are the NGOs and initiatives trust the Lebanese Army. So, when they asked for beneficiaries' details, NGOs and initiatives refused to cooperate because they are linked to the state and might use the data for elections." - Respondent 4, 2021.

"We didn't want to give our data, but we had to." – Respondent 6, 2021

Third, the international community doesn't trust the state and, for this reason, decided to donate via organizations and NGOs on the ground.

Donations bypassed the state, and NGOs and initiatives took the lead in accepting funds.

"It was also a question of management of funds. Given the lack of trust that the donors had, international donors expressed their distrust in the government. They didn't want to support any project channeled by the government." - Respondent 23, 2021

"The role of the government should be to give reassurance to international donors. Because of the lack of trust, the international community didn't even reach out to the government." - Respondent 2, 2021

" At the time, people already didn't trust the state. Even other countries sent their money to third parties, to NGOs, to you know, the civil society. Even other countries failed to trust the state." - Respondent 16, 2021

## **D. Level of Preparedness**

The Beirut Port explosion of August 4, 2020, is considered one of the enormous explosions in the last decades. Accordingly, the level of preparedness of Lebanon to face disasters is questioned. It is part of the reasons behind the chaos in response to the explosion. It englobes both the part of State from the response and the NGO's part.

### ***1. The state's level of preparedness***

Respondents probed the level of preparedness of the State to face this disaster. They considered the State not prepared to face disasters for several reasons.

All the respondents answered that the level of preparedness to face a disaster in Lebanon is very low. According to respondents 1, 6, 9, 12, and 21, the State was not prepared to face such a disaster or any other disaster.

This weak intervention of the State is due to the lack of disaster management plans and their implementation.

"In disaster management, very few are the institutions that are prepared for disasters in Lebanon. The main shortcoming is that on the level of the State, we do not have an updated disaster management plan" - Respondent 9, 2021

"State is not prepared to face disaster since there is nothing functional in the state." - Respondent 20, 2021

"Without getting into politics, it was evident to us, NGOs and initiatives, that there is no straightforward process or guideline. Whatever is in place is archaic and did not come up to bar the level and the extent of the disaster that we were facing." -Respondent 23, 2021

Respondent 3 communicated that "there are policies, but they are theoretical," while respondent 21 suspects the implementation and execution of the policies in place. Furthermore, the lack of preparedness to face a disaster is the lack of experience in facing disaster, primarily humanitarian. The Lebanese Army representing the State does not

work on a humanitarian level, creating a gap between the NGOs and initiatives and the State.

"The Lebanese Army is not involved in humanitarian work. The Lebanese Army is used to working in a straight manner, and this is difficult to accept from the NGO because our work is more humanitarian " - Respondent 11, 2021

"They have nothing to do with humanitarian work." - Respondent 22, 2021

On another level, municipalities in Lebanon, particularly Beirut Municipality, do not work on the preparedness level of disaster response. First, the Beirut municipality did not have enough resources and materials to engage directly in removing debris and damages.

"Beirut municipality did not have trucks to remove debris. So, they have not done anything and should have worked on removing debris." - Respondent 10, 2021

Because of the lack of trucks available, Respondent 11 "helped Beirut municipality with ten pop cars and ten pick-ups to remove debris"- Respondent 11, 2021

Moreover, the Beirut municipality did not provide NGOs and Initiatives working on the ground with a map so they could divide the zones. The available maps were outdated.

"The newest map they could provide us with was from 1976". - Respondent 22, 2021

NGOs and Initiatives considered Beirut municipality and the State, complicating the work on the ground, especially for initiatives. Non-registered initiatives had to take a pass from the municipality to be able to work. This was a way to collaborate; however, NGOs and Initiatives did not see it positively.

"The second day, the municipality of Beirut adopted a circular that initiatives are not allowed to work without a pass" - Respondent 8, 2021



Furthermore, the high level of damage aligned with the lack of preparedness is due to the weak infrastructure.

"So, I guess there is not enough infrastructure. Moreover, we were not prepared for such like for such a disaster, no one would be prepared, but at least other states would have acted differently." - Respondent 21, 2021

## 2. *NGOs and initiatives' level of preparedness*

Even though the NGOs were created before the August 4 explosion, the level of preparedness of the NGO is related to how old they are.

