

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

NON-PROFITS ON THE FRONT LINE TO RECOVER  
BEIRUT: THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN STATE WEAKNESS,  
DISASTER RECOVERY AND PUBLIC TRUST

by  
SARA HASSAN ADNAN AL TAHER

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
to the Department of Political Studies and Public Administration  
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
at the American University of Beirut

Beirut, Lebanon  
April 2023

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

NON-PROFITS ON THE FRONT LINE TO RECOVER BEIRUT:  
THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN STATE WEAKNESS, DISASTER  
RECOVERY AND PUBLIC TRUST

by  
SARA HASSAN ADNAN AL TAHER

Approved by:



---

Dr. Tania Haddad, Assistant Professor  
Political Studies and Public Administration

Advisor

---

Dr. Hiba khodr, Associate Professor  
Political Studies and Public Administration

Member of Committee

---

Dr. Ohannes Geukjian, Associate Professor  
Political Studies and Public Administration

Member of Committee

Date of thesis defense: April 28, 2023

# AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

## THESIS RELEASE FORM

Student Name: Al Taher Sara Hassan  
Last First Middle

I authorize the American University of Beirut, to: (a) reproduce hard or electronic copies of my thesis; (b) include such copies in the archives and digital repositories of the University; and (c) make freely available such copies to third parties for research or educational purposes:

- As of the date of submission
- One year from the date of submission of my thesis.
- Two years from the date of submission of my thesis.
- Three years from the date of submission of my thesis.



Signature

05/05/2023

Date

# ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Sara Hassan Adnan Al Taher

for

Master of Arts

Major: Public Administration

Title: Non-profits on the Front Line to Recover Beirut: The Interplay Between State Weakness, Disaster Recovery and Public Trust

The Beirut explosion of August 4, 2020, was one of the most catastrophic events in Lebanon's recent history, with a death toll of over 200, thousands of injuries, and billions of dollars in damages. The aftermath of the explosion highlighted the weakness of the Lebanese government in responding and recovering from a disaster of that magnitude, leaving non-profit organizations to step in and take the lead. Despite the tireless efforts of many individuals and organizations, the response and recovery process has not been successful, and two years later, the city still struggles to regain its former glory.

This thesis examines how the weakness of the government reflected on the efforts of non-profit organizations to achieve recovery and how this, in turn, affected public trust in these organizations. Our findings reveal that the absence of a clear disaster management plan from the government resulted in minimal intervention and responsibility being shifted to non-profit organizations, which faced significant challenges in operating in an unstable environment without state intervention. However, after analyzing our data, we found that public perception of non-profit organizations was only affected positively after the explosion, and the Lebanese public still relies and trusts these organizations as opposed to the government.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	4
ILLUSTRATIONS.....	7
INTRODUCTION .....	8
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	11
A. Post-disaster Recovery and Reconstruction.....	11
B. The Role of Non-Profit Organizations in Post Disaster Recovery .....	14
C. Public Trust in Governmental Vs. Non-profit Organizations.....	19
D. Conceptual Framework.....	21
BACKGROUND STUDY ON LEBANON .....	25
A. Corruption, Trust and Disaster Management in Lebanon.....	25
B. Resilience in Lebanon:.....	27
C. The august 4 aftermath: .....	29
D. World bank survey:.....	31
1. Trust in various actors: .....	32
2. Confidence in usage and spending of recovery assistance: .....	33
METHODOLOGY .....	35
FINDINGS .....	38
A. Respondents Information:.....	38
B. Views on Non-profit Organizations' versus the Government's Response .....	40
C. Trust in the Non-profit Sector Versus the Government.....	43
D. Views on Recovery .....	45

ANALYSIS .....	47
A. Shortcomings of the response and recovery process: .....	47
B. Public perception and trust: .....	48
CONCLUSION .....	56
APPENDIX .....	59
REFERENCES .....	67

## ILLUSTRATIONS

### Figure

1. Non-profit engagement in post disaster development (Demiroz & hu, 2014)....	18
2. Trust in various actors (World Bank, 2020) .....	32
3. Confidence in spending recovery assistance (World bank, 2020).....	34
4. Location on the 4th of August .....	38
5. Participation in relief efforts .....	39
6. Affected by explosion.....	40
7. Responding to the explosion.....	40
8. Rating non-profit organizations' performance .....	41
9. Rating government performance .....	42
10. Bigger impact.....	42
11. Change in perception .....	43
12. Trust.....	44
13. International aid.....	45
14. Successful recovery .....	45
15. Sector responsible for recovery .....	46

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

When disasters strike, a quick response should be introduced. Countries and organizations usually have preset disaster management plans to follow to face such unfortunate incidents. In other cases, governments are not competent enough and leave their citizens with chaos added to the disaster.

On August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020, two explosions struck the Lebanese city of Beirut, causing severe damage over a 6-mile radius and being felt over a hundred miles away (Wagner & Petras, 2020). Less than a minute was enough for the capital to become covered with debris, chaos, and desperate people running down the streets to save their loved ones or trying to get a grip of life.

The carnage caused by the Beirut blast exceeded expectations, where around 7,000 people were injured and 204 dead. More than 70% of Beirut's buildings were affected, and about 70,000 homes were damaged, leaving around 300,000 people homeless (Disaster Philanthropy, 2020).

This all happened at a time where the local and international community had lost trust and faith in the Lebanese government, and was preceded by the uprising of October 2019, which was fueled by people's mistrust in their government and politicians and the competence of these latter to provide basic needs for the citizens.

The society did not only condemn the state for lack of intervention but also blamed the government and the politicians who did nothing despite being well aware of the danger of explosive materials at the port and, in turn were responsible for the explosion and all the damage and loss it had caused (Hajjar, 2020).



The morning after the incident, volunteers were flooding from all over Lebanon to the affected areas, cleaning the debris, starting to repair homes, and providing food and shelter for those who needed it and trying to locate people who were still missing. These took over the state's responsibility, and were the main actors in responding to people and their needs. Unlike their public counterparts, the processes of these organizations were not hindered by any form of bureaucracy. The state's failure to manage a post disaster response was divided into two pillars: the first being the lack of direct response and its reliance on other players to hold this duty and the other being the hindering of the groundwork through the introduction of bureaucratic requirements. The latter was expressed when the government requested all the organizations to present their official papers to the army to get permit access to damaged areas. The government failed to create coordination and participatory disaster management plans. This failure is conveyed by the public's observation of homeless, displaced and desperate people lacking a helping hand especially after dimming the media's light on this response.

Despite the vast amounts of pledged international aid and donations and the significant number of organizations working on the reconstruction of Beirut, five months later, more than half of the affected area was still destroyed. Many residents claim that they have been visited by organizations to assess the damage but have never returned and that their homes are still not suitable to live in (Sewell & Chehayeb, 2020).

This leads us to our research question: To what extent did state weakness impact the ability of non-profit organizations to achieve recovery from the August 4 explosion, and how did this affect public trust in these organizations?

To evaluate public trust in non-profit organizations following the disaster, a survey was conducted using quantitative data collection methods. The survey aimed to

gain insight into how individuals perceive the non-profit sector and the government's response to the disaster, and to determine if this response has impacted their perceptions of these organizations. The survey was electronically distributed on social media platforms targeting individuals over 18 years of age who were in Lebanon at the time of the explosion.

The thesis is divided into five distinct parts. Starting with a review of relevant literature related to the long-term effects of disaster response on public trust followed by a background study specific to Lebanon. The second part will outline the methodology employed in the research. The third will consist of the main findings of the study, followed by analyzing these findings in detail. Finally, a comprehensive conclusion based on the results and analysis presented in the previous sections.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

To have a better understanding and assessment of the long-term post disaster recovery in Lebanon after the blast and how it changed people's perceptions, the literature will be divided into three sections, (1)the first reviewing literature about post-disaster management and recovery and examining the role of non-profit organizations on long term impact of intervention, (2)the second exploring the concept of trust and reliance on non-profit organizations post-disaster, and the (3)third reviewing the literature about disasters in Lebanon and the role of non-profit organizations. Finally, we will talk about the conceptual framework of the thesis and what our study will be contributing to the literature.

#### **A. Post-disaster Recovery and Reconstruction**

Any country around the world is prone to be struck by a disaster at any point in time, whether man-made or natural and lacking the proper disaster management and recovery plan leaves the government surrounded by chaos and unable to answer to its helpless people's needs.

Primarily, an immediate response needs to be addressed to those affected, by providing them with different types of relief, such as food, shelter or medical care. However, another equally important part of disaster management is what happens after that, which is post-disaster recovery and reconstruction; the main path to return the area affected by disaster back to normal.

Fedryansyah et al (2018); Sofyan et al (2020) outlined the disaster management process phases as follows:

1. Pre-disaster prevention and mitigation,
2. Emergency response to relieve those affected,
3. Post disaster recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation.

To mitigate the losses of life and infrastructure caused by disasters, governments need to have all three steps of disaster management on their agenda and have a clear plan of implementation in case of any unexpected events. Usually, different actors step in besides the government in such incidents and provide necessary aid; such as community-based organizations and international aid organizations.

Looking deeper into post-disaster recovery and reconstruction, Jiuping & Yi (2013) found that this phase could be carried out in three different models:

1. Central government-oriented aid
2. National non-governmental organizations aid
3. International humanitarian aid

According to Cameron (1998) different countries take different approaches on which model to follow depending on their resources and capabilities, and in many times all three approaches appear in different concentrations.

Many studies in the literature show a direct relationship between the level of development of a state and its success in disaster management. Also, the ability of disaster recovery and reconstruction relies heavily on the availability of resources and capital, thus many countries that need more resources rely on international funds and donations with the help of several local and international associations.

Harrald (2006) has identified agility and discipline as critical success factors for disaster response. He also highlighted the importance of establishing a coordinated

networked response to meet required goals and open the way to develop a sustainable plan that completes the relief process and responds to needs on the long as well as the short term.

According to Demiroz and Hu (Demiroz & Hu, 2014) disaster recovery starts right after a disaster happens and could last for years. The success and time frame of the recovery mirror a community's disaster resilience, or in other words, its ability to revert back to its pre-disaster conditions or even better ones to avoid the vulnerability that caused the catastrophe in the first place. The degree of a community's disaster resilience is dependent on two factors: the effectiveness of the disaster recovery and the level of development of the economy (Demiroz & Hu, 2014). To achieve effective disaster recovery and create resilience, collaborations between the public, private and non-profit sector need to be formed through a participatory governance approach with the common goal of effectively managing the disaster and becoming resilient (Demiroz and Hu, 2014).

