

# **Ensuring Accountability in Reconstruction and Reform Efforts in Lebanon**

Key Informant Interviews  
Findings Report  
June 2022

**Leila Dagher, Ph.D.,  
Principal Investigator  
Ld08@aub.edu.lb  
American University of Beirut**

**Please cite as:**

Dagher, L., Tabsh G., Sidani, O., Abi Younes, O. (2022). "Ensuring Accountability in Reconstruction and Reform Efforts in Lebanon: Key Informant Interviews Report of Findings."

**Leila Dagher**

American University of Beirut

Department of Economics

Email: [ld08@aub.edu.lb](mailto:ld08@aub.edu.lb)

**Ghina Tabsh**

American University of Beirut

Department of Economics

Email: [ghinatabsh@gmail.com](mailto:ghinatabsh@gmail.com)

**Ola Sidani**

American University of Beirut

Faculty of Health Sciences

Email: [os12@aub.edu.lb](mailto:os12@aub.edu.lb)

**Oussama Abi Younes**

American University of Beirut

Department of Economics

Email: [oa42@aub.edu.lb](mailto:oa42@aub.edu.lb)

**Disclaimer:** The views and opinions expressed herein should be attributed to the authors and not to the American University of Beirut.

# Contents

<b>I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>3</b>
A.	Developing the KII Guide.....	3
B.	Determining the Target Sample.....	3
C.	Data Collection Process .....	3
D.	Data Cleaning and Analysis.....	4
<b>III.</b>	<b>MAIN FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
A.	Relevance and Effectiveness .....	6
B.	Efficiency.....	9
C.	Accountability .....	10
D.	Transparency.....	11
E.	Strengthening Social Cohesion and Conflict Prevention .....	11
F.	Impact and Sustainability .....	12
<b>IV.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>13</b>
A.	Challenges.....	13
B.	Suggestions and Recommendations .....	14
<b>V.</b>	<b>APPENDIX A .....</b>	<b>15</b>
A.	Semi Structured Interview- KII Guide.....	15
1.	General Information.....	15
2.	Relevance and Effectiveness .....	15
3.	Efficiency.....	15
4.	Accountability .....	16
5.	Transparency.....	16
6.	Strengthening Social Cohesion and Conflict Prevention .....	16
7.	Impact and Sustainability .....	17
8.	Challenges and Adaptable Management.....	17

## I. INTRODUCTION

A powerful explosion at the Beirut Port on August 4, 2020, left Lebanon, already facing an unrelenting torrent of crises, with a serious humanitarian crisis. The explosion claimed more than 200 lives, more than 6500 injured, and left over 300,000 Lebanese homeless.<sup>1</sup> Based on the Beirut Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment conducted in August 2020, through a joint initiative of the World Bank Group (WBG), in cooperation with the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU), it was estimated that damages ranged between \$3.8 and \$4.6 billion USD and losses ranged between \$2.9 and \$3.5 billion USD.

In response to the disaster, international and regional actors have joined efforts to assist Lebanon, sending medical food donations and rescue teams to Beirut to tend to urgently needed relief. On August 9, 2020, an international support conference pledged almost \$298 million in immediate relief aid and the EU set its mapping system to support Lebanon to assess the damage and plan for reconstruction. Recognizing the endemic corruption and mismanagement as core factors leading to the blast, international actors have called for strong transparency and accountability reforms for the Lebanese government and state institutions to regain the trust of its people and supporting countries. In addition, due to the major discontent of the Lebanese people towards their government, many Lebanese are demanding that money and aid in the form of food, medical care and housing be channeled only through trusted local organizations.

Several recent reports and documentaries have questioned the transparency and accountability of international assistance related to the Port of Beirut (PoB) explosion. There are claims that millions of dollars have been misused or wasted to corruption. In order to fill this information gap, the American University of Beirut (AUB)<sup>2</sup> conducted a data collection exercise that included (1) field surveys<sup>3</sup> of 250 aid beneficiaries in the PoB area, and (2) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with 25 experts in the field. This report presents preliminary findings from the KII sessions, which were carried out as part of the project led by AUB and the Lebanese Transparency Association (LTA) and funded by Transparency International: "Ensuring Accountability in Reconstruction and Reform Efforts in Lebanon (EARREL)."