The following chart indicates that out of 20 NGOs created before the blast, 8 NGOs were created between 2019 and 2020, the year that witnessed a substantial financial and economic crisis.

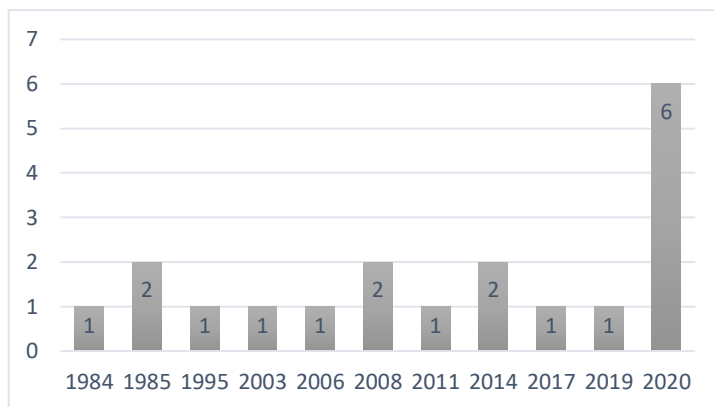


Figure 7. Date of established of NGOs and Initiatives before the blast

The readiness to face a disaster depends on the NGO's experience in catastrophes and the level of awareness and preparedness developed before a disaster.

The level of preparedness for a disaster in Lebanon is low. The NGOs that considered themselves prepared to face the Beirut port explosion are involved in previous disasters. Out of the 25 respondents, only five answered that they were involved in an earlier tragedy.

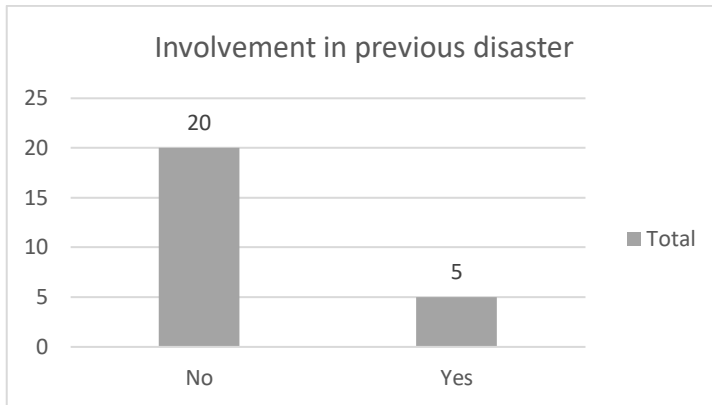


Figure 8. The involvement of NGOs and initiatives in previous disasters

The non-governmental organizations involved in previous disasters were more prepared to respond to the Beirut blast. As respondent 25 affirms regarding the preparedness for the Beirut port explosion,

"Of course, this is one of the most significant events in history, but with our experience, we had something to work in the beginning. We already knew how to work."

Some NGOs didn't start from scratch since they had their bases to face disasters, while new NGOs and Initiatives did a great job, but they lacked experience.

"Some smaller organizations did fabulous work as well, so it's not about scale, but it's about the experience and the way of doing things." - Respondent 3, 2021

The elder NGOs engaged more human resources and resources, which helped respond to the blast.

"Ours is diversified enough and were dynamic enough. So, we have a space close to six hundred people letting us be dynamic enough to deploy forces and act." - Respondent 3, 2021

In parallel, recently launched NGOs and Initiatives find it more challenging to face disaster in an organized way, as Respondent 19, 2021 describes.

"I guess no one can say that he was prepared, and it was very spontaneous [...], which is why it was chaotic."

a. Planning the response

Besides the preparedness for a disaster, the following part will depict whether NGOs and initiatives planned or not their response. Planning the Beirut port explosion intervention was not evident for all the respondents. It is related to the date of intervention of the NGO and the launching of the initiative. Some decided to intervene directly spontaneously until they organized their interventions.

"Just the cleaning was spontaneous" - respondent 13, 2021

"You can't plan; local communities can't do planning in 2 hours and go on the ground. Because if you see on Wednesday morning, at 8 am, people are cleaning the road; it wasn't planning it was impulsive. With time, there was planning. They adjusted things, but nothing was organized at 100%." - Respondent 15, 2021.