In The “national disaster recovery framework” concept of resilience is used as a benchmark to assess a community's long-term recovery from disasters. According to the framework successful recovery should achieve the following indicators (FEMA, 2011):

- Successfully overcoming all the impacts of the disaster (physical, emotional, or environmental)
- Re-establishing a social and economic base that earns the trust and confidence of the community members
- Rebuilding and answering to the residents' needs and reducing their vulnerability
- Presenting the community's preparedness and resilience to face the consequences of the disaster

For post disaster recovery to be carried out successfully, different actors have to collaborate together (government, nonprofit organizations and international players) especially if the country is already in a vulnerable condition. The efforts of these actors are important not only to answer to people's needs and rebuild and rehabilitate, but to reinforce their trust which is one of the indicators of successfully reaching disaster resilience.

## **B. The Role of Non-Profit Organizations in Post Disaster Recovery**

The literature on disaster management shows that when unexpected extreme events occur, the state is often unable to react independently without assistance from local and international organizations who play a vital role in disaster response. Initially, non-profit organizations are created to fill the gaps left by the state's negligence, incompetence or lack of resources, making it impossible to fulfill the people's needs. In times of disaster, non-profit organizations step in for the same purpose.

Quoting Simo & Bies (2007 p.125):

“Thrust into or voluntarily stepping up to fill in the gaps in available services because of local, state, and federal administrative failures, nonprofits oftentimes respond to the crisis by forming or engaging in collaborative activities.”

Simo & Bies explain that such collaborative activities come from partnerships, cooperation, and networking between non-profit organizations and the different sectors. (Agranoff and Pattakos 1979; Austin 2000; Simo and Bies 2007)

We can divide the involvement of non-profit organizations in response to disaster into three phases. To begin with, we see volunteers and local community members rushing to help right after a disaster happens. This immediate response comes in the form of individuals trying to save people in their neighborhood and relief organizations

immediately showing up forming search parties. The few days following the crises, people in the affected areas still need a great deal of help, which is when efforts become more organized and cooperative. Non-profit organizations start to form networks and work to provide distressed people with various aid forms such as food, shelter, and medical supply or assistance. And finally, on a longer term, after a catastrophic event has lost its light in the media and eyes of public opinion, the duties of these organizations surely should not come to an end. Disasters have many significant long-term effects, and recovery from them needs a much longer time than the cause of destruction (Todd & Todd,2011)

To successfully carry out a disaster relief plan, non-profit organizations should carry on with long term recovery efforts including but not limited to (FEMA, 2005)

- Providing people in need with the services required
- Collecting funds for rebuilding damaged areas
- Helping in reconstruction
- Assisting people who have lost their jobs due to the event
- Assisting children who have lost their education
- Providing medical care for those who were permanently injured
- Providing mental care
- Setting plans to prevent and respond to other disasters.

While the majority of the literature focuses on the role of NGOs in immediate response and relief in times of disasters, Demiroz and Hu (Jaeger et al. 2007; Murphy 2007; Demiroz & Hu, 2014) magnified their role and importance in post disaster recovery.

As we have seen in the previous section, creating collaborations between the public, private and non-profit sectors is an essential disaster management mechanism. Non-profit organizations are vital factors in those collaborations as they can respond to the needs of the effected community due to their scope of work and their connections with communities in the first place. Due to their connections with the community non-profit organizations are usually more responsive and less rigid, giving people easier access than public or governmental organizations. According to the “National Disaster Recovery Framework” NGOs' role in disaster response should not be limited to providing short-term services such as food, shelter and safety. It should be extended in the long term in providing psychological care to those affected, and participating in reconstruction and rehabilitation services (FEMA, 2011).

Sustaining recovery services on the long-term is harder than the immediate response as efforts need to continue and coordination becomes more complicated in terms of identifying needs, allocating resources and sustaining volunteers (Demiroz & Hu, 2014).

Demiroz and Hu (Jaeger et al. 2007; Murphy 2007; Demiroz & Hu, 2014) argue that non-profit organizations' flexibility, accessibility and responsiveness make them better fit to deliver long-term recovery services (such as helping residents of impacted areas return to their homes) in a timelier manner than the government whose processes could be hindered by bureaucracy.

Moreover, the importance of collaboration increases in the long-term post-disaster recovery. On that note, non-profit organizations leading and coordinating that collaboration is necessary for its success and sustainability. Through organizing efforts, creating networks and collecting information, non-profit organizations can ensure



efficient and effective service delivery and avoid duplication and create fruitful collaboration with the public and private sector for successful long-term disaster recovery.

The importance of networking relationships and collaboration between sectors shows that social capital is a high indicator of the success of post-disaster recovery and non-profit organizations contribute to building social capital. Studies conducted on community-based disaster responses show that the importance of social capital lies in the fact that trust and positive relations between individuals, NGOs and the government create a base for successful response and recovery from disasters (Jaeger et al. 2007; Murphy 2007; Demiroz & Hu, 2014).

When disasters occur in communities with high social capital and trust between organizations of the different sectors, combining recourses for response and post disaster recovery is more easily carried out by organizations.

Finally, besides coordinating collaborative efforts, for NGOs to successfully engage in post-disaster recovery, they must be willing to participate in networks with other organizations and the government and sustain those networks to continue on the long-term.

The figure below presented by Demiroz & Hu that summarizes the factors that contribute to the engagement of non-profit organizations in post-disaster development which leads to community disaster resilience:

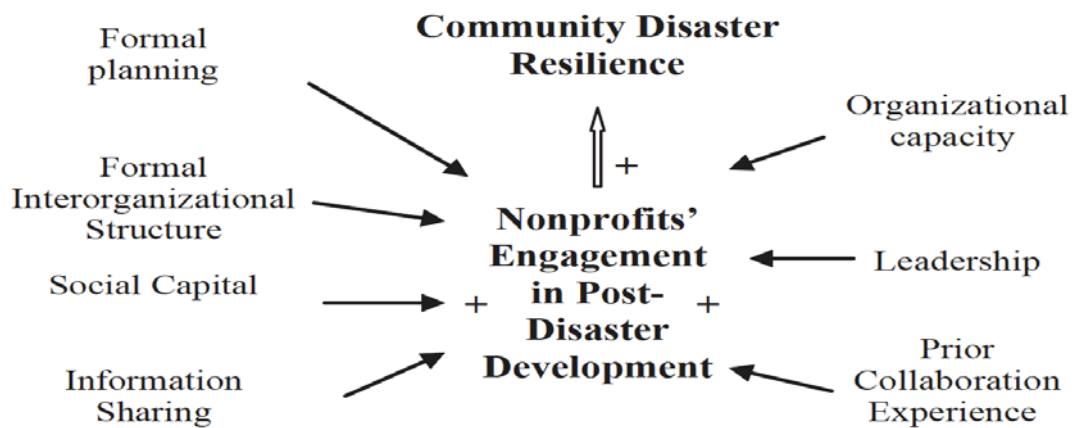


Figure 1: Non-profit engagement in post disaster development (Demiroz & hu, 2014)

According to what the literature has shown, neither governments, nor the non-profit sector can carry out disaster recovery on their own, thus coordination and collaboration between sectors are vital factors in the success of managing a disaster (Bolin & Stanford, 1998; Waugh & Sylves, 2002; Eller, Gerber & Branch 2015).

Eller et. Al (2015) explored the nature of collaboration non-profits participate in during large scale disasters while assessing their capabilities in meeting their goals trying to find a relation between their direct response and their long-term recovery assistance. They conclude that these organizations had a large scope of services provided and a high capacity in meeting goals in parallel to observing the following:

- Extensive coordination and collaboration efforts within the non-profit sector and along other sectors indicating goals accomplishment.
- A clear link between immediate and long-term response that was strongest in terms of coordination and collaboration: the longer-term recovery relies on the degree of engagement in collaboration and efforts of coordination.

The significance of networking and collaboration for non-profit organizations to have a successful and sustainable long-term disaster recovery is mentioned in most of the

literature. What if the state was unwilling or unable to take part in that collaboration? Would that undermine the efforts of non-profit organizations and stand in their way of effectively reaching their goals?

### **C. Public Trust in Governmental Vs. Non-profit Organizations**

By default, the concept of trust is essential for non-profit organizations. They need to be trusted by their donors and beneficiaries to reach their goals and mission. The fact that non-profit organizations do function to help communities and not to generate and distribute profit contributes in developing public trust towards these organizations. However, throughout history some of these organizations have proved to be serving certain people or group interests and such cases of fraud and mismanagement have shaken that inherent trust (Becker, 2018). Thus, non-profit organizations need to follow practices that would enhance public trust in them such as being transparent to show accountability to donors, stakeholders and beneficiaries. Besides being transparent, showing responsiveness is also an important indicator of accountability and in turn an important variable in gaining public trust.

While public trust is clearly needed for an organization to generate funds, it has also shown an effect on the organization's growth and development (Burt, 2014). Apart from fraud or bad management practices, Burger and Owens (2010) suggested that some non-profit organizations could drift away from complete openness and transparency due to an oppressive relationship with the state, this suggestion requires us to dig deeper into how a corrupt state could also push NGOs towards that direction.

In crises, public trust in government and non-profit organizations is essential for them to get donations and support to help the victims. Weng et al. (2015) conducted a study to measure the public trust in governmental and non-profit organizations in terms

of effectiveness delivering aid post-disasters. The results of their study showed a significant negative correlation between corruption and trust. Thus, governments that are perceived to be more corrupt earn less trust and thus less donations. On the other hand, the study showed a weaker association of corruption to non-profit organizations, subsequently NGOs earned a higher public trust. This brings us to the conclusion that when a government is perceived to be corrupt, donors (local or international) and beneficiaries would put a higher trust in non-profit organizations more to administer the aid ensuring an enhanced recovery and relief from the disaster. Whereby, donors and beneficiaries fear government organizations would not allocate the donations to help the victims.