The project aims to ensure greater accountability and transparency of humanitarian aid and reconstructions efforts, particularly for those most affected by the Beirut port explosion. It will do so by better equipping local civil society and journalist networks in their roles as watchdogs, by supporting state actors to improve government reforms and manage crisis in transparency, and by equipping citizens to monitor and report corruption, particularly in areas of Beirut most affected by the explosion.

---

<sup>1</sup> Al-Hajj, S., Dhaini, H. R., Mondello, S., Kaafarani, H., Kobeissy, F., & DePalma, R. G. (2021). Beirut Ammonium Nitrate Blast: Analysis, Review, and Recommendations. *Frontiers in public health*, 9, 657996.

<sup>2</sup> The AUB project team is composed of: Dr. Leila Dagher, Dr. Ghina Tabsh, Ola Sidani, and Oussama Abi Younes.

<sup>3</sup> Findings from field surveys are presented in a separate report.

In the next phase of the project, the team will triangulate and contextualize the data collected via different methods to conduct an in-depth analysis of the data. The final report will subsequently present further examination of the aid process in the aftermath of the PoB explosion, and the tools best suited to strengthen and sustain the fight against fraud, waste, and abuse of international aid.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This section describes the methodology that was developed and implemented during the KII stage of the project, including: (a) the KII guide and IRB approval; (b) the sampling strategy; (c) the data collection process including the challenges and limitations; and (d) the data cleaning process.

### A. Developing the KII Guide

The package submitted to the Institutional Research Board at AUB on November 20, 2021, included the IRB application, the consent script, the email invitation script, and the KII guide (see Appendix A). The guide was developed by the AUB team to facilitate the gathering of the desired information from a representative sample of key informant interviewees. The informants are individuals who have had an intervention role in aid disbursement in the port of Beirut area. An extensive literature review conducted by the team informed the design of the data collection tools, in terms of themes and specific questions. The goal of the KIIs was to solicit in-depth information about the aid process from experts who have first-hand knowledge about the topic. The KIIs were designed to be conducted in a semi-structured format, whereby the facilitator explains the research questions, the goal of the project, and a list of specific questions to initiate a discussion with the interviewee. After several rounds of revisions, the IRB approval was granted on February 16, 2022.

### B. Determining the Target Sample

The team compiled a list of over 60 potential experts to interview, out of which 25 individuals were actually interviewed in this first round of KIIs. A second round is planned for August-September 2022. In the selection process, the team prioritized diversity and representativeness, to gain a more holistic picture about the aid process. Consequently, the 25 informants came from diverse backgrounds and different capacities, including the Beirut Municipality Council, the Lebanese Army, Embassies, UN agencies, World Bank, International NGOs, Local NGOs, Microfinance Institutions, Aid Alliances, and Research Institutions. The names (and all identifying information) of all the interviewees shall remain anonymous and undisclosed in the report as per AUB IRB rules.

### C. Data Collection Process

The AUB research team emailed invitations to participate in the KIIs to all 60 initially identified key informants. This was followed-up by calls to schedule the interview. Recruitment faced some challenges as the target participants were drained by the number of interviews/surveys they have been invited to participate in post-explosion, on top of very long working hours in many cases. Through an extensive process of snowballing and referrals, a total of 71 contacts were contacted by the end of the process, of which the first 25 to respond were selected. At first, the AUB team had planned to hold the interviews

in groups of 5, however it proved quite difficult to find common time slots among the participants. As such, the team employed different modalities to adapt to the availability of the interviewees.

Only 1 round of 5 group KII was conducted, after which the team shifted to holding individual interviews. The majority of the interviews were held face-to-face, online interviews were only conducted for individuals who were abroad or during national holidays. All in all, the interview method was quite diversified; online, face-to-face in a reserved meeting room at Citea Hotel, or in the interviewee's office. The interview session typically lasted between 45 and 75 minutes in which the facilitator asked informants a series of customized questions (see Appendix A), but left the discussion to flow freely. Most importantly, all 25 interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees. Data collection was carried out between the months of March and April 2022. We effectively conducted 25 semi-structured interviews; 13 women (52%) and 12 men (48%).

#### **D. Data Cleaning and Analysis**

All interviews were recorded and stored on a shared drive. The recordings were then transcribed with the help of NVIVO if the whole interview was conducted in English, or otherwise manually transcribed. The transcripts were then reviewed by one of the team members and finally validated by the enumerator, to ensure the quality and accuracy of the information.