Moreover, since it is not the field of intervention of many NGOs and initiatives, it took them time to plan and decide how they could help within their area of expertise.

"Forgot about the first two weeks because it is not our field of expertise. When we planned to perform and do psychosocial support, honestly, we didn't have constraints obstructing our work." - Respondent 8, 2021

In parallel, some decided to narrow their ideas and focus on specific services and beneficiaries, which belated their interventions as respondent 18 specified

"We took our time to plan; we researched what we need to concentrate on in disasters."

In addition to respondent 20, 2021 who decided "not to be involved in the residential buildings but to institutions and shops."

Others took advantage of their injured members and planned their intervention while recovering. This idea represents the case of respondent 14, whose members were injured during the blast.

"So, the first week was us thinking in what just happened to try to get back on our feet since our homes, our workplace, we were injured and damaged" - Respondent 14, 2021

In the direct response post the blast, NGOs changed their plans several times; as respondent 2, 2021 explained, their plans were "changing daily, and we learned a lot of things by being on the ground even though we already had our beneficiary base." Moreover, some didn't stick to their plans "I organized the work, but we changed the plan." (Respondent 8, 2021) or "decided to postpone it and instead focus on offering food in the first few days"

#### **E. Collaboration between NGOs and initiatives**

The response to the explosion brought people together. Marked by the proliferation of NGOs and initiatives on the ground, the response to the blast experienced collaboration between NGOs and Initiatives. The following chapter elaborates on the culture of collaboration in the non-profit sector.

This chart describes whether the NGOs and initiatives collaborated on the ground or not with other NGOs and initiatives.

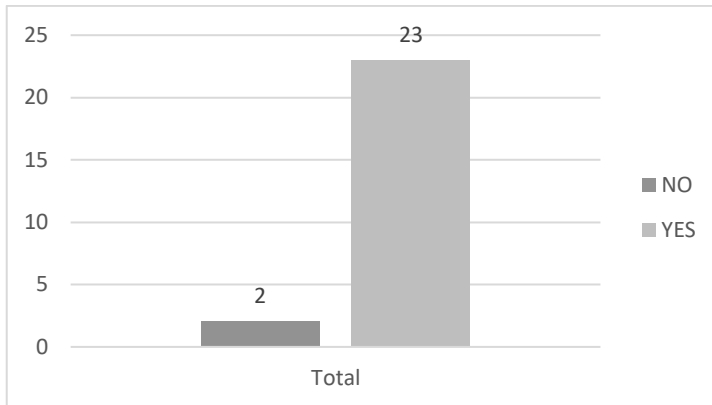


Figure 9. NGOs that collaborated with others.

Out of 25 respondents, 23 collaborated with other non-profit sector members. Their collaborations were diverse. Some collaborated with big NGOs. Collaboration with big and old NGOs facilitated the process on the ground due to their expertise and based network.

Other respondents teamed up with campaigns raised post the explosion, and others cooperated with international donors to ensure their resources. As a result, big NGOs access donations easier because they already have the international community's trust in their work.

"The collaborations had great outcomes. However, working with new initiatives that were established after the explosion was not encouraging. They were not doing great work in reparations. We have received some complaints about prices for things that we did not renovate. The work was quick and not correct; problems start showing up." - Respondent 7, 2021

"The big NGOs were more coordinated because they took zones. The initiatives were vital, even though it seemed that we were not very coordinated. We are very coordinated because we fill each other gaps." - Respondent 6, 2021

Respondents assessed the coordination between NGOs and initiatives on the ground. The chart below reveals the assessment of Respondents regarding the coordination.



Figure 10. Assessment of the cooperation between NGOs in response to Beirut port explosion.

Out of 25 respondents, 12 considered the coordination on the ground as good, and nine approved that it was good coordination, but it needs improvements. Conversely, two out of 25 assumed that the coordination required to be improved and was not good, while two preferred to work alone and not collaborate.

Duplication between NGOs was a common obstacle in the response showing the chaos on the ground.