An article by Nguyen (2016) shows a direct link between corruption and disasters by stating that disasters do in fact open a window for corruption. The argument shows that if a government was inherently corrupt, corruption would be facilitated in the event of a disaster. That practice is encouraged by the huge inflow and of donations and aid that the government could reallocate to other matters of higher priority (Nguyen, 2016). That explains why donors and beneficiaries often prefer that all kinds of resources be managed by non-profit organizations when disasters hit the countries with corrupt governments; this process lays the road to a higher transparency in the management and allocation of resources.

Moreover, the amount of “bonding social capital” that is present in a community is also a factor that affects the degree to which community members rely or depend on non-profit organizations for assistance. A study by Rivera indicated that communities with connections between individuals sharing similar backgrounds, nationalities, religious beliefs and educational levels (high bonding social capital) usually present more

reliance on community-based organizations for disaster relief, especially faith-based ones (Rivera, 2018).

Finally, the public might also refer to the non-profit sector and rely on its services more due to its easier accessibility and faster un-bureaucratized processes in contrast to the public sector. These notions create connections within communities and build relationships of trust between beneficiaries and organizations providing these first with the needs their government is failing to meet.

The reviewed literature shows that the degree of corruption in the government and the degree of bonding social capital within a community have a direct effect on the trust and reliance of the community members on non-profit organizations as opposed to the government in times of disasters. What hasn't been explored is how that trust is affected by the long-term results of the efforts done by these organizations.

#### **D. Conceptual Framework**

What the literature presents in terms of methods that lead to impactful long-term recovery is easier said than done in a country like Lebanon. As important as all those factors are, coordination and collaboration were challenging and organizations had to find different ways to cope and provide assistance, identifying these ways is important for understanding the coping mechanisms that non-profits in Lebanon utilized in the absence of state support.

Several conceptual models were presented in the literature to assess the effectiveness the of long-term recovery plans by non-profit organizations.

The national disaster recovery framework sets resilience as a benchmark to evaluate the effectiveness and success of a long-term recovery process. According to the framework,

indicators of resilience are presented by overcoming all the impacts of the disaster, re-establishing a social and economic base that earns the trust of the community members, reducing the members' vulnerability and preparing them to face the consequences of the disaster.

However, in a country like Lebanon, with many other issues that deteriorated the quality of life other than the blast, it is difficult to assume that the type of resilience mentioned in the literature could easily be achieved. Moreover, non-profit organizations were mostly left to achieve that on their own without any guidance or assistance from the state. Thus, the importance of this research within the literature lies in assessing the effectiveness and sustainability of long-term recovery from disaster in a country where all those efforts were carried out by third sector in the absence of state support.

On the other hand, the literature presented state corruption and transparency of non-profit organizations as indicators of public trust. As important as these notions are to measure public trust, taking into consideration the case of a state that had already failed its people and left them to rely on community organizations to assist them urges us to consider other concepts that could lead to public trust in the third sector such as the dormancy of the state.

The contribution of our study to the literature will be focused on assessing long term effects of disaster recovery lead by non- profit organizations that the state that has failed to assist and left them to find ways to create community resilience on their own. To do that we need to understand whether they were able to meet their goals, and in their case, what were the factors that contributed to that or hindered it. Moreover, we will come up with an understanding of how those notions have affected public trust in these organizations.

Through our study we aim to find the foundations on which public trust in the non-profit sector is built, and how the long-term impact of their post-disaster intervention affected that trust.

Thus, the paper will be linking the factors that lead to the success or failure of a long-term disaster recovery in the context of a failed state, to the effect of these long-term results on public trust.

Throughout reviewing the literature, below are the main concepts we will be measuring:

In order to measure public trust in NGOs and its foundations we need to look into the following concepts:

- Transparency of non-profit organizations
- Responsiveness of non-profit organizations
- Corruption of the state
- Dormancy of the state
- Impact of non-profit response to the blast
- The needs of people that have or haven't been fulfilled by non-profits.
- Public perception of the sector before and after the blast.

To measure the long-term effectiveness of the non-profit response to the blast, we need to investigate the following:

- The kinds of aid and services they were providing.
- Whether they were able to fulfill their goals.
- Nonprofit-State relationship throughout response.
- Limitations non-profits faced in responding.
- Strategies they followed to maintain their presence and reach their goals.

Reasons that kept some organizations in the long-term recovery phase while others withdrew



## CHAPTER III

### BACKGROUND STUDY ON LEBANON

#### **A. Corruption, Trust and Disaster Management in Lebanon**

Many factors in the nature of Lebanon make it prone to different kinds of manmade and natural disasters and this has been seen in the recent years. Regardless of the turbulence and the threats, the Lebanese state has not yet created coherent disaster management or mitigation plans that could reduce the effects of such incidents (Haase, 2014).

Despite the country's numerous crises, Lebanon's disaster management capacities remain questionable due to the lack of coordination, collaboration and information sharing. This is mainly caused by some deficiencies within the government such as corruption, nepotism, lack of expertise and bad financial practices (Haase, 2014).

Haase explained that in many incidents these deficiencies in the government left non-profit organizations with no choice but to respond to certain disasters isolated from any kind of support or assistance from the government.

We will briefly explore some of these events below:

The civil war that erupted in Lebanon between 1975 and 1990 was one of the early instances where NGOs proved their capabilities in direct and post disaster responses. That period of time was one of the most important in the development of these organizations and the prominence of their roles (The Lebanese center for political studies 1997; Mehanna 1991; A. Karam 1991; Mehanna 1993; El Husseini et al 2004; ESCWA 2010, Haddad, Haase and Ajamian 2019). After the war ended these more organizations started

forming and their role began to shift in the direction of recovery development and reconstruction as opposed to direct relief (The Lebanese center for Policy studies 1997; Haddad, Haase and Ajamian 2019).

Following the assassination of Prime minister Rafik Al Hariri in 2005 and the Israeli war against Lebanon in 2006 the government again became unable to answer to people's needs and relied on NGOs to provide aid and relief. Their engagement was not limited to immediate relief; they participated in long-term recovery activities such as assisting the displaced, reconstructing damaged areas in the south of Lebanon and providing social assistance. (Haddad, Haase and Ajamian 2019).

Moreover, the huge refugee influx that followed the war in Syria posed a real threat to stability in Lebanon whereby service provision by the state was already weakened even for the nationals. (Boustani, Carpi et al, 2016). The lack of planning and coordination magnified the problem with the increased number of refugees coming in. As a result of the lack of a coordinated response from the state's side, non-profit organizations; mainly international ones like the UNHCR took the lead in responding to the refugee crisis (Boustani, Carpi et al, 2016).

Most recently, non-profit organizations have again showed their importance in sustaining the wellbeing of the Lebanese population when they played a significant role in responding to the COVID pandemic and its consequences.

Non-profit organizations in Lebanon have had a history of responding to people's needs when the state fails to do so. With the consistent turbulence in the country, NGOs have in many instances assumed the role of the state in responding to certain crises leading this research towards the following assumption: Lebanese citizens would naturally put more trust and reliance on non-profit organizations rather than their government. We have

to however bear in mind that the limitations of the government will backfire and hinder the processes of the non-profits and lead to a sense of disappointment and consequently the loss of public trust.

The high degree of corruption and nepotism in the Lebanese state, sometimes results in favoring certain organizations which are connected to politicians over others. This happens through regulations that limit the ability of operation for organizations while easing the way for others who support certain groups. This type of differentiation was portrayed in a post on social media by a recently formed non-profit organization which has maintained its presence in the recovery and reconstruction of Beirut months after the blast expressing concerns about the government's decision in officially prohibiting all charities from distributing aid during the lockdown imposed as a measure to maintain the COVID19 spread in the country. Their concern wasn't in the prohibition itself but rather in the failure of the state to equally impose these measures on the politically affiliated organizations who were distributing food and fuel to families in specific towns (Beitelbaraka, 2021).

## **B. Resilience in Lebanon:**

With the case of Lebanon, the term resilience could be taken in a slightly different direction; according to Mouawad (2017) one of the ways in which resilience is presented in Lebanon is its community's sociality in times of crises and its ability to join forces of self-organization in difficult times. As we have seen previously, many types of crises have affected the turbulent country and presented the state's inability to act, thus through that accumulation of such experience's communities have learned to compromise and respond without expecting any state intervention or assistance.

However, it is important to note that despite the fact this resilience presented by the Lebanese community has led to fully or partially overcoming several hardships it could on the other hand be accountable to the dormancy of the state or its unwillingness to participate in changing the status-quo. (International Crisis Group, 2015)

Finally, Graham (2020) summarized all the hardships that Lebanon has been going through before the blast to argue that the blast was not only the cause of disaster in the country but also the result of it. Graham argued that the term resilience in Lebanon is a scheme by the state to sustain its injustice. Whereby the Lebanese are perceived by the international community as “resilient” just because they have survived such hardships. The argument introduces is that this perception has brought harm to the Lebanese by drifting attention away from the root of their problem, being their leaders and the system, which are the main contributors to disaster and crises.

There is a vast amount of literature on the aftermath of disasters and the role that non-profit organizations play throughout the disaster management plan. Most of the literature highlights the importance of collaboration, forming networks and combining efforts of the three sectors and the public to have a successful long-term recovery from disasters. Other strands on literature also show how corruption of the government hinders disaster recovery and shifts peoples trust towards non-profit organizations to manage disaster recovery.

This thesis evaluates the response of the non-profit organizations to the Beirut blast focusing on the long-term recovery instead of the direct response. We expect to see a shift in the people’s perception in the ability of the state to meet its dues and increasingly rely on the third sector instead; but what remains to be investigated is the sustainability

of this response in the light of a “failed state” and whether the public’s trust in the third sector was affected when tested in that response.

### **C. The august 4 aftermath:**

Almost three years after the explosion, we can see that successful recovery from the disaster was not achieved. Despite the reconstruction of many damaged areas, the inhabitants of these areas are still suffering from a deteriorating quality of life from many different aspects, adding to that the pressures that are coming from the living conditions that have deteriorated for all of Lebanon and its citizens.

We cannot undermine the efforts of many local and international organizations to prevent that from happening, but we also cannot undermine how the failure and corruption of the state have led to getting no results from these efforts.

In her book, “International and Local Actors in Disaster Response: Responding to the Beirut Explosion” Haddad highlights the importance of good governance in successfully managing disasters, and how governments are the party that should be responsible for coordinating the various efforts in responding to disasters. (Haddad, 2022) When the government refrains of this role, the efforts of organizations are highly disrupted and might become much less effective.