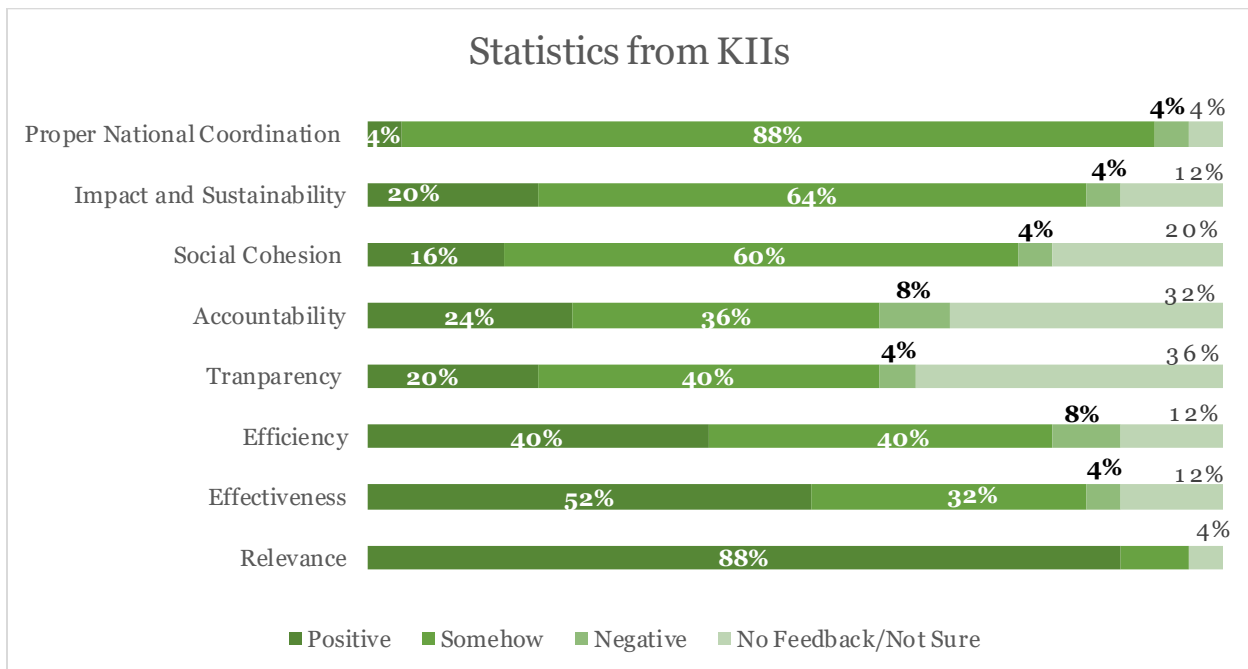
As for the data analysis and report writing, the content analysis approach is used. Using content analysis, the team was able to quantify and analyze the presence, meanings, and relationships of specific words, themes, or concepts.

### III. MAIN FINDINGS

In this section we provide a summary of the collective input from all 25 interviewees segregated by themed categories: relevance and effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, transparency, social cohesion and conflict prevention, and impact and sustainability. We also summarize the interviewees’ thoughts about the national coordination process, challenges faced and adaptive management in response to new information and changes in context.

Figure 1 provides some general statistics extracted from the interviews. In aggregate figures, the respondents rated almost all categories as somewhat acceptable, and that further improvements are needed in order to attain better results except for relevance. Around 88% of the respondents evaluated the relevance of the aid intervention as positive, which obtained the best evaluation among all six categories. 52% of the respondents assessed the effectiveness as good, while 38% considered that more efforts are needed. The other categories were rated as follows: efficiency (40% good, 40% somewhat, 8% bad and 12% not sure), transparency (20% good, 40% somewhat, 4% bad and 36% not sure), accountability (24% good, 36% somewhat, 8% bad and 32% not sure), social cohesion (16% good, 60% somewhat, 4% bad and 20% not sure), impact and sustainability (20% good, 64% somewhat, 4% bad and 12% not sure). As for the existence of appropriate coordination at the national level (4% good, 88% somewhat, 4% bad and 4% not sure), the majority concur that there is a need for improvement.

