

AUGUST 2020

Beirut Port Explosion Rapid Assessment

AL-MOUDAWAR AND KARANTINA, BOURJ HAMMOUD, AND KHANDA' AL-GHAMI'



The Beirut Port from Charles Helo Highway, taken on August 13, 2020.



SUMMARY

To better understand the impact of the August 4, 2020 port explosion in Beirut, the Near East Foundation (NEF) undertook a rapid assessment from August 11-14, 2020. The objective of this assessment was to identify the major needs of vulnerable entrepreneurs with small businesses and skilled workers, as a result of the explosion. The scope and timeframe of the assessment were limited to immediate needs and focused on the vulnerable, highly impacted neighborhoods of Al-Moudawar and Karantina, Bourj Hammoud, and Khanda' Al-Ghami'.

The assessment confirmed that damages caused by the explosion were significant in the three areas studied, affecting both homes and businesses, business operation, employment, and the overall livelihoods of residents. Specifically, the assessment found that: (1) demand for raw construction materials and skilled workers is likely to further increase prices that are already high due to inflation; (2) in addition to building repairs, businesses require support to replace or repair inputs critical to restart business operation; (3) high-demand for repairs will create a local market deficiency of skilled workers; (4) skilled workers need to recover basic tools and equipment to return to work; (5) there currently is no coordination mechanism for early recovery to ensure inclusiveness, coordination, and complementarity of services as NGOs and others respond; and, (6) women were disproportionately impacted by the explosion which suggests mainstreaming protection into any intervention.

In *Section VI*, the assessment presents recommendations to inform an inclusive and sustainable early livelihoods recovery response that supports timely and safe shelter rehabilitation, small business recovery, and employment opportunities.

Based on the information gained through the rapid needs assessment, NEF is developing an early recovery and livelihoods response plan.



A glimpse of the destruction resulting from the Beirut port explosion, among the most powerful in history.

I. BACKGROUND

Beirut experienced a massive explosion on August 4, 2020, displacing hundreds of thousands of people, killing an estimated 180 people and injuring 6,000. The impacts of the explosion, which comes at a time of severe economic crisis and increasing rates of COVID-19, must be addressed immediately to mitigate its effects. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 6 hospitals and more than 20 clinics are damaged. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) estimates that 40,000 buildings were damaged, with 3,000 residential structures experiencing serious damage, and that 70,000 workers lost their jobs as a result of the explosion. This has direct implications for more than 12,000 households¹.

Lebanon is among the most urbanized nations in both the world and the Arab region, with 87% of its 4 million inhabitants living in urban areas and 64% residing in the Beirut and Tripoli metropolises. The Syrian crisis that began in 2011 led to a major migration movement in the region. Countries that neighbor Syria, especially Lebanon, experienced a large influx of displaced persons. According to official statistics, Lebanon hosted more than 1,075,000 Syrian refugees as of October 2015, in addition to 43,500 Palestinian refugees from Syria and fewer numbers of Lebanese returnees and Iraqi refugees. Today, Lebanon hosts the largest number of refugees per capita, with a Government estimate of 1.5 million Syrian refugees, 18,500 refugees of other origins (e.g. Iraq, Sudan, Ethiopia), in addition to 200,000 Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate (UNHCR, 2020).

Refugees have mainly found shelter through informal and formal market channels (UN Habitat Lebanon country profile²); and due to the lack of formal camps, the distribution of refugees largely follows the urbanization pattern of Lebanon. Important to note is that urbanization

1 OCHA. 2020. Lebanon: Beirut Port Explosions Situation Report No. 4 [As of 13 August 2020].

2 UN Habitat, UNICEF, UN Women, Municipality of Beirut, 2012. Rapid Profiling Of Seven Poor Neighborhoods In Beirut City. Safe and Friendly Cities for All. [online] Beirut. Available at: <<https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Rapid%20Profiling%20final.pdf>> [Accessed 13 August 2020].

in Lebanon is often disorganized with no central planning, resulting in precarious construction with limited safety standards. Damage from the explosion heavily affected the country's capital, Beirut, and its surroundings. Shelters that were vulnerable prior to the explosion have been more severely affected, leading to increased shelter inadequacy and internal displacement. Similarly, access to services in urban centers, which has historically been problematic and often unavailable to the majority of the poor population, has further deteriorated as the healthcare system has become overwhelmed. This reality is amplified by pre-existing factors, including the economic crisis, which caused an eight-fold devaluation of the Lebanese lira relative to the U.S. dollar (the rate went from 1 USD = 1,500 LBP to 1 USD = 8,500 LBP, reaching up to 11,000 LBP at the average black-market rate). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the country in and out of lockdowns and states of emergency, with a new lockdown commencing on Friday, August 21, 2020.