Observing the work of many NGOs that have been working on the ground since the explosion and listening to their problems and concerns gives us more elaboration of that idea and a bigger understand of what had been missing and hindering their work. The biggest and most significant limitation that faced these organizations was the lack of coordination and systemic approach with centralized efforts. When such an approach was not introduced by the government, most organizations were left to independently causing

a lot of delays, replication of work, and difficulty in reaching all the beneficiaries and vetting to everyone's needs.

To try and minimize the effects of that problem, some organizations tried to coordinate and collaborate with each other, or some with government related entities. These types of relationships are very important in facilitating the work of these organizations and in maintaining a successful approach to recovery from a disaster.

According to Haddad, the terms coordination and collaboration in disaster response have different definitions; coordination is when organizations work together and share their resources to achieve a common goal. Whereby collaboration is when they form partnerships and work closely together in implementing their operations. (Haddad, 2022).

Many organizations preferred to form such relations with organizations they had previous connections with, making it easier for them to work together. Others were more flexible and open to more diverse relations.

On the other hand, while some organizations were open to working with the state or government related entities, others preferred not to due to several reasons such as: the lack of a disaster management plan, the lack of a clear response set by the government, the lack of their trust in the government, or the lack of the government's involvement and leadership, and finally the absence of response from the local government such as municipalities. (Haddad & Sakr, 2022) These notions have not only reduced the will of organizations to work with the government (assuming the government is open and well equipped to take part in such relations) they have also created an extra burden on organizations that were expected to respond to everyone's needs and handling issues they are sometimes beyond their capabilities and were actually responsibilities of the

government. . These organizations were being held accountable for everyone and were the only ones to blame for any shortcomings even if it wasn't within their scope of work.

#### **D. World bank survey:**

In September 2020, a month after the explosion, the world bank published the results of a survey targeting people in the most affected areas. The survey was aimed at understanding these people's needs and assessing the impact of the blast. The findings of that survey are significant to our study because they identify the most pressing needs of the respondents who were affected by the blast as well as their opinions in the disaster response process. The part of the study concerned with people's opinions of the response uses trust as one of its main measurement tools. We will look more into the results of the study as we will be comparing them to the results of our survey which was conducted a year later in order to find out if public perceptions have changed or remained the same more than a year after the blast given that a year is an adequate amount of time for people to be able to actually assess what has been accomplished in terms of recovery from the disaster.

Despite the similarity in the questions of both surveys, the time frames in which each survey was carried clarifies the significant difference in the purposes of the world bank survey and the survey of this study. The results of the world bank survey provide some guidance on how the recovery management plan should be carried out while the results of our survey provide an assessment of the results and whether it was perceived successful by the people.

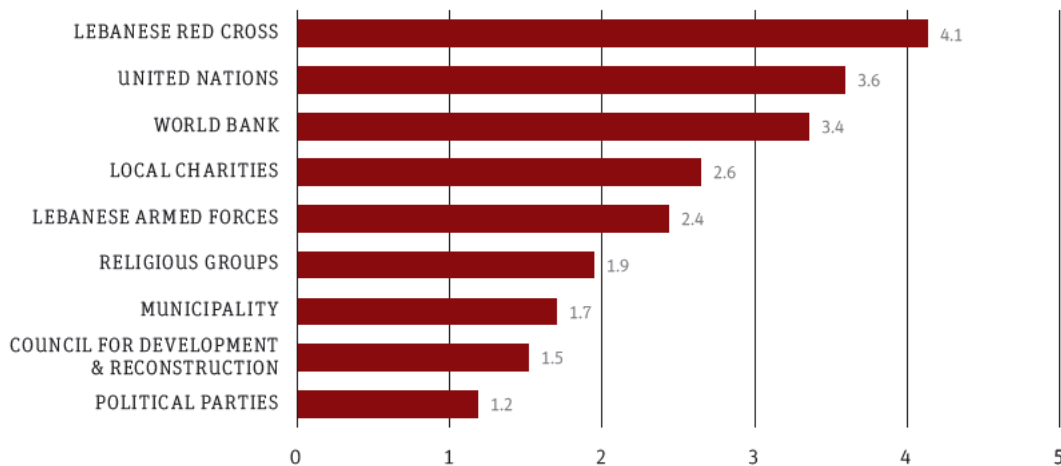
Below we will demonstrate some of the results of the world bank study to later compare them to our results.

**1. Trust in various actors:**

The first question about trust in the world bank survey consisted of listing different actors that were thought to be involved in responding to and dealing with the august 4th explosion. The actors included international organizations such as the world bank and united nations, national organizations (government institutions, non-governmental organizations, religious groups and political parties.

The first important thing we could conclude from the results of the people’s responses to that question was that the Lebanese red cross received the highest votes of trust while political parties received the least. Regarding other actors, trust was given to international organization more than the remaining national ones. However, among the local institutions included, just as political parties received a majority of no trust at all, religious groups also were on that level with people giving them minimal trust. Instead people showed more trust in local charities and the Lebanese armed forces.

The figure below is taken from the world bank study to demonstrate the results more clearly:



Note: Trust was rated on a scale from 1 (no trust at all) to 5 (complete trust).

Figure 2: Trust in various actors (World Bank, 2020)



Another interesting finding from the world bank study was by comparing the variables age and trust in different actors to come up with an understanding of how a respondents' age influenced which of the actors mentioned they placed more trust in. although the red cross received the highest votes of trust among all age groups, it was shown that the youngest age group (18-24) slightly showed more trust than others. This age group also presented a higher level of trust in local charities than the older age groups. Older groups (40 and above) showed more trust in the Lebanese army and international organizations than their younger counterparts. This trend shows that the young generation in Lebanon, has more faith in the local non-governmental sector in Lebanon than the generations that preceded them.

## ***2. Confidence in usage and spending of recovery assistance:***

The second question we will discuss, measures people's confidence that the funds acquired will be spent for recovery. Respondents were asked to rate their levels of confidence in three statements that measure transparency (to be spent in a transparent manner), equality (to assist those most in need) and fairness (to be used fairly) of equality assistance. Respondents to that question generally (regardless of age, gender or any other variable) showed their lack of confidence in all three aspects and less than 10% were confident that the money will be well spent in all aspects. According to the world bank report, the only noticeable difference in age and gender responses was that people aged 30 to 49 years presented the least confidence. This is likely due to the fact that this generation has previously witnessed mismanagement of funds for recovery during the civil war. In contrast the youngest age group (18-24) were the only group slightly more confident than others that money will be well spent.

The figure is below for further understanding:

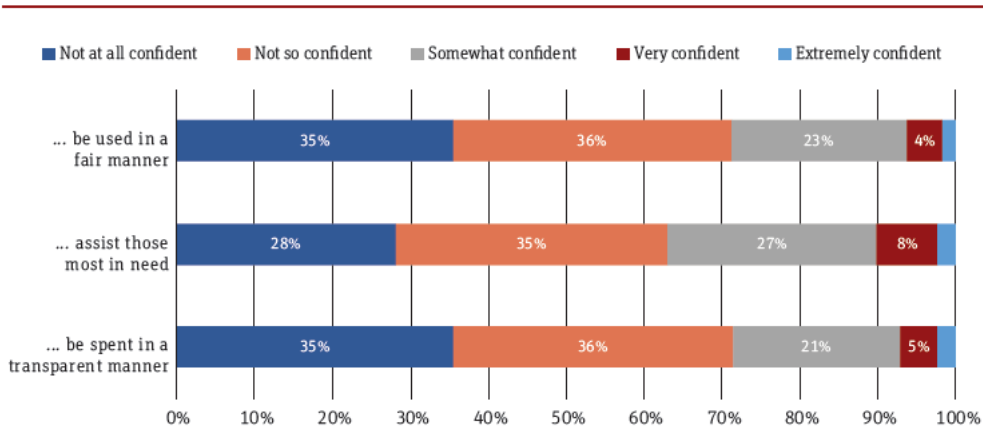


Figure 3: Confidence in spending recovery assistance (World bank, 2020)

Finally, the world bank study has also highlighted an important matter regarding assistance of people who were affected by the blast. Their survey showed that 34% of the respondents who have not registered for assistance do not have adequate information on how to do so, despite their desperate need for assistance. While another 38% who believe they will not receive the support. (World Bank, 2020)

These numbers are alarmingly high and they indicate two significant problems; the first being a fault in management and coordination in finding and reaching out to those in need or being informative on the registration process for them to reach out for assistance. And the second being another outcome of the mistrust and lack of confidence in the system that needs to be reinforced for the success of recovering Lebanon.

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODOLOGY

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the impact of state weakness on the ability of non-profit organizations to achieve recovery from the August 4 explosion, and how this affected public trust in these organizations. To this end, we will assess the extent to which successful recovery has been achieved and its effect on public perception and trust in non-profit organizations.

To achieve our research objectives, we will employ a quantitative data collection methodology by distributing surveys to individuals who were directly or indirectly affected by the explosion. These surveys will provide us with insight into how these individuals were assisted, by whom, and how this experience shaped their trust and perception of non-profit organizations relative to the state.

Surveys are a beneficial component of any research methodology, as they offer a practical and cost-effective way to collect data from a large and diverse pool of respondents. Compared to other methods of data collection, such as interviews or focus groups, surveys are more efficient and can be administered to a larger number of people in a shorter period of time. Quantitative methodology provides researchers with a standardized method of collecting data, which facilitates data collection and analysis. Another benefit of using surveys is that they can be conducted anonymously, allowing respondents to provide honest and candid responses without fear of judgment or bias (Fowler Jr, 2013).

By utilizing surveys, we can gain a better understanding of how non-profit organizations' response to the August 4 explosion in the context of state weakness has

impacted public perception and trust, and draw meaningful conclusions about the relationship between state weakness, non-profit efforts, and public trust.