**Figure 1: General statistics by category**





## A. Relevance and Effectiveness

### Describe the aid process following the PoB Explosion (the type of aid given).

Immediately after the blast, the majority of the respondents indicated that their NGOs/associations called for an urgent emergency response meeting to set a quick plan for intervention. The main players in the aid process were the private sector, individuals, neighborhoods, NGOs, INGOs, international donors such as UN agencies, World Bank, Embassies, microfinance enterprises, the Lebanese Red Cross, in addition to the Lebanese Army. The municipalities had a very shy contribution, and they indicated the bureaucratic process is very crippling, so they diverted the aid donation they received to UN Habitat. The government's role was not visible at least by any of the 25 key informant people that we interviewed nor by the 258 beneficiaries that we surveyed.

The speed of the response varied based on the form of aid that each entity can provide. For instance, the medical and food responses were the fastest, followed by shelter, then came cash, coupons, WASH/hygiene kits, in-kind donations, psychosocial support and then renovation responses. Aid disbursement can be studied over three phases; first phase is the immediate response (right after the blast), phase two is the intermediate response based on a quick needs assessment via surveys, phase three is the longer-term response based on a more planned type of assessment.

In phase one, many volunteers not only limited to NGOs but also private citizens, neighbors, friends rushed to move the injured on the streets to hospitals/clinics/medical centers inside Beirut district and outside. At this stage, the humanitarian aid as an immediate response to the disaster focused on saving lives and relieving suffering. People from different nationalities/religions/neighborhood rescued each other on the spot. The red cross had the most professional team in the field to move the injured but the numbers of the injured was enormous so many other entities sent volunteers with basic instructions (though with no medical background or training) to support those in pain or in need for help. For instance, a man was walking in Mar Elias when the explosion occurred, and the whole store glass shattered over him, leaving him on the side of the road bleeding and unconscious. He was awakened by a guy on a motorcycle who moved him to the nearest hospital. In parallel, people were trying to locate their missing family members via individual initiatives and WhatsApp groups.

In addition, in phase 1, comfort food was also being provided by several aid providers. Food supply included hot meals, sandwiches and drinking water. There is no doubt that the food support was very necessary especially in this phase, however there was an over-supply according to the interviewees. What is even more painful during this phase is that citizens, household, and businesses had to sleep on the doorsteps to protect their assets and belongings from theft. The only national body in the field was the Lebanese Army who mainly secured the explosion area in the port, yet there were no security measures to protect the affected alleys, the houses, or businesses.

In phase two, aid providers started to organize their staff and set plans for assessments and started acting accordingly. In this phase, all types of aid were provided. Medical and food responses were the fastest, followed by shelter, then came cash, coupons, WASH/hygiene kits, in-kind donations,

psychosocial support and then renovation responses. Renovation aid varied from basics such as temporarily fixing the door/window to complete renovation. As expected, heritage buildings were given a lot of attention from national and international NGOs. In fact, heritage buildings received more attention and funding than households or businesses. As a result, the percentage of the heritage buildings reconstructed by far exceeded the percentage of houses and businesses that received reconstruction aid.

Phase three is still ongoing and mainly provides for reconstruction and social and psychological support. Throughout the aid process and until the present, there has been several incidents of work duplication whether in terms of needs assessment, or in terms of aid support, and lately in terms of aid evaluation. Unfortunately, the community suffers from survey and interview fatigue, and this included beneficiaries and key informants.

Furthermore, many interviewees reported having been told by the beneficiaries that they have filled several surveys but did not receive any support whatsoever.

#### Describe the aid process during PoB Blast (how was the aid channeled).

Almost all the aid was channeled directly through the aid players that we mentioned before, and not via the government. The respondents indicated that the lack of trust in the government, and the high corruption level are considered as the two main reasons for not involving the government. In addition, the government did not play a visible active role in pain alleviation during the Port of Beirut Blast and had no coordination role either. The Lebanese government has a crisis management plan, yet it was never put into effect in terms of planning, training, or execution.

#### Describe the aid process during PoB Blast (how were the beneficiaries determined).

Each aid provider had a different modality of identifying beneficiaries depending on the area of intervention, time of intervention and on the type of aid.