Damage to an old residential building in Bourj Hammoud area (note no glass or Nylon window covers). August 12, 2020

The Beirut explosion further exacerbated this already volatile climate. While the effects of the blast spread to the entire city, severe damage was primarily in neighborhoods surrounding the port. El-Moudawar and Karantina are the only remaining historical working-class districts of the city, while nearby Gemmayzeh, Geitawi, and Mar Mikhael have been gentrifying for at least a decade. Karantina, the site of one of the first civil war massacres and the city's historical workers' warehouse district, experienced immense devastation to its vulnerable populations and fragile homes, some of which have crumbled. Immediately east of the

port are Mar Mikhael and Gemmayzeh, where some of the only remaining clusters of Ottoman and French Mandate heritage buildings still stand. The majority of buildings lost windows and doors, and many display structural cracks, broken balconies, fallen façades, and more. In Beirut's historic core, building façades and large-scale glass panes and window frames have blown to pieces, eviscerating millions of dollars of public and private investment.

The port is Beirut's main lifeline, where around 80% of direly needed food imports flow. It is severely scathed and its full repair is expected to drag out over years. The explosion impacted all of Beirut's districts, well beyond the limits of municipal Beirut, affecting homes, offices and shops in districts such as Badaro, Jnah, Ghobeiri, Furn el-Chebbak, Dora, Bourj Hammoud, and Sin el-Fil, where glass panes were shattered and doors and windows were destroyed.



Damage to a residential building in Khanda' Al-Ghami'. The family residing on the 3rd floor was displaced and the rest of the building was abandoned. August 13, 2020



Damage to building infrastructure in a residential area in Khanda' Al-Ghami'. Photo taken August 11, 2020

II. METHODOLOGY

The objective of this assessment was to identify the major needs of vulnerable entrepreneurs with small businesses and skilled workers, as a result of the August 4, 2020 explosion in Beirut. To reach this objective, the research team used a rapid randomized approach to sample small businesses, skilled workers, and residents around the Karantina, Al-Moudawar, Bourj Hammoud and Khanda' Al-Ghami' area.

A minimum of five small businesses and ten residents were interviewed in each area, with a focus on an intersectional approach that gives a voice to the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. Both vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugees were interviewed in each area; and women, including small business owners, were interviewed. The research team arrived in the area by car and interviewed businesses in each neighborhood, spanning the whole area. In Khanda' Al-Ghami', relevant authorities were notified prior to the team's visit and a representative remained with the team at all times³. This was necessary to ensure the security of the assessment team given the political and social context of the area.

The team also reviewed available secondary data, although the limited timeframe of the assessment did not allow for an in-depth review. The assessment team also used direct observation to assess damages and needs.

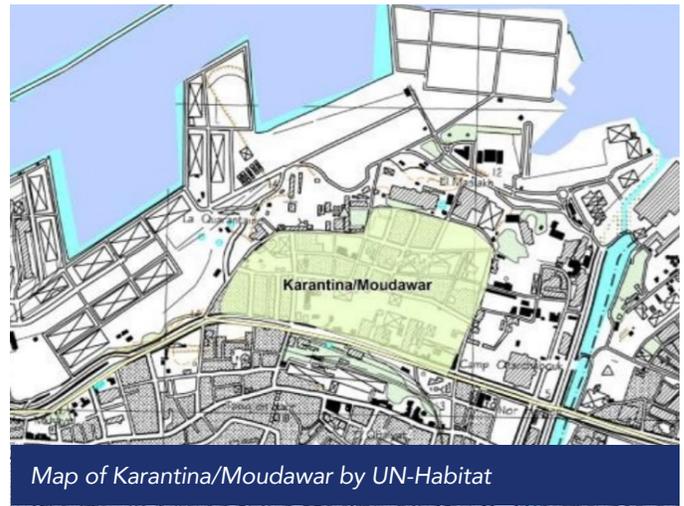
The following questions, which were provided by NEF, guided the assessment:

1. What are the damages and consequences of the explosion on their business? Please provide specific examples, including scope and value of repairs needed (including material and labor cost).

³ Because of the political and social context of Khanda' Al-Ghami', this was a necessary measure to ensure safety. Given the focus of the assessment and the ability of the team to witness damages and needs directly, the assessment team believes that this security measure did not constitute a limitation or a bias. Rather, it created a situation in which both the field assessment team and the interviewed residents felt more comfortable to speak with "approval" by the de facto local non-state authority.