We began by tailoring a survey to the Lebanese public during the summer of 2021 (a year after the blast) after IRB approval. The survey was intended to get public opinion on organizations' response effectiveness as well as their trust in these organizations. The research was mainly based on the data collected from an online survey conducted on "lime survey" and distributed on social media platforms in order to get a diverse sample of respondents rather than having them all from a certain educational institution or area of residence or age group. Thus, after IRB approval, invitations to complete the survey were distributed on different platforms (all pages and platforms were specific to the Lebanese population) that include different members of the Lebanese society. The survey was a self-completed questionnaire and had to be conducted online due to the covid-19 situation limitations at the time, but that way has proved to be more effective in giving respondents more comfort to give honest answers and express their opinions freely as opposed to administering it face-to-face or on the phone.

The survey distribution process began during the month of July, 2021 following the IRB approval to admins of different social media platforms who are based in Lebanon or have Lebanese followers with the hope that these followers who fit the criteria would respond to the survey. Since all these pages had big audiences, the aim was to have a large number of responses in a short period of time. However, the response rate was much lower than expected and we had to find more ways to encourage people to participate. Some of the survey questions were open ended and mandatory so we removed that mandate as an encouragement for people who skipped the survey because they did not have the time or motivation to write down their opinions and only preferred answering

multiple choice questions. After a few months we were able to retrieve 66 complete responses which was lower than the number we were hoping for but considered an acceptable sample. The results of the survey distributed among the people affected by the blast were analyzed through SPSS 26.0. The data was arranged and collected and the frequencies of the answered questions were computed to analyze the results accordingly.

As for the survey content, it was divided into two parts; the first a general questionnaire about their whereabouts during the blast and whether they were affected and/or participated in any type of response. The second part consisted of questions asking people's opinions in the approaches taken by the government and by non-profit organizations and which did they deem more trustworthy. These questions satisfied two bigger questions asked throughout the research:

- a. How people perceived non-profit organizations and the state
- b. If people thought long term recovery from the blast was achieved by either.

It was important to get the opinions of Lebanese public on that issue because they were the ones affected and their assessment was more important for the success of the response than any theoretical one. For that reason, the purpose of the survey being distributed to a random sample of the Lebanese public was to get the insight of different people who were affected and how that changed their perception.

# CHAPTER V

## FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of the survey conducted to investigate public trust in the aftermath of the Beirut blast. The survey aimed to understand the level of trust that the Lebanese public has in the non-profit sector versus the state following the explosion. The survey was distributed electronically, and a total of 66 responses were collected from individuals across various regions of Lebanon. The following section presents a comprehensive analysis of the survey findings.

### A. Respondents Information:

47% of the participants were in Beirut on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August, 25.8% of them were in Mount Lebanon. This indicates that more than 70% of the participants were close to the blast and are directly or indirectly affected by the blast.



Figure 4: Location on the 4th of August

In terms of participation in relief efforts that followed the explosion, 40.9% of the respondents didn't participate on any of the relief activities. This might indicate that these people might have been directly affected by the blast and in need for assistance. 25.8% of the respondents have volunteered individually in the affected areas, and 21.2% have donated only. Only 10.6% of the respondents volunteered as a member of an organization that was responding to the disaster.

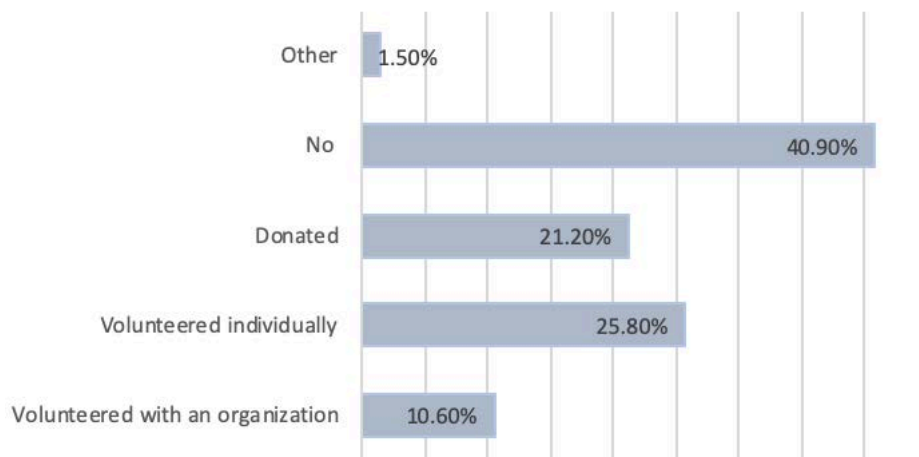


Figure 5: Participation in relief efforts

A majority of 68.2% of the respondents were directly affected by Beirut explosion while 31.8% of the total weren't directly affected.

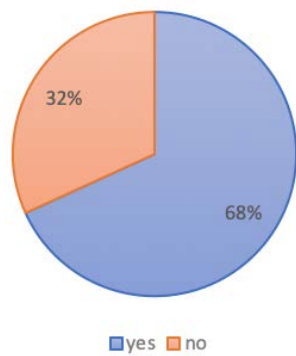


Figure 6: Affected by explosion

**B. Views on Non-profit Organizations’ versus the Government’s Response**

The respondents were clearly in favor of the non-profit organizations’ response to the blast as opposed to that of the government. 80.3% of the respondents believed non-profit organizations were more responsive and helpful to people affected by the blast and played a bigger role in responding to the disaster. While 12.1% believe the same for the government.

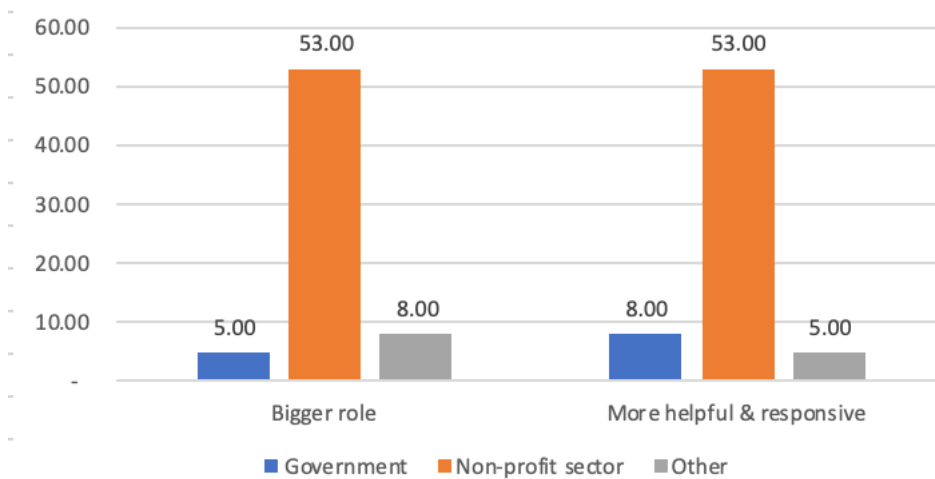


Figure 7: Responding to the explosion



When asked to rate the performance of non-profit organizations in terms of responding to people’s needs, these organizations received moderate to high rates on their performance before the august 4 explosions. Whereby the ratings were higher for performance after the 4<sup>th</sup> of august, which shows that people’s perception of these organizations’ performance has changed positively after their response to the explosion.

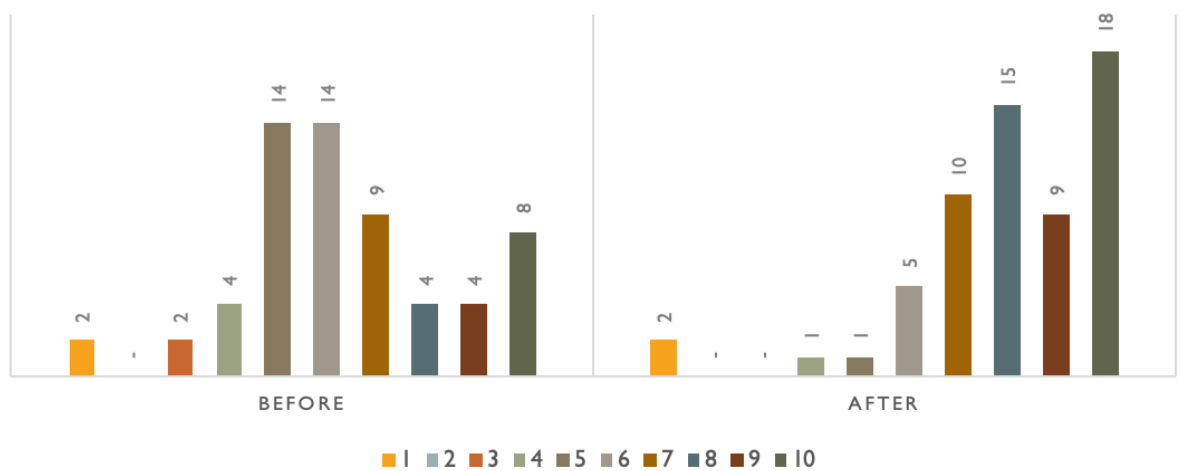


Figure 8: Rating non-profit organizations' performance

As for rating government performance, we can see that the respondents gave low ratings to government performance before as well as after the blast. The ratings after the blast were even lower than those before.

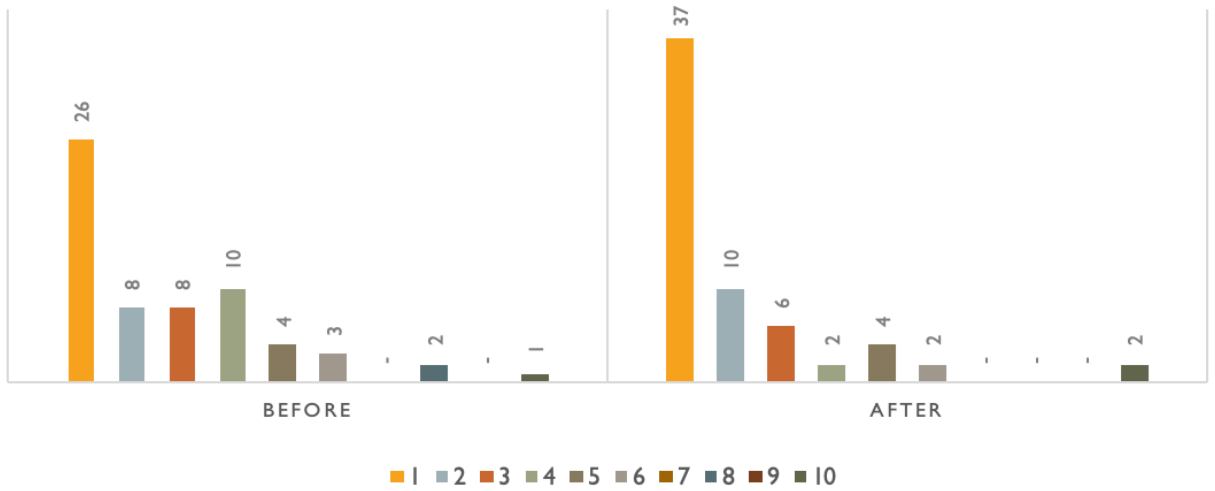


Figure 9: Rating government performance

Finally, a majority of 92.4% of the respondents believed that non-profit organizations have had a bigger impact in responding to the disaster than the government.