"It was chaotic because you would see the same house receiving help from the different organizations while its neighbors did not receive anything. It was chaotic, and this is understandable because this is something that happened suddenly. There is no time to plan. Along the way, and it did not take long, NGOs started planning and doing communication meetings." – Respondent 1, 2021

"This kind of inter-organizational work was very nice to see. However, at the same time, it raises the question of how to make sure that resources are distributed equally to the affected population. How can we better manage the coordination and the documentation between different NGOs and initiatives." – Respondent 2, 2021

"Collaboration was outstanding, and it was purely aiming to help people. Nevertheless, in my opinion, there is much duplication from NGOs; there was no adequate follow-up and organization." - Respondent 4, 2021

"Every organization did its best, and today's coordination is good." – Respondent 3, 2021

"They tried to organize per zone to avoid conflict and duplication. Today, we would have faced more serious problems if these were not like this." – Respondent 15, 2021

"There is no perfect coordination anywhere, especially after something that chaotic and following this type of explosion." - Respondent 9, 2021

### ***1. Types of collaborations***

Collaboration between NGOs and initiatives on the ground was primarily based on sharing resources and referrals. The hereunder table attests that most respondents were involved in collaborations based on sharing resources or referrals of cases.

Table 1. Types of collaboration between NGOs and initiatives

Sharing responses	Respondent 2, 14, 6, 3, 17, 15, 16, 18,11.
Referrals	Respondent 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 17, 23, 24.
Communicate zones to avoid duplications	Respondent 5, 7,15, 11.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following chapter will discuss the answers to the research questions and sub-questions in light of the findings from the interviews. This chapter will develop the reasons behind the weak response, not the state's absence, and the local community's role, mainly the volunteers, non-governmental organizations, and initiatives. Thus, the chapter will question whether the local community as defined above replaces the state or not in the response and whether the attribution of a "parallel state" to the non-governmental organization is applicable. Finally, the chapter will focus on networking and inter-organizational relationships to face a disaster and prevent and prepare for a disaster.

#### **A. Discussion of the research findings**

##### ***1. The weak role of the state in the response to Beirut Port explosion***

Although many respondents described the state's role in response to the blast as absent or minimal, the state was present. Represented by the Lebanese Army, the state tried to organize the response. However, three central components hindered the role of the state:

- The lack of resources
- The lack of trust
- The lack of expertise in the humanitarian field



a. Lack of funds and resources

The ongoing crisis that Lebanon went through in the past decade drained its resources, and the trust in the state by the international community decreased, affecting the donations and funds. The state lacks the resources and funds to ensure a professional response to a disaster. On the ground, with the minimal number of resources provided by the state, the state didn't provide direct services to the affected population. Instead, its intervention focused on organizing the respondents' work for the disaster and waiting for international aid that was mainly unavailable through the state. The lack of capabilities of the state to help the affected population made it rely on the help of the non-profit sector. In addition, the explosion hit the state's public health sector and public hospitals, draining their capability to be on the ground directly after the blast. Most public institutions were affected due to their localization in the center of Beirut. Until now, the consequences of the explosion are still visible, and damages have not been repaired. For instance, damages caused by the explosion are still found in building such as the bistros palace, the local of the ministry of foreign affairs and emigrant previously hasn't been repaired. With the lack of resources and high level of damages, the state fails to be part of the relief work.

b. The notion of trust and legitimacy

The notion of trust is vital to understanding where the state stood after the explosion.

Lack of resources is followed by a lack of international trust in the government, hindering receiving funds and donations. Response to a disaster requires rapidity. However, while waiting for help and resources, non-state participants were already doing the relief work. In addition, the state's intervention came late, making the collaboration

harder. The first state response was via Beirut municipality, helping remove damages and marking danger zone so that the volunteers on the ground pay attention. However, the municipality lacked trucks and equipment to remove debris. To accelerate the work, respondent 11 assisted the municipality with trucks. Weeks later, the government declared Lebanon in a state of emergency and organized via the Lebanese Army a Forward emergency room. This phase of the response to the blast questioned the state's legitimacy and highlighted the role of legitimacy in considering a state weak. (Fregonese 2012) The beneficiaries, NGOs, and initiatives working on the ground don't trust the state. The main reason for collaboration is that since the state is the authority, some NGOs and initiatives collaborate with the state to proceed with their work.