The NGOs who already operated centers in the affected areas found it easier to identify and reach out to beneficiaries. In many cases, victims turned up at these centers that are well known in the area and have the community's trust. However, those who have no presence in the areas of intervention had to put more effort to build a mobile visible center and to make themselves known to potential beneficiaries.

Other dynamics also played a role in the approach to identify beneficiaries. For instance, in phase 1 for provision of medical and food support, beneficiaries were identified on the field and were approached to be offered help. Furthermore, aid providers resorted to one or more of the following approaches:

- establishing quick response corners to be visible for anyone in need for help in the affected areas,
- setting up hotlines to respond to the beneficiaries' needs,

- creating WhatsApp groups for outreach,
- starting own lists of beneficiaries and snow-balling the reach out via word-of-mouth,
- using the needs assessments to build a database in order to support victims.

Interviewees were aware of several initiatives of referrals between the aid providers mainly between the NGOs or the INGOs.

#### Describe the aid process during PoB explosion (any collaborations).

The interviewees stressed on the absence of any proper coordination mechanism. During the aid disbursement process and as the need emerged, some aid providers coordinated among themselves to refer beneficiaries who needed support in services they do not provide. However, all coordination initiatives were done on an individual level or between small alliances among NGOs that share the same vision. Other types of coordination processes emerged such as the one by OCHA and the Lebanon Reform, Recovery & Reconstruction Framework (3RF) that was designed as a collaborative process based on the participation of the government, civil society, the private sector as well as development partners.

The key interviewees in this round, indicated that those coordination efforts didn't lead to actionable plans. The army also tried to assist in the coordination process especially in organizing the reconstruction efforts by dividing the affected areas into six zones (K, O, L, M, N, P) and assigning areas in those zones to different NGOs.

A major drawback to the absence of a national crisis management team and the absence of a national coordination unit was the emergence of numerous NGOs that were visible in the field yet had no experience in dealing with disasters. As a result, many of them conducted assessments and then disappeared; some set up hotlines but never replied or the numbers were disconnected. No doubt, this reflected negatively on the reputation of NGOs, not to mention the confusion. Many beneficiaries were not sure who to trust or who to talk to. The excessive number of NGOs created a general sense of chaos.

#### With respect to renovation-related aid, were there any measures/criteria taken to ensure that the property was inhabited or if there were any MoUs put in place between CSOs and owners to protect the rights of the tenants for example?

All the interviewed aid providers who supported with renovation projects followed measures/criteria manuals that allowed them to identify eligible beneficiaries. Nonetheless, the criteria varied widely from one aid provider to another; in many cases it was based on the size of renovation and on the needed budget. In addition, some aid providers had criteria lists from donors to comply with.

Renovation included households, businesses, and heritage structures. The interviewees indicated that MoUs or agreements were signed with the beneficiaries, most of those agreements bind the beneficiaries to receive aid from the provider they signed with and by the end of the construction, they signed a

completion of work form. Moreover, it has been noted that many beneficiaries were aware that so many NGOs are offering aid and waited for the best offer.

The bright side of the story is that most of the international donors requested from the implementing partners/NGOs a local construction firm, preferably based in the affected area. This condition was meant to economically support the businesses in the area as well. So aside from the direct benefit to the beneficiaries, the local contractors also benefitted from the aid process and overall, this generated income for many families.

In contrast, one interviewee mentioned that some NGOs provided fake lists and documents of completed constructions. NGOs who engaged in this type of fraud fixed only a few of the selected houses/buildings/businesses, while having received funds for many more. Another type of fraud was providing overvalued invoices by the contractors, by cheating on the quality or quantity used. The NGOs approved those invoices because they had a limited time to spend the budget. Therefore, such cases negatively impacted the effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency of the aid disbursement process.

On a different note, the key informant interviewees who were involved in aid renovation were asked if the renovation had negative side effects on the beneficiaries. Some answered that the scope of renovation that they conducted did not by any means improve the value of the property, but rather made it fit to live in. Others, who were also supporting with legal issues regarding rent disputes, mentioned that the aid intervention managed to help avoid legal issues. Others who were working on heritage buildings, noticed that some assets were already purchased from the original owner and hence it is inevitable that the beneficiaries were asked to leave the building. There were different scenarios encountered, but clearly the issue of old rent contracts needs to be resolved irrespective of the aid intervention.