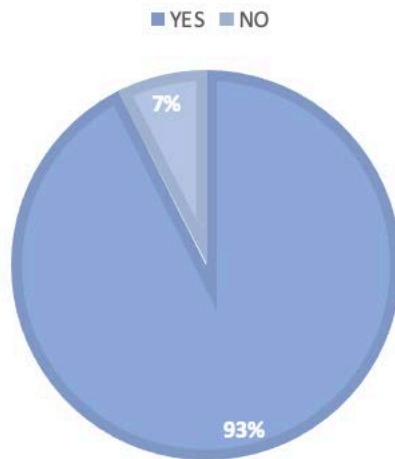


Figure 10: Bigger impact

### C. Trust in the Non-profit Sector Versus the Government

The next section presents questions aimed at evaluating public perception and trust in the non-profit sector versus the government.

As seen in the chart below, the majority of the respondent's perceptions of non-profit organizations has changed after August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020. In the questions that follow, we aim to find whether that change was positive or negative.

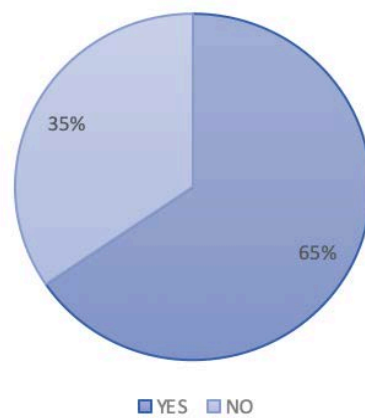


Figure 11: Change in perception

Respondents who answered that their perceptions have changed, were given a follow up question asking whether this change caused increased or decreased trust in non-profit organizations. As displayed by the chart below, a significant majority of these respondents said they now trust non-profit organizations more than they did. Which makes us understand that their perceptions towards non-profit organizations changed positively.

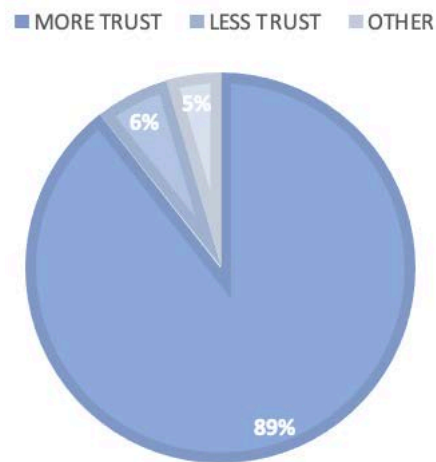


Figure 12: Trust

Respondents who have less trust mostly justified that by the fact that these organizations have not been able to fulfill their promises in terms of recovering from the disaster.

Finally, respondents showed their increased trust in non-profit organizations again when they were asked who they think should handle international aid for the recovery and reconstruction of Beirut. Almost 82% of the respondents believed that it should be handled exclusively by the non-profit sector. With less than 14% trusting the government with that responsibility.



Figure 13: International aid

#### D. Views on Recovery

The final part of the survey questions aimed at understanding people’s views on the recovery of Beirut from the disaster and whether they believe it has been achieved. To begin with, less than 22% of the respondents believe that recovery has been achieved while 78.3% of the respondents do not believe that Beirut has recovered from the disaster.

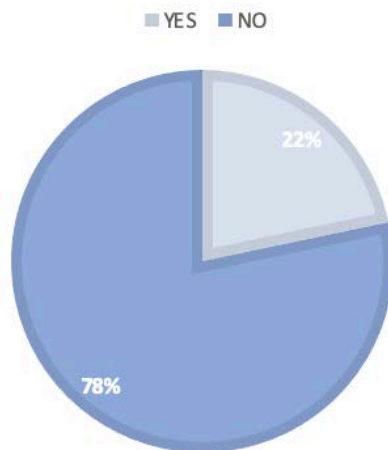


Figure 14: Successful recovery

Respondents were then asked an open-ended question about what they think has slowed down the success of the recovery process. 45.4% of the responses were not valid. However, the rest of the responses all revolved around factors such as corruption, the government, the politicians and the economic crisis.

When asked what they think is still missing to achieve successful recovery, most respondents thought people in affected areas still need psychological and financial assistance.

Finally, when asked who they think should be responsible for recovering Beirut from such a disaster, a majority of 63.6% of the respondents believed it should be the government's responsibility. This shows that although people have seen the non-profit sector playing the bigger part in that process, they do know that it is a responsibility that the government should be held accountable for. However, this responsibility was assumed by the non-profit sector to fill a gap that has been left by the government yet again.



Figure 15: Sector responsible for recovery

## CHAPTER VI

### ANALYSIS

#### **A. Shortcomings of the response and recovery process:**

Although more than half of the respondents to our survey have participated in response efforts to the blast, only 10% were part of an official organization working on a systematic response. Whereby the rest of the 50% either donated money or volunteered individually. Here we witness the first fault in the approach to the response to such a disaster. The fact that there was not a unified platform or anything similar to join the efforts of organizations as well as individuals who wished to provide their help could have led to the loss of many efforts who otherwise could have been accurately distributed to prevent a large cluster of volunteers in a certain area and their shortage in another. These volunteers were not guided by any body and thus their efforts were not organized properly.

This individual example represents the core problem in Lebanon's response to the explosion which is the lack of coordination and collaboration. If there has been any kind of approach to organize the efforts of these volunteers, the direct response to the blast would have been more efficient and successful. This type of problem caused many complaints by organizations and beneficiaries whereby many beneficiaries were reached by multiple organizations while others were completely disregarded.

The results of the world bank survey, have also demonstrated another face to that problem, whereby 34% of the respondents who have not registered for assistance have

not done so due to their lack of information and instructions on how to do that despite their desperate needs for different kinds of assistance.

We can look at all of these results as different consequences to the same problem. First being the lack of a systematic response to the blast due to the fact that Lebanon did not have any kind of disaster management plans previously designed for such uncalculated events. After the event took place, the Lebanese government did not put any effort to create a plan that allowed to join the efforts of all the parties involved to organize them and make the best out of them. Each party was working independently slowing down and reducing the effectiveness of their efforts regardless of their otherwise intentions.

This is the core issue of everything else we will be discussing in this study. We can come to the main diagnosis of all the events that have been taking place since the explosion and understand the main symptom that has caused them, that being the lack of coordination and collaboration between the government and different parties involved in the response and recovery phase.

## **B. Public perception and trust:**

To begin with, 92.4% of respondents thought that non-profit organizations have had a bigger impact in responding to people's needs in Lebanon, regardless of the Beirut explosion. This shows that the foundation of people's trust in these organizations has been built due to them answering to their needs even before the disaster. They have been playing the role of the government in many different incidents and fulfilling people's needs that have to be otherwise attended by their governments.



In regards to their roles after the explosion, another majority although slightly smaller percentage (80.3%) still answered that nonprofit organizations played a bigger role in responding to the needs of people affected by the blast. While only 7.6% believed that the government has played that role. This showed that a vast majority of the respondents who were affected by the blast were completely aided by non-profit organizations and saw no state intervention. Another 80.3 percent also described non-profit organizations as more responsive and helpful, indicating that these respondents might have tried to seek help from government bodies and turned to non-profit organizations when they did not receive what they have asked for.

None of the respondents presented any form of joined efforts from both sides in their answers showing that they did not see any form such a unity between the governments and these organizations.

In order to find a trend in how people's perception could have changed in government and non-profit organizations after the blast, they were asked to rate their performance before and after August 4, 2020.

We saw that before the explosion, respondent's perception of non-profit organizations could be described as moderate. As the majority of respondents rated their performance 5 or 6 out of 10 while only a 12.1% gave them a rate of 10. We saw a change in that trend through the ratings after the 4<sup>th</sup> of august as a majority of 27.3% gave a rate of 10 and a 22.7% rated 8 as opposed to 6.15% before the blast. This shows us that people's perception of these organizations' performance has indeed changed positively after witnessing their role in responding to the August 4 disaster.

With regards to the perception in government performance, the majority of 39.4% had already rated 1 out of 10 before the blast and that majority only became larger (56.1) after

the blast. Showing that people already had their doubts in government performance before the blast and these doubts were only confirmed after they were struck by such a disaster.

The main question we want to answer is whether people's perception in these organizations has changed, and how this affected their trust. 56% of respondent stated that their perception in non-profit organization has indeed changed after the blast and a significant majority of those (89.4%) said they now trust them more than they previously did.

To reinforce that sense of trust, 81.8% of respondents think that international aid to recover Beirut from the disaster should be handled by non-profit organizations.

We could relate this question with the one in the world bank survey; where respondents were asked to rate their confidence that these funds will be efficiently spent. The majority of the responses to that question did not show so much confidence. However, we can come up with two assumptions from these results:

1. This lack of confidence might be a result of these respondents assuming that the aid will be handled by government bodies; confirming our result which shows that people trust non-profit organizations more with these funds.
2. The younger age group of respondents in the world bank survey (under 40) showed slightly higher confidence than their older counterparts. Since the respondents to our survey consist of that younger age group; we can see that this younger generation has more confidence in non-profit organizations, a point we will be discussing with more depth later in this chapter.

The world bank survey also looked into the variable of trust in different actors who were involved in responding to the Beirut explosion. The actors included

international organizations as well as national ones including governmental and non-governmental organizations.

We can see that they have had results similar to ours, the Lebanese red cross received the majority of respondents' trust while political parties received the least. Following the Lebanese Red Cross, the survey results show that people instilled their trust in international organizations rather than national ones, whereby the United Nations and World Bank received more votes than local charities (although they come in second place in terms of local organizations listed).