What makes the state credible or not to face a disaster or its population is its legitimacy. The entity that the government decided to attribute the responsibility to is the Lebanese Army. The Lebanese Army is still one of the public institutions trusted by the majority of the state. Therefore, the collaboration with the Lebanese Army is two-faced. Some collaborate with the Lebanese Army, considering that it is the only reliable state institution and others regard the Lebanese Army as a separate entity from the state. The choice to give the managerial task to the Lebanese Army can be justified by trying to gain the citizens' trust and NGOs and initiatives on the ground. Even though the Lebanese Army managed the distribution of the respondents to the blast between zones, their managerial skills weren't adequate for the situation.

Furthermore, the population doesn't see the ability to face such a disaster in their state. Therefore, individual initiatives took the lead in the relief work. The lack of trust from the NGOs and people on the ground in the state makes collaboration difficult. NGOs see themselves as capable of facing everything without referring to the state.

c. Lack of humanitarian expertise.

Even though the Lebanese government enabled many disasters management projects throughout the year, the implementations of these projects remained unfinished. The Lebanese Army, in charge of the response to the blast, received several critics regarding its lack of expertise in the humanitarian field. Its role was always to protect and secure the sovereignty of the state and the security of its citizens. The Beirut port explosion tested the part of the Army in, on the one hand, managing the non-state actors responding to the blast and, on the other hand, his ability to deal with a humanitarian crisis. Since the Lebanese Army usually works straightforwardly and the attitude of its members is serious, non-state actors reproached their attitude and criticized the way they were managing. However, assuming that this is not the field of expertise of the Lebanese Army, some respondents say that their presence was a learning process and that they developed with time. However, even the Lebanese Army, in their part in distributing resources, couldn't continue due to the lack of donations.

Nevertheless, the knowledge of the NGOs on the ground regarding facing a humanitarian crisis and how to deal with beneficiaries corroborates the ability of the non-profit sector to act in these times. In such a big disaster, the action of one particular NGO or initiative isn't enough. The chaos resulting from the blast required intertwined work between the non-state actors combined and the state.

**2. *Local community between collaboration and parallel state.***

a. A chaotic yet promising response

After the blast, NGOs and Initiatives' proliferation created a rapid response yet chaotic to the damages. The NGOs and Initiatives were partly responsible for removing

debris, helping the affected population, ensuring shelter and psychosocial support, and rebuilding Beirut, which is the relief work. As a limitation to their response, many NGOs and initiatives mentioned duplication. Duplication is due to their impulsive response yet not being organized initially. The nature of NGOs in Lebanon, especially the most prominent NGOs, is to focus on their beneficiaries and help a higher number of people. However, the big ampler of the damages and the Lebanese Army's intervention in distributing the zones put the competitive spirit of NGOs aside. The chaotic response is due to the lack of preparedness and planning. Planning the answer is related to the experience of the NGO and its expertise. The high number of NGOs and initiatives established after the explosion says a lot regarding the planning of the response. According to their self-assessment, big established NGOs had a basis for their response, which was more favorable. For instance, NGOs set since the end of the civil war and responded to the Israeli war of 2006, the Syrian refugees' crisis, involved in previous rehabilitation projects and integrated into previous disaster responses were more aware of how to act than the new established NGOs.

Nevertheless, the response to the Beirut port explosion emphasizes the Lebanese community's nature. Known for its heterogeneous society and sectarian behaviors, Lebanese put their differences aside and, hand in hand, helped in the response, whether through individual initiative or by volunteering in an NGO. This readiness to volunteer reminds all the phases that Lebanon relied on the non-profit sector and non-state actors instead of its state to act first. Since the end of the civil war and the accumulation of Lebanon's budget deficit, NGOs have filled the state's gap to the extent that the population refers to them first before asking for services from the state. This culture of

volunteering expanded regrouping people from all sects and regions in a weak state and making a difference on the ground.

b. NGOs: a parallel state?

As mentioned above, NGOs and initiatives didn't wait for the state, and they intervened. Although NGOs and Initiatives had to collaborate with the Lebanese Army and the Beirut municipal to have circulars and approvals on their zones of work, some NGOs remained reluctant to cooperate with the state and preferred to bypass the state. NGOs and Initiatives created their networks and collaborations focusing on sharing resources and referring donations to the targeted population, the work assigned for the Lebanese Army to do.

