

The Beirut Explosions

6 August 2020

HIGHLIGHTS

- The death toll of the two explosions that hit the city of Beirut on 4 August has risen to at least 140 people with more than 5,000 injured. A further 100 are reportedly still missing. Children are likely to be amongst the casualties. Those who survived are traumatised and in shock.
- Of the 300,000 people who have lost their homes and are displaced, approximately 80,000 are children.
- On 4 August, the Government declared a two-week state of emergency and cancelled the general lockdown measures that had been put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- A large quantity of the Ministry of Public Health's (MOPH) acute and chronic medication and vaccines, stored in a warehouse less than 3km from the explosion site, were secured by immediate action by MOPH and support from WHO and UNICEF, despite significant structural damages.
- UNICEF is responding to the immediate needs and is working to support the Government and partners with its requests.



SITUATION OVERVIEW

At 18:00 (GMT+3) on 4 August, two explosions hit Beirut city originating in the port. The second much larger explosion is believed to be caused by the 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate stored in one of the warehouses. The explosions sent shockwaves throughout the city causing multiple casualties and widespread damage even beyond the city.

The death toll and casualties are expected to rise further as emergency rescue operations are ongoing. As of the evening of 6 August, reports are that 140 people have been killed and over 5,000 injured. Significant damage has been reported to buildings and civilian infrastructure particularly in the areas surrounding the port. According to the Beirut Governor up to 300,000 people have lost their homes and have been displaced. Schools, currently on summer break, have been opened as shelters.

The port was severely damaged in the explosion, with parts completely destroyed including strategic grain silos, reducing the reserve to less than a month, along with critical medical supplies. The airport is still functioning despite suffering some damage and commercial flights continue. Many facilities have been damaged including three main hospitals in Beirut which are severely damaged with others being relocated. Already overwhelmed by the COVID-19 situation, hospitals in Beirut are reaching full capacity and are reporting a lack of equipment to treat the injured and care for patients in critical condition. Some injured are transferred to hospitals in other parts of the country. Urgent calls for blood donations are made across the country. Relocation of hospitals, COVID-19 units, health supplies and stock are currently underway. At least 12 primary health care facilities, maternal, immunization and newborn centres in Beirut are also affected. These used to serve nearly 120,000 people. Reports suggest that some 34 schools are damaged from the explosion.

Lebanon has already been suffering from political instability, economic collapse and a surge in COVID-19 cases. The pandemic meant that hospitals are overwhelmed, and front-line workers are exhausted. This explosion with the vast number of affected people overwhelmed the already stretched health services of the country.

RESPONSE

UNICEF's priority is the wellbeing and safety of children and their families and is providing a multi-sectoral response focusing on Child Protection, WASH and Primary Healthcare activities. Continuity of COVID-19 response activities will be ever more vital.



HEALTH

- › Assessments are currently underway on health facilities including hospitals, Primary Health Care Centres (PHCs) and the MoPH central warehouse at Qarantina. Initial results confirm severe structural damages to health facilities and the warehouse. Most of the acute and chronic medication in the warehouse were relocated immediately to another storage facility with WHO and UNICEF support. All vaccines in five destroyed cold rooms in the warehouse were immediately transferred to two remaining partially damaged, yet functioning cold rooms, which sustained the cold chain, saving over 90 percent of vaccines in stock. To make sure these vitals supplies remain safe and available, on 5 and 6 August the vaccines were transferred to a privately-owned warehouse and to the Rafic Harriri University Hospital's cold room.
- › An entire newborn and paediatric unit supported by UNICEF at the Qarantina Governmental Hospital has also been severely damaged. Twenty-four children including nine newborns have been evacuated safely with the support of the army to a hospital with intensive care unit capacities.
- › UNICEF is procuring tetanus vaccination shots to serve up to 10,000 injured people as a precautionary measure prior to medical interventions.
- › Ten containers of personal protective equipment (PPEs) at the port have been confirmed as destroyed. UNICEF is mobilizing to replenish these lost stocks. The country has seen a spike in COVID-19 cases, with an increase of around 200 cases daily in the week prior to the explosions almost ten times the numbers seen in March. The impact of the recent events on the population has led to a lower compliance to COVID-19 safety measures. UNICEF with partners is mainstreaming key COVID-19 messages whilst also adjusting messages to include psychosocial and trauma support.
- › Rehabilitation of primary health care centres will be prioritised to preserve continuation of services

- › UNICEF is planning to procure emergency medical kits, medicines and supplies to be able to replenish dwindling stocks across health care facilities.
- › Rehabilitation and or replacement of five cold rooms at MoPH central warehouse will be critical to ensure these vital supplies are kept safe.



WASH

- › UNICEF supported port workers and first responders with provision of drinking water in the aftermath of the explosions.
- › UNICEF is working with the Beirut and Mount Lebanon Water Establishment (BMLWE) to identify field hospitals and other sites that will require water. UNICEF is also procuring additional chlorine for the BMLWE.
- › UNICEF will be supporting in the provision of water, water sanitation and waste management to support primary health centres in the resumption of services.
- › Water, personal hygiene kits, baby kits and IPC materials are being distributed to 60 families in temporary shelters.



CHILD PROTECTION

- › To ensure they are coping with bereavement and trauma of the events they witnessed, UNICEF is providing psychosocial support services including hotline centres and will support the reunification of children who have been separated from their families. UNICEF will also provide case management support with cross sectoral referrals.
- › UNICEF is exploring options to establish child-friendly centres for children who have been impacted by the explosions
- › UNICEF is also supporting with the assessment of the needs of children in affected areas and is exploring options to distribute basic supplies to children, young girls and women
- › The Child Protection working group is meeting on 7 August to coordinate efforts and align priorities of the response.



EDUCATION

- › UNICEF and the Ministry of Education are assessing the damage to schools; initial reports are that some 34 schools are damaged from the explosion.
- › UNICEF anticipates supporting the rehabilitation of damaged schools for when children return to school.



ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

- › Through its existing programmes, UNICEF is supporting youth engagement initiatives aiming to provide community based support to the most vulnerable with debris clearance, cooking etc.
- › UNICEF youth programmes which were manufacturing PPE prior to the explosion will be ramped up to meet the increased needs.

INITIAL RESOURCE REQUIREMENT

UNICEF Lebanon country office is in touch with Government counterparts and partners to scale up its support to affected children and their families in order to respond to the immediate and medium-term needs as they emerge. Multi-sectoral assessments are underway, and needs are expected to evolve. UNICEF estimates that it will require US 8.2 million.

SECTOR	INITIAL RESOURCE REQUIREMENT (USD)
HEALTH	\$4,300,000
WASH	\$1,800,000
EDUCATION	\$1,050,000
CHILD PROTECTION	\$550,000
ADOLESCENT & YOUTH ENGAGEMENT	\$500,000
TOTAL	\$8,200,000

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