Another extremely important issue that was highlighted in the world bank survey is finding the reasons behind those who were in need for assistance and yet have not registered for it. The results showing those reasons were quiet concerning and they all are both contributors and at the same time consequences of the faults in the approach to responding to a disaster.

Respondents who had not registered for any assistance, despite their need for it did that for the following reasons:

1. They do not believe they will receive the support
2. They do not know how to register
3. They have low confidence in the effectiveness of assistance (they did not trust government authorities and believed that aid given by NGOs was randomly distributed without organization or checking that it is being handed to the people that are actually in need).

These reasons express the core problem of the whole approach and can also lead us to its solutions. We can now understand what has reduced the effectiveness in

responding to people's needs or what prevented people who were in need for assistance from actually receiving it.

Our observation of participating organizations can also contribute to our understanding of these problems. Whereby organizations were facing difficulties in reaching the right beneficiaries since there was a lot of overlapping and people who have received help from multiple organizations while others received none at all since the organizations could not have known about them or were not able to reach them.

Using this information, we can now clearly understand what was missing in the approach and can bring us to three main concepts:

1. coordination
2. collaboration
3. communication

The absence of these three concepts from the approach of responding and recovering from a disaster that has had many negative consequences, lead to somewhat a failure of achieving the main goals of that approach. Although non-profit organizations have put all their efforts to succeed in bringing Beirut to rise back up, they could never do that on their own.

This brings us back to the main point of discussion; the failure of the state had indeed affected the results of non-profit organizations' efforts. These organizations were working to fill the gap that was left by the state, but even in doing that they needed some help from government entities in paving the way to include the three concepts we have mentioned above.

- Coordination: there should have been a disaster management plan previously set by the government to provide some guidelines and important information for

organizations and/or government entities to respond to such a devastating event that needed very fast interference.

- Collaboration: despite the instability and financial disability of the government, had they worked with these organizations they would have created a better and more organized approach especially that it was not exclusively financial help that these organizations sought from the government.
- Communication: the state could have made everything a lot easier if some ministries had only worked as a channel for communications to allocate services better and to prevent overlapping or overseeing any individual who needed help.

Another problem caused by the government that acted as a barrier for non-profit organizations was related to international aid. These organizations were in desperate need for international aid to be able to successfully carry out the response and recovery from the blast and there was no way for them to achieve that on their own. The problem here was that nations and international financial institutions did not view the Lebanese government as one that was competent to receive any funds due to several past experiences and due to many political complications in the form of the government and the state.

What the government has to do in order to solve that dispute was a range of reforms that could help it reinstate international trust as well as local trust and to take part in helping Beirut recover. After such a devastating disaster, the least that was expected from the government was to provide its citizens with such reforms for their well-being in the first place and for securing funds to help in rebuilding and recovering the city.

However, the government and parliament did not initiate any of that and kept making it harder with actions such as not being able to make a decision to elect a new president of the country after president Michael Aoun's term ended in October 2022.

In an op-ed by Samar Al Yassir, director of ANERA organization, she described the situation to still be miserable one year after the explosion, although they might be expected to be celebrating the reconstruction by that time. She explained that regardless of how much civil society organizations are working to achieve that, they cannot do it without the help of international community and its aid. She later stressed that international finance organizations who promised to aid Lebanon are still waiting for the country to establish a government and enact credible reforms that meet their criteria before sending over the help.

She states "our work is meaningful and impactful, but we are not the government." Later explaining that although these organizations can never replace the government, the situation could have been much worse without their efforts.

In this op-ed, Ms. Al Yassir summarized how the incompetence of the government have crucially affected her organization and other organizations' efforts who are left to act alone and everything is expected from them while in fact, they cannot achieve everything in their own; without interference from the government and international aid.

This kind of behavior among many other similar instances is indirectly but hugely influencing the success of non-profit organizations as it is difficult for them to keep sustaining themselves. Despite the fact that we can unfortunately say that recovery from the Beirut explosion has not been achieved, our surveys show that if that has changed public perception in non-profit organizations in Lebanon it has done so positively. Although many people are still living the consequences of the disaster, and have somehow

lost hope in ever getting the lives they had before; they still believe in these organizations, and the results of what happened have only instilled their mistrust of the state and placed any remaining hope they have in non-profit organizations.

In conclusion, our analysis revealed several shortcomings in the response and recovery process after the Beirut blast. The lack of coordination and collaboration between the government and different parties involved in the response and recovery phase was identified as the core problem. This resulted in a disorganized approach and a failure to achieve the main goals of the response efforts. Non-profit organizations played a significant role in responding to the needs of people affected by the blast, and the majority of respondents believed they were more responsive and helpful than the government. The survey results showed a positive change in people's perception of non-profit organizations after witnessing their role in responding to the August 4 disaster. On the other hand, the majority of respondents had already rated government performance poorly before the blast, and this only worsened afterward. Moreover, the lack of confidence in government authorities and their aid distribution caused people to turn to non-profit organizations instead. International aid to recover Beirut from the disaster was also found to be best handled by non-profit organizations. Another important thing to note is how the Lebanese government's incompetence and failure to establish reforms created a barrier in receiving international funds, and indirectly but massively influenced the success of the recovery efforts. Despite the fact that recovery from the Beirut explosion has not been achieved due to all the reasons mentioned above, we still saw a positive impact on public trust in non-profit organizations in Lebanon.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

This thesis focused on understanding how the weakness of the Lebanese government reflected on the efforts of non-profit organizations to recover Beirut from the August 4 explosion, and how that affected public trust in these organizations.

The results of our study show that recovery from the Beirut explosion was not carried out successfully despite the efforts of many individuals and organizations. Unfortunately, more than two years later, Beirut has not successfully recovered from the blast.

One of the main reasons behind this is the fact that the state did not have a clear predefined disaster management plan to deal with a disaster of that kind or any kind to be exact. This caused the government to have minimal interference leaving the responsibility on non-profit and international organizations to step in. These organizations were also working in an unusual environment considering all the other instabilities that Lebanon was facing, such as financial, economic, and political issues.

These factors all added up to each other, standing in the face of all the efforts that were carried to return the lives of those affected by the explosion to some sense of normalcy and stability. Although the public was constantly complaining regarding that matter, our surveys show that non-profit organizations did not lose public trust. However, if the case remains the same, it might lead to people losing all their faith in these organizations.

What has happened in the past two years should be taken as a lesson learned for local organizations and for the government to avoid similar events in the future and to



come up with a clear path to take in case the country is ever faced with something similar, which is very likely given the turbulent condition the country is in.

The government is not only hindering non-profit organizations by not stepping in, but it is also acting as a barrier between them and international aid. International aid organizations will not provide Lebanon with the needed financial assistance until a government is appointed that will show clear reforms to regain their trust; the most important one being carrying a transparent investigation on who was accountable for the disaster in the first place, followed by a series of reforms that have been long due to how the Lebanese government was operating.

These reforms are the most important initiative to begin with to ease the way for non-profit organizations to operate efficiently because they can definitely never succeed without the assistance of the government and the international financial aid. We can finally conclude that regardless of how hard non-profit organizations work and how many plans they set, they cannot stand independently from the state and they cannot sustain themselves without international aid.

In conclusion, the weakness of the Lebanese government did have a significantly negative impact on the efforts of non-profit organizations in recovering Beirut from the August 4 explosion. Without a clear disaster management plan and the support of the government, non-profit organizations were left to shoulder the responsibility of responding and recovering from the disaster. This highlights the importance of having a strong government that can work hand in hand with non-profit organizations to respond effectively to disasters. It also highlights the importance of regaining public trust in the government organizations, which is vital for stabilizing the situation in the country. By carrying out reforms and carrying out transparent investigations, the government can

regain the trust of international aid organizations and facilitate the work of non-profit organizations, ultimately leading to the successful recovery of Beirut from the August 4 explosion.

## APPENDIX

### SURVEY RESPONSES

#### Are you over 18 years old?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	2	3.0	3.0	3.0
	Yes	64	97.0	97.0	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

#### What is your gender?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	35	53.0	53.0	53.0
	Female	31	47.0	47.0	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

#### Where were you located on the 4th of August, 2020?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		5	7.6	7.6	7.6
	Beirut	31	47.0	47.0	54.5
	Mount Lebanon	17	25.8	25.8	80.3
	North Governorate	2	3.0	3.0	83.3
	Beqaa	3	4.5	4.5	87.9
	Nabatiye	1	1.5	1.5	89.4
	South Governorate	6	9.1	9.1	98.5
	Baalbek-Hermel	1	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

**Did you participate in any of the relief activities that followed the August 4th explosion in Beirut?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes, I volunteered as a member of an organization that was responding to the disaster	7	10.6	10.6	10.6
	Yes, I volunteered individually in the affected areas	17	25.8	25.8	36.4
	Yes, I donated	14	21.2	21.2	57.6
	No	27	40.9	40.9	98.5
	Other	1	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

**Were you directly affected by the Beirut explosion? (Physically, financially or emotionally)**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	45	68.2	68.2	68.2
	No	21	31.8	31.8	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

**Do you believe non-profit organizations in Lebanon have a bigger impact in responding to people's needs than the government?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	61	92.4	92.4	92.4
	No	5	7.6	7.6	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

**In your opinion, which sector played the bigger role in responding to the Beirut explosion?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	The Government	5	7.6	7.6	7.6
	The Non-profit Sector	53	80.3	80.3	87.9
	Other	8	12.1	12.1	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

**If you or anyone you know was affected by the explosion, which sector did you find more responsive and helpful?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	The Government	8	12.1	12.1	12.1
	The Non-profit Sector	53	80.3	80.3	92.4
	Other	5	7.6	7.6	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

**[Before the 4th of August disaster] On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the role of Non-profit organizations in Lebanon before the August 4 explosion (in providing people with their needs and fulfilling certain gaps in society) and after that (in re**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	3.0	3.3	3.3
	3	2	3.0	3.3	6.6
	4	4	6.1	6.6	13.1
	5	14	21.2	23.0	36.1
	6	14	21.2	23.0	59.0
	7	9	13.6	14.8	73.8
	8	4	6.1	6.6	80.3
	9	4	6.1	6.6	86.9
	10	8	12.1	13.1	100.0
	Total	61	92.4	100.0	
Missing	System	5	7.6		
Total		66	100.0		