Overall, when asked if this crisis has set the grounds for a coordination mechanism, the answer was no. If another crisis takes place, the aid providers have developed their own crisis management plans based on the blast intervention, but at the national coordination level the same type of chaos will unfortunately be witnessed again.

## **B. Efficiency**

### Is the action adequately monitored by implementing partners and other key stakeholders?

Monitoring the aid disbursement process varied from one donor to another. Some relied solely on the reporting done by the implementing partners. Others did thorough field visits in addition to the desk reporting, while some did selective field visits in addition to the reporting. All the respondents in this round of interviews indicated that they have their own reporting systems and in addition to that they complied with the donor's reporting criteria.

In the perception of the experts, an aid provider is considered to be honest and credible when all verification documents and reporting information including reconstruction pictures, beneficiaries' lists, invoices, contractors' lists, supplies, inventories, performance indicator tracking sheets, and more are available and well communicated with the donors.

#### Do you have any feedback and complaints response mechanism?

Not all aid providers have feedback and/or complaint mechanisms. For those who do, it is accessible through their websites, but none of the interviewees mentioned that it was used by Port of Beirut explosion beneficiaries. Some aid providers conducted follow-up visits with their beneficiaries that allowed them to extend additional help to those in need either themselves or by referring them to others who can.

#### How long (on average) did the beneficiaries have to wait to receive the required aid?

There was a large discrepancy regarding the duration between requesting the aid and receiving it, especially with different aid providers. The discrepancy depends on the type of aid interventions. For example, medication, food, WASH, shelter were rather quick, within the same week of the blast. Others such as cash, coupons, in-kind and reconstruction took much longer. Therefore, the duration ranged from immediate to very long.

In sum, the existence of aid duplication, the fact that some beneficiaries asked for aid and never received it, the existence of several fraud cases (see section above on renovation aid) and the lack of proper coordination affected the level of efficiency considerably. All interviewees agreed that things could have been more efficient had there been a crisis management plan, a shared database, and a proper coordination mechanism. However, without the aid intervention that took place during the blast, nothing would have been done and the situation could have been much worse.

### **C. Accountability**

#### How was the privacy of beneficiaries respected when receiving the aid and during communications?

All interviewees confirmed that the lists of beneficiaries were not shared unless there is a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) with a referral partner or the donors. Some interviewees mentioned that the Lebanese Army requested the lists of beneficiaries from them to coordinate the aid, while other NGOs stated that they were never asked to share any beneficiaries' lists. At least one of the interviewees, was prohibited by the donor (OCHA) from sharing any beneficiaries' lists with the Lebanese Army.

#### Do you still communicate with the beneficiaries? If yes, for what reason?

Many NGOs are still in contact with their beneficiaries either because they have initiated a trust relationship with them, or to offer further support especially in terms of psychological support. Some renovation projects are also still ongoing; hence the aid providers are still in touch with the beneficiaries.

## **D. Transparency**

### Do you follow a clear disbursement process, traceability, and publishing?

With regards to traceability, interviewees indicated that internally each aid provider is able to trace the aid 'follow the money' through the transaction chain from donor to crises-affected people. The same applies to many international donors, who have sophisticated and detailed monitoring systems. Yet, other aid providers, some embassies for example, limited the follow up to the stage of the local implementing partners, and not to the end beneficiary. They select their local partners after rigorous vetting and mostly worked with reputable NGOs.

Many aid providers have already published the aid intervention-related facts, including on-site pictures and reports on their website, while maintaining the beneficiaries' confidentiality. Others, (around 50% of the interviewed NGOs) have compiled all the required reporting material but shared them only with the donor and not with the public since they were no strict requirements to do so or because it is still work-in-progress.

## **E. Social Cohesion and Conflict Prevention**

The answers concerning the effect of the aid intervention on strengthening the social cohesion and in conflict prevention varied considerably between one interviewee and another. However, there was consensus that during phase 1 (immediate response) there was evidence of solidarity and spontaneous collective action to provide relief among the Lebanese, foreigners, and immigrants. As time progressed, and in view of the lack of transparency and the perception of unfairness and inequity of the aid process, amid a severe financial crisis, new tensions were created leading to new types of gaps among the neighborhoods and areas. It is important to note here, that the impressions about the impact of PoB explosion on social cohesion cannot be separated from the impact of the economic and financial crisis that has placed many Lebanese people under a lot of pressure, not to mention that many had already lost their jobs due to the crisis. So, the blast came on top of existing hardships, with which people were barely coping.