Collaborations between NGOs were based on developing networks. Some NGOs and initiatives created a platform for the data assessment and divided the beneficiaries according to NGOs' sources and field of intervention. However, they didn't continue to the end; each worked independently. Collaboration between NGOs and initiatives revealed the experience of the well-established NGOs. Initiatives assisted NGOs in their response, and many of the respondents mentioned each other as main collaborators. The power of networking in the answer is to widen the intervention circle and focus on the target population. Small initiatives needed assistance because of the lack of expertise, time, and resources to invest.

Nevertheless, this organization remains an added value to the response. Many of the work initially needed reparation because of rapid and number-oriented intervention. NGOs focused on their zones and presented better work when organized on the ground.

The late organization on the ground slowed down the response. Building trust between NGOs and initiatives was new yet essential to creating these networks.

Even though NGOs created their networks and organized their work on the ground, and some refused to collaborate with the state, the state wasn't absent entirely, and at the end of the day, NGOs had to coordinate somehow with state institutions. NGOs do not constitute a parallel state, yet their trust and collaboration with the state need to be enhanced. Both Government and Local community efforts are required to face a disaster in a weak State like Lebanon. When NGOs and initiatives were trying to create their networks, the search for a leader was the primary constraint. What NGO will be leading the network? The state established a collaboration framework by nominating the Lebanese Army and appointing the Forward Emergency Room. Respondents from old established organizations denied being able to respond to such a disaster without cooperating with the state. In the end, Lebanon is a weak state with a rich culture of volunteering in its society. This parallelism highlights the importance of inter-organizational relationship to respond to a crisis.

For both State and non-state actors, the limitation to their response is their lack of preparedness to face massive disasters.

### ***3. Preparedness for a disaster on the government agenda***

The gap witnessed between the role of State and NGOs and between NGOs and initiatives responding emphasize their lack of experience and preparedness for a disaster. Networking, the biggest asset to any disaster response, caused deceleration in the relief and response to the blast. Getting to know NGOs and initiatives and building these connections, and the acceptance to collaborate with the forward emergency room was

time-consuming. The Hyogo Framework mentioned establishing a National Committee for Disaster Risk Reduction to help coordinate national and multinational sectors. However, the work on implementing this provision was not done since networking started from zero for the majority, aside from the connections developed by some respondents before the blast.

The response to the Beirut port explosion proved that early relations between organizations and the state were essential.

Furthermore, the lack of preparedness and seriousness to face a disaster from the government proved the need to enhance this topic on the government agenda. Nor the human resources nor the materiel resources were ready to face such a disaster. The lack of awareness about facing disasters makes the intervention on the ground harder and creates some clashes. The impulsive response of volunteers and NGOs when danger was still serious, accompanied by the Beirut municipalities members trying to control and stop volunteers from being in zones of risk, created clashes. This is due to the lack of awareness about the importance of cooperation between different actors instead of playing solo and the lack of understanding regarding how to act during a crisis.

Interorganizational relationships reflect the balance in the role of both state actors and non-state actors in a weak state. In contrast, the state needs the assistance of NGOs and other non-state actors to fulfill its lack of resources. In parallel, the non-state actors need an organizational entity, a leader, to help the organization. Therefore, the main target population and end remains the people and rebuilding what is destroyed.

## **B. Recommendations**

The discussion and analysis of the research findings generated a series of recommendations to further develop the disaster managing process in Lebanon.

### ***1. Maintain the platforms created during the response by NGOs.***

Platforms created by NGOs and initiatives were not sustainable. Few weeks after the response many parallel networks were created to organize the work and services provided to affected population. In parallel, NGOs revendicated leadership and managerial role from the state after the explosion. The lack of resources of the state necessitates the help of non-governmental organizations and initiatives to fill the gap and assist people. Furthermore, there is no specific number of registered NGOs within the state. To ensure its control over the sector and to sustain the efforts made during the explosion, these platforms created by the NGOs and initiatives on the ground should be combined within one platform in which NGOs provide their missions and field of intervention. In this way, whenever a disaster happen the concerned entities are directly contacted. This platform should be managed by a state entity, the Ministry of Social Affairs or the Disaster Risk Reduction Unit when established, to organize upcoming responses to crisis. Therefore, state and NGOs efforts are intertwined and there is both implication of NGOs and initiatives and the state in a response.