**[After the 4th of August disaster] On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the role of Non-profit organizations in Lebanon before the August 4 explosion (in providing people with their needs and fulfilling certain gaps in society) and after that (in res**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	3.0	3.3	3.3
	4	1	1.5	1.6	4.9
	5	1	1.5	1.6	6.6
	6	5	7.6	8.2	14.8
	7	10	15.2	16.4	31.1
	8	15	22.7	24.6	55.7
	9	9	13.6	14.8	70.5
	10	18	27.3	29.5	100.0
	Total	61	92.4	100.0	
Missing	System	5	7.6		
Total		66	100.0		

**[Before the 4th of August disaster] On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the role of the Lebanese Government before the August 4 explosion (in providing people with their needs and fulfilling certain gaps in society) and after that (in responding to**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	26	39.4	41.9	41.9
	2	8	12.1	12.9	54.8
	3	8	12.1	12.9	67.7
	4	10	15.2	16.1	83.9
	5	4	6.1	6.5	90.3
	6	3	4.5	4.8	95.2
	8	2	3.0	3.2	98.4
	10	1	1.5	1.6	100.0
	Total	62	93.9	100.0	
Missing	System	4	6.1		
Total		66	100.0		

**[After the 4th of August disaster] On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the role of the Lebanese Government before the August 4 explosion (in providing people with their needs and fulfilling certain gaps in society) and after that (in responding to t**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	37	56.1	58.7	58.7
	2	10	15.2	15.9	74.6
	3	6	9.1	9.5	84.1
	4	2	3.0	3.2	87.3
	5	4	6.1	6.3	93.7
	6	2	3.0	3.2	96.8
	10	2	3.0	3.2	100.0
	Total	63	95.5	100.0	
Missing	System	3	4.5		
Total		66	100.0		

**In your opinion, should international aid for the recovery and reconstruction of Beirut be handed to:**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	The Government	9	13.6	13.6	13.6
	The Non-profit Sector	54	81.8	81.8	95.5
	Other	3	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

**Did your perception of Non-profit Organizations in Lebanon change after the August 4th explosion?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	38	57.6	65.5	65.5
	No	20	30.3	34.5	100.0
	Total	58	87.9	100.0	
Missing	System	8	12.1		
Total		66	100.0		

**If you answered yes to the previous question, please select the answer that applies:**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I trust them more	59	89.4	89.4	89.4
	I trust them less	4	6.1	6.1	95.5
	Other	3	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

**If your trust towards Non-profit Organizations has decreased, please select the reason(s) that apply:**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Non-profit Organizations did not fulfill their promises	57	86.4	86.4	86.4
	Non-profit Organizations did not effectively manage the recovery from the blast	2	3.0	3.0	89.4
	Non-profit organizations did not equally provide assistance to people of the affected population	6	9.1	9.1	98.5
	Other	1	1.5	1.5	100.0



**If you answered no to the previous question, what do you think has not yet been fulfilled?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Destroyed homes still need to be reconstructed	3	4.5	6.4	6.4
	People in affected areas need financial assistance	8	12.1	17.0	23.4
	People in affected areas need psychological assistance	34	51.5	72.3	95.7
	Other	2	3.0	4.3	100.0
	Total	47	71.2	100.0	
Missing	System	19	28.8		
Total		66	100.0		

**Almost a year after the disaster, do you believe Beirut has recovered and organizations working on its recovery have fulfilled their role?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	13	19.7	21.7	21.7
	No	47	71.2	78.3	100.0
	Total	60	90.9	100.0	
Missing	System	6	9.1		
Total		66	100.0		

**Which sector do you believe should be responsible for recovering Beirut after the explosion? (Recovery can be seen as reconstruction and rehabilitation of affected people and areas on the longer term)**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	The government	42	63.6	63.6	63.6
	The non-profit Sector	23	34.8	34.8	98.5
	Other	1	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	66	100.0	100.0	

## REFERENCES

- Becker, A. (2018). An Experimental Study of Voluntary Nonprofit Accountability and Effects on Public Trust, Reputation, Perceived Quality, and Donation Behavior. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 47(3), 562–582. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764018756200>
- Beirut Explosion*. disasterphilanthropy.org. (2020). <https://disasterphilanthropy.org/disaster/beirut-explosion/>.
- Burger, R., & Owens, T. (2010, February 11). *Promoting Transparency in the NGO Sector: Examining the Availability and Reliability of Self-Reported Data*. World Development. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X10000082>.
- Burt, C. D. B. (2014). *Managing the Public's Trust in Non-profit Organizations*. Springer New York.
- Carpi, Estella & boustani, marwa & gebara, hayat & Mourad, Yara. (2016). Responding to the Syrian crisis in Lebanon. Collaboration between aid agencies and local governance structures. 10.13140/RG.2.2.31562.16327.
- Demiroz, F., & Hu, Q. (2014). The Role of Nonprofits and Civil Society in Post-disaster Recovery and Development. *Disaster and Development*, 317–330. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-04468-2\\_18](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-04468-2_18)
- El-Yassir, S. (2021, August 4). *One year ago, Beirut exploded. now the situation is worse*. Anera. <https://www.anera.org/blog/one-year-ago-beirut-exploded-now-the-situation-is-worse/>
- Eller, W., Gerber, B. J., & Branch, L. E. (2015). Voluntary Nonprofit Organizations and Disaster Management: Identifying the Nature of Inter-Sector Coordination and Collaboration in Disaster Service Assistance Provision. *Risk, Hazards & Crisis in Public Policy*, 6(2), 223–238. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rhc3.12081>
- FEMA. (2005). *Long-Term Community Recovery Planning Process*. Federal Emergency Planning Agency. <https://www.fema.gov/pdf/rebuild/ltrc/selfhelp.pdf>.
- FEMA. (2011) *Disaster Recovery Framework*. <https://www.fema.gov/txt/recoveryframework/ndrf.txt>.
- Fowler Jr, F. J. (2013). *Survey research methods*. SAGE Publications.
- Graham, T. (2020, October 26). The cost of resilience: The roots and impacts of the beirut blast. Retrieved from <https://www.justsecurity.org/72122/the-cost-of-resilience-the-roots-and-impacts-of-the-beirut-blast/>

- Haddad, T., Hindy, E. A., Haddad, T., Hasse, T., & Ajamian, M. (2018). Religion, Relief, and Reform. *Religion and civil society in the Arab world: in the vortex of globalization and tradition* (pp. 128–159). Routledge India.
- Haddad, T. N. (2023). International and local actors in disaster response: Responding to the Beirut explosion. Routledge.
- Haddad, T., & Sakr, T. (2022, July 28). *Interorganizational relation in disaster response in developing context: Assessing response to Beirut Explosion - Public Organization Review*. SpringerLink. Retrieved March 7, 2023, from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11115-022-00650-9>
- Hajjar, C. (2020, August 10). *Lebanon's Government Is to Blame for the Beirut Explosion*. <https://www.nationalreview.com/2020/08/lebanons-government-is-to-blame-for-the-beirut-explosion/>.
- International Crisis Group. (2015, July 20). *Lebanon's Self-Defeating Survival Strategies* (Rep. No. 160). Retrieved from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/lebanon/lebanon-s-self-defeating-survival-strategies>
- Kaltenbrunner, K., & Renzl, B. (2019). Social Capital in Emerging Collaboration Between NPOs and Volunteers: Performance Effects and Sustainability Prospects in Disaster Relief. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 30(5), 976–990. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-019-00123-6>
- Kapucu, N., Liou, K. T., & Haase, T. W. (2014). Beyond the Hyogo Framework: Disaster Management in the Republic of Lebanon. In *Disaster and development: examining global issues and cases*. Springer Verlag.
- Mouawad, J. (2017, November 13). Unpacking Lebanon's Resilience. Retrieved from <https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/unpacking-lebanons-resilience>
- Nguyen, Q. (2016). Do Natural Disasters Open a Window of Opportunity for Corruption? *The Journal of Development Studies*, 53(1), 156–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2016.1187724>
- Rivera, J. D. (2018). Reliance on Faith-Based Organizations for Tangible Assistance in Times of Disaster: Exploring the Influence of Bonding Social Capital. *Sociological Spectrum*, 38(1), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02732173.2017.1409147>
- Sewell, A., & Chehayeb, K. (2020, December 9). *Long road to recovery for Lebanon's blast survivors*. The New Humanitarian. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/12/9/beirut-explosion-insufficient-aid-rebuild>.

- Simo, G., & Bies, A. L. (2007). The Role of Nonprofits in Disaster Response: An Expanded Model of Cross-Sector Collaboration. *Public Administration Review*, 67, 125–142. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2007.00821.x>
- Sofyan, I., Erdiyansyah, & Royfandi, M. (2020). Participative disaster management: Post-disaster renewal of Palu City. *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 13.
- Todd, D., & Todd, H. (2011). *Natural disaster response: lessons from evaluations of the World Bank and others*. World Bank. <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/621591468350106378/natural-disaster-response-lessons-from-evaluations-of-the-world-bank-and-others>.
- Wagner, D., & Petras, G. (2020, August 6). *Massive explosion rocks Beirut: Before and after images show extensive damage*. USA Today. <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/2020/08/06/massive-explosion-rocks-beirut-how-did-happen-before-after/3298960001/>.
- Walden University. (2020, October 23). *the-role-of-volunteers-and-nonprofits-in-the-time-of-a-disaster*. Walden University. <https://www.waldenu.edu/online-masters-programs/ms-in-nonprofit-management-and-leadership/resource/the-role-of-volunteers-and-nonprofits-in-the-time-of-a-disaster#:~:text=Nonprofits%20focused%20on%20long%2Dterm,and%20For%20provide%20rebuilding%20services>.
- Weng, W. W., Woo, C. K., Cheng, Y. S., Ho, T., & Horowitz, I. (2015). Public trust and corruption perception: disaster relief. *Applied Economics*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2015.1039703>
- World Bank Group. (2020, October 7). *Beirut residents' perspectives on August 4 blast*. World Bank. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/publication/beirut-residents-perspectives-on-august-4-blast>
- Xu, J., & Lu, Y. (2013). A comparative study on the national counterpart aid model for post-disaster recovery and reconstruction. *Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal*, 22(1), 75–93. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09653561311301998>