### ▪ Social Relationships

To some extent, the aid intervention intensified the quality and quantity of social networks/collaborations among aid givers. However, these initiatives were limited to small initiatives/alliances and collaborations. Unfortunately, this round of interviews shows symptoms of worsened trust in government institutions. This crisis revealed a complete absence of the role of the government and revealed conflicting perceptions on the aid disbursement process by the Lebanese

Army. There is no evidence that the aid intervention improved the levels of acceptance of diversity or tolerance for others.

- **Connectedness**

When asked whether the aid intervention strengthened the feeling of belonging to the place (village, state, country, etc.) or to a group (gender, ethnic, religious, linguistic, etc.), none of the interviewees had a clear-cut answer. Had the explosion taken place during normal times, and not during a crisis, the answer could have been yes. However, given the situation, the explosion and the aid intervention did not play a major connectedness role.

- **Orientation Towards the Common Good**

Without any doubt, and as explained earlier, the aid intervention enhanced the Lebanese ability to be socially responsible mainly during the immediate response phase. Some aid providers and contractors acted in the best interest of the society by trying to maximize the support and attain good quality material (in-kind, kits, food, reconstruction material) at very good prices to serve as many people in need as possible. In contrast, quite a few (specifically contractors) took advantage of the situation to maximize their own profits at the expense of the beneficiaries.

- **Equality**

How to address the issue of equality, equity, or fairness is controversial. Many aid players served the society in all honesty trying to be as fair and equitable as possible, while others did not. On one hand, the assistance provided made a huge difference in the lives of many. On the other hand, it made others feel left out especially that many Lebanese find it difficult to ask for help. As a result, many were left out only because aid providers did not reach out to them. Others asked for help and did not receive it.

## **F. Impact and Sustainability**

Many beneficiaries are still receiving aid and the NGOs are extending their projects to support the people in the explosion areas. Yet, it is important to highlight the fact that the need for extended support is not independent from the economic crisis. Therefore, the aid intervention activities are still in progress particularly for cash assistance, psychological support, and reconstruction.

Additionally, many NGOs have focused on entire neighborhoods so as to revive the whole area and help enterprises go back to work and become self-sustaining businesses.

## IV. CONCLUSION

This report presents preliminary findings from the Key Informant Interviews conducted by AUB as part of the project led by AUB and the Lebanese Transparency Association (LTA) and funded by Transparency International: "Ensuring Accountability in Reconstruction and Reform Efforts in Lebanon (EARREL)." The project aims to ensure greater accountability and transparency of humanitarian aid and reconstruction efforts, particularly for those most affected by the Beirut port explosion.

For this purpose, the assessment carried out had two main objectives: (i) validating the findings of the field surveys, and (ii) providing key information about the ongoing aid process.

The interviews with 25 key informants that the AUB research team conducted with representatives from NGOs, UN, World Bank, Embassies, Coalitions, decision makers and others, for the most part corroborated the findings from the survey. In spite of the efforts by NGOs, the private sector (individual initiatives) and the Lebanese Army to alleviate the pain of Port of Beirut Blast victims, the results show major weaknesses in the areas of aid relevance, efficiency, coordination and fairness. The interviewees reported that many beneficiaries received food donations that were not really needed or in amounts that exceeded their needs, there was duplication of work essentially between aid provided by the NGOs and the Lebanese Army. Also, some beneficiaries indicated that the aid was not enough especially those receiving cash and renovation. However, it is worth noting that the blast and the post-blast phase, during which the aid intervention was taking place, was a period of severe economic deterioration and rapid inflation. Therefore, the insufficiency of aid could be due to the excruciating economic, financial and political crisis, the country is suffering from.

### A. Challenges

Aid providers faced several challenges while supporting the community.

- Lack of national coordination.
- Absence of a care-giving government.
- Absence of a national risk management plan
- Difficulty gaining the trust of the community.
- Working in areas they don't have offices in.
- Working in an environment of complete chaos.
- Some NGOs did not have the expertise nor the capacity to manage large funds.
- Lack of training on how to act in a crisis.
- Too many aid providers and lack of professionalism.
- Competing with aid providers that took this intervention as an opportunity to market themselves.