### ***2. Organize trainings and workshops for state and non-state actors regarding Disaster Management.***

As deduced from the study, what lack the response is the knowledge of acting in a humanitarian field. The Lebanese army, nominated by the state to represent it, is one entity that must be involved un these training to enhance their expertise in responding and



acting in a humanitarian crisis. Therefore, organizing trainings and workshops regarding disaster management aims to develop the preparedness of the population to face other disaster by benefiting from foreign expertise in the field. In addition to develop courses on disaster management which is a field that is not prominent in schools and universities in Lebanon. This course aims at raising a knowledgeable generation and public servants, raising the interest of people in engaging in this field and train probable policy maker enabling them to raise disaster management policies on the government's agenda.

The course can be divided as the following: introduction to disaster management, practical example of role in the different phases of facing a disaster and finally advocacy and working on policymaking.

### ***3. Establish the disaster risk reduction entity and develop its role***

Lebanon engaged and signed several projects and framework such as the Hyogo Framework, Sendai Framework, and other conventions. The reasons behind the lack of implementation of this engagement are political crisis, economic factors, etc. The disaster risk reduction entity should be established in parallel to the implementation of provisions in place. Furthermore, what is needed is to develop and attribute a role for this entity so it can represent the state during preparedness and response phase of a disaster. Moreover, this entity should be established with less bureaucratic procedure to access services. What divided NGOs and the state is the bureaucratic process to access information, services which is a burden in time of disasters and crisis. This entity should facilitate the rapid response to a disaster.

#### ***4. Focus on civic engagement***

The number of NGOs is high in a small country as Lebanon. Creating an NGO in Lebanon is not complicated. In the last decade, Lebanon witnessed an erosion in the number of NGOs established. Some share the same missions and field of expertise. Since the state is relying on volunteers to assist NGOs and people, it is important to focus on enhancing this culture on volunteering not only during a disaster to avoid the slow response. This can be done via emphasizing the importance of civic engagement in schools, universities, workplaces. The aim is not only to create NGOs but to engage in already established NGOs and develop their work on the ground.

#### ***5. Engage the private sector in disaster management.***

One main limitation for the work of state or NGOs is the lack of resources and funds. State and NGOs end up waiting for help from the international community and diaspora to send funds and assist the work. When there are no funds, NGOs stop their services. In the last decade, enterprises and big companies initiated corporate social responsibility department in their workplace. Under the work on developing civic engagement, companies should work on creating network with the non-profit sector not only during a crisis but throughout the year through the department. This helps in building a network and in investing in the right place facilitating the response when a crisis occurs.

#### ***6. The need for a sustainable interorganizational relationships***

In the response to the explosion, many, as mentioned in the study, refused to collaborate with the state even with the Lebanese army. Therefore, collaboration between NGOs and initiatives were created during the response. Networks were developed, NGOs met each other's and worked with each other's. These connections should be maintained

by engaging in common project all over the year and introducing themselves to the widest population. NGOs should not wait for a crisis to work with each other's but should develop their connections as a preparedness for times in need.

## APPENDIX I

### **Recruitment script**

This script was used when contacting the organizations/ individuals for the purpose of scheduling an appointment to conduct the interview for the topic under research.

Hello,

My name is Tracy Sakr. I am a Graduate student at the American University of Beirut, Public Administration Program. As part of my Thesis dissertation, I am conducting a research about the role of local community in response to the Beirut port explosion. My research question concerns the role of interorganizational relationship in response to the blast and how can it be effective? Through my research, I found that your organization/ you are involved in the the response to the blast. I am contacting to schedule an appointment for an interview. The interview will be 25 to 30 minutes long. Your participation is entirely voluntary and no personally identifying information will be collected.

If you are interested in taking part of my study, I can send you the consent form. And please let me know your availabilities for the interview?

In case they are not interested: Thank you for your time. If you have any questions later, you may reach me by email at [tes03@aub.edu.lb](mailto:tes03@aub.edu.lb) or by phone at 79 10 87 08. If you know someone who would be interested in the study, please provide me with their contact information.

Thank you and have a good day

## APPENDIX II

### Interview questions

- What services did your organization provide to affected people after the Beirut blast? When did you intervene (directly after the disaster or not)?
- Why did you intervene? Did you change your mission? How did people perceive your intervention?
- Did your organization engage in any form of collaboration with government and/or other non-profit organization?
- Did you put a certain plan? What are the limitations that you faced? What you think would have helped you in better response?
- Was your organization involved in a previous disaster relief?
- What do you think was the role of the state? Do you think we have disaster management policy? How do you perceive the state? The response of the state?
- What was the role of local communities in response to Beirut Explosion? (What strategies did they use? Had they any plan? Or their response was impulsive?)
- How do you assess coordination between NGOs in Lebanon in the response to a disaster?
- What type of volunteering did the Beirut blast introduce and did it promote the culture of volunteering in Lebanon?
- Was local community prepared to respond to this type of disaster?  
How can interorganizational relationship be more effective in disaster response in Lebanon? What advice if other disaster happens? How should we act, be prepared?

## APPENDIX III

### List of Respondents

No. of Respondent	Basic Interview Details
1	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, March 19, 2021
2	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, March 15, 2021
3	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, March 29, 2021
4	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, March 31, 2021
5	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, March 25, 2021
6	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, March 16, 2021
7	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, April 7, 2021
8	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, March 25, 2021
9	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, March 17, 2021
10	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, March 19, 2021
11	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, March 25, 2021
12	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, March 21, 2021
13	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, March 17, 2021
14	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting,, March 17, 2021
15	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting,, March 24, 2021
16	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, April 8, 2021
17	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, March 25, 2021
18	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, April 26, 2021
19	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, April 20, 2021
20	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, April 21, 2021
21	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, April 7 , 2021

22	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, March 17, 2021
23	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, March 29, 2021
24	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, March 29, 2021
25	Interviewed by researcher, audio recording, Zoom meeting, April 22, 2021

## APPENDIX IV

### **Consent to participate in an Online Research Study**

**This notice is for an AUB-IRB Approved Research Study**

**for Dr. Tania Haddad at AUB.**

**\*It is not an Official Message from AUB\***

**You are invited to participate in a research study entitled Corruption, nepotism and failed state: responding to Beirut explosion conducted by Dr. Tania Haddad, Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the American University of Beirut. The conduct of this study will adhere to the IRB approved protocol.**

***The IRB approved method for approaching subjects is interviewing. The purpose of the study is*** two-fold: the first is to broaden the literature on the public sector corruption and mismanagement that leads to disaster and the second is to analyze the role of nonprofit associations in post-disaster management in light of a failed state. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your expertise in the field and could provide me with valuable input in relation to the topic of my study.

Please read the information below and feel free to ask any questions that you may have. This research is mainly about is to learn about disaster prevention and response in light of a failed state You are invited to give information that will be a valuable contribution to this research.

#### PROCEDURES

**This message invites you to:**

**1. Read the consent document and consider whether you want to be involved in the study.**

**And to note:**

- ***Participation is completely voluntary.***
- ***Completing the interview will take around 20 minutes.***
- ***Only the data you provide in the interview will be collected and analyzed.***

***The research team will not have access to your name or contact details.***

- ***The results of the interview will be published in a peer-reviewed journal articles and conference presentations and article/thesis/project report will be available in printed form and electronically from***



## **AUB Libraries**

- **The inclusion and exclusion criteria.**

### POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

**You will not receive payment for participation in this study.**

**The results of the study will** fill the gap in literature about disaster prevention and response in light of a failed state Also, this study will serve as a reference for future studies around this matter in the region

### POTENTIAL RISKS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR SOCIETY

Your participation in this study does not involve any physical risk or emotional risk to you beyond the risks of daily life.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

**The collected data will remain confidential and anonymous. Records will be monitored and may be audited by the IRB while assuring confidentiality.**

### PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

**If you voluntarily consent to take part in this study, you can change your mind and withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.**

**Refusal to participate or withdrawal from the study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and neither will it affect their relationship with their organization and AUB/AUBMC.**

### QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY

If you have any questions about the study, can contact Dr. Tania Haddad at: 01-350000 ext 4517 or [th18@aub.edu.lb](mailto:th18@aub.edu.lb)

### CONCERNS OR QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS

If you have concerns about the study or questions about your rights as a participant h, you can contact the **AUB IRB Office**: Social & Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board 01-374374 ext: 5445 or [irb@aub.edu.lb](mailto:irb@aub.edu.lb).

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