## B. Suggestions and Recommendations

- There is a serious need to launch a national crisis management unit, whose task is to contain crises and to coordinate any aid intervention process, including but not limited to beneficiaries, aid providers and donors' databases to avoid aid duplication and achieve better efficiency.
- There is a need to create a platform of vetted and credible aid providers, types of aids and hotlines accessible by the public.
- Aid providers need an incentive to collaborate and to abide by the humanitarian needs; hence, it is very important to create this incentivizing system. This highlights the importance of an aid tracker that allows all aid providers as well as the public to follow up on aid to build informed decisions, to gain trust in the aid process, and to achieve transparency.

This report presents the initial findings from the 25 KII sessions. It primarily aims at describing the post-disaster humanitarian aid distribution process, while identifying its main weaknesses. This preliminary report will be followed by a more detailed final report containing analysis of qualitative and quantitative data collected through surveys and interviews. The final report will present a more comprehensive analysis of the aid distribution process and make some policy recommendations.

## V. APPENDIX A

### A. Semi Structured Interview- KII Guide

#### 1. General Information

Interviewee's Name.....

Interviewee's position.....

Name of the NGO/INGO or the International Organization.....

Type of Aid Provided.....

#### 2. Relevance and Effectiveness

Describe the aid process during Beirut Blast (the type of aid given).  
.....

Describe the aid process during Beirut Blast (how where the beneficiaries determined).  
.....

Describe the aid process during Beirut Blast (any collaborations).  
.....

Describe the aid process during Beirut Blast (how was the aid channeled).  
.....

With respect to renovation related aid, were there any measures/criteria taken to ensure that the property was inhabited or if there were any MoUs put in place between CSOs and owners to protect the rights of the tenants for example?  
.....

#### 3. Efficiency

Is the action adequately monitored by implementing partners, and other key stakeholders?  
.....

Any backward coordination mechanism for follow up?  
.....

Do you have any feedback and complaints response mechanism?  
.....

How long (on average) did the beneficiaries have to wait to receive the required aid?  
.....

Do you have and apply formal guidelines and procedures to assist in identifying, monitoring, and dealing with potential conflicts of interest with potential suppliers/procurement agents? If so, how does the IP proceed in cases of conflict of interest?  
.....

What are these procedures/ guidelines, etc? A brief.....

#### 4. Accountability

How was the privacy of beneficiaries respected when receiving the aid and during communications?  
.....

Do you still communicate with the beneficiaries? If yes, for what reason?  
.....

#### 5. Transparency

Do you follow a clear disbursement process?  
.....

Traceability: To what extent were you able to trace the aid (being able to 'follow the money' through the transaction chain from donor to crises-affected people)?  
.....

Do you publish aid intervention related data/reports regularly on your website?  
.....

#### 6. Strengthening Social Cohesion and Conflict Prevention

##### ▪ Social Relationships

Do you believe that the aid intervention strengthened the quality and quantity of social networks/collaborations among aid givers?  
.....

Do you believe that the aid intervention strengthened the levels of trust in others and in government institutions/army?  
.....

Do you believe that the aid intervention improved the levels of acceptance of diversity (tolerance of other groups)?  
.....

##### ▪ Connectedness

Do you believe that the aid intervention strengthened the feeling of belonging to the place (village, state, country, etc)?  
.....

Do you believe that the aid intervention strengthened the feeling of belonging to a group (gender, ethnic, religious, linguistic, etc)?  
.....

- Orientation Towards the Common Good

Do you believe that the aid intervention strengthened the Lebanese ability to be socially responsible?

.....

Do you believe that the aid intervention players were acting in the best interests of our society?

.....

- Equality

How well resources and opportunities are distributed (jobs, wealth, social services, justice)?

.....

How included do minority groups and individuals feel (ethnic, religious, handicapped, women) in the overall society.

.....

## **7. Impact and Sustainability**

Are the beneficiaries able to benefit from the received aid till today?

.....

Do the beneficiaries still need aid in relation to the Port of Beirut Explosion recovery?

.....

If the received aid is renovation/construction of a business, ask, did the Appeal contribute to economic recovery of the business?

.....

## **8. Challenges and Adaptable Management**

What challenges did you face and how did your organization overcome them?

.....

What would you do differently?

.....

Any lessons learnt?

.....

Would you like to add anything else?

.....