2. What types of vulnerable small entrepreneurs exist in the area and what are their main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, particularly as a consequence of the explosion?
3. What types of vulnerable skilled workers (that can support reconstruction and recovery) exist in the area? Please assess their expertise, availability, remuneration, barriers to work, and level of skills.
4. What types of damages hit vulnerable houses (both owned and rented houses)? Please provide specific examples, including scope and value of repairs needed (including material and labor cost).
5. How can we link vulnerable skilled workers with vulnerable people who need quick repairs in their houses?
6. What types of coordination mechanisms for economic recovery exist in these areas?
7. What types of support are needed for small entrepreneurs not only to resume their work but to sustain it as well?
8. What types of businesses are currently needed in the market?
9. Is there a mapping of skilled workers in these areas? A network, formal or informal? And, what types of certifications are common among skilled workers?
10. How can we mitigate the impact of hazards on vulnerable populations while ensuring that no new risks are created throughout the process?
11. Can the local market respond to the existing shelter rehabilitation needs?
12. How should gender and protection be mainstreamed in this context?

III. KARANTINA/MOUDAWAR



A. Overview

The Karantina/Moudawar neighborhoods are east of Beirut's port, with local residents belonging to different religious and confessional sects. The residents include Armenians, Sunnis, Maronites, and Catholics. Increasingly, there are a number of Syrian and Iraqi families working in neighboring facilities, including the Beirut port and the slaughterhouses. It should be noted that Karantina has historically absorbed refugees (e.g. Armenians, Palestinians, Syrians). The infrastructure in this area has been neglected and consists of a number of make shift dwellings.

The Karantina Public Hospital along with three main outpatient healthcare centers (one in Nour Hajeen and two in Moudawar) are the main providers of health services. Due to the poor quality of schools in Karantina/Moudawar, most children attend school outside the neighborhood, mostly in Bourj Hammoud.

B. Assessment

Small and micro enterprises (SMEs) experienced severe material losses. Interviewed business owners stated that they either had no injuries or minor injuries that did not require hospitalization. However, material losses of enterprises are significant. An interviewed butcher, for instance, reported the loss of the shop's surveillance system (damage to security cameras), loss of a meat refrigerator, and

complete destruction of two cars. In addition, the shop's physical structure is damaged with cracks in the walls and roof. The refrigerator alone cost roughly 5,000 USD at the time of purchase when the dollar to lira exchange rate was still 1,500 LBP. The owner estimates the losses to cost more than 55 million LBP (according to the average black-market rate at the time of the assessment, 1 USD = 7,000 LBP). A nearby small grocery shop also lost a refrigerator. All businesses interviewed reported shattered glass as well as damage to the walls (cracks and other damages) but were unable to provide a cost estimate as the price of repairs is unknown, particularly given the changing economic context and rapid fluctuation of the local currency's exchange rate.

Employment in Karantina is linked to the warehouses, factories, or the now demolished port; the majority of employment has been halted and consequently fewer people are in the area to support businesses. Notably, businesses that are not directly affiliated with or related to the port have been affected. For example, a car mechanic interviewed has been able to continue working and generating income but revenue is lower despite the heavy need for car mechanics post-explosion.

Most residents around Karantina live in precarious shelters and their employment is directly linked to the port or other warehouses and factories in the largely industrial area. As such, the acquired knowledge and experience that those workers possess are linked to those jobs: they work at the port or at the sorting facility or other warehouses and factories. When residents whose shelters were damaged were asked whether they know of any skilled workers who can help repair their homes, the unanimous response was that none exist in the area.

All houses interviewed had severe damage to their doors and windows with no temporary solutions implemented (no nylon covers or other temporary measures). The walls and roofs were also damaged with severe cracks. Furthermore, furniture and household goods were severely damaged or destroyed. In one instance, a family reported being afraid that one of the walls is likely to fall but maintained that the building itself is stable. All Lebanese residents interviewed owned their homes, but the Syrian resident lived in a rented house which is also severely damaged. Similar to the business owners, the residents were unable to estimate the cost of repairs especially considering that, as noted above, they do not know of any skilled



Shelters in a residential area on governmental property, taken on August 11, 2020.

workers in the area. The Syrian resident reported that as his house is rented, he could move but his furniture (which he paid 2,000 USD for) is completely damaged and he would not be able to afford furniture at a different house.

A lack of skilled construction workers was identified in the Karantina area. However, there is a very strong demand. As noted previously, the large majority of jobs in Karantina are linked to the port or other manufacturing and warehousing facilities. As such, when asked if they knew skilled workers in the area who would be able to repair damages in their homes, residents maintained that none existed in the area, with one mentioning he would need to hire someone from West Beirut (Gharbiye).

Karantina constitutes a market for skilled workers from nearby areas. Vulnerable workers from other areas, such as Bourj Hammoud, could be put in contact with people in Karantina for repairs. However, it is important to note that neither the workers nor the residents would be able to afford the cost of material due to the economic crisis and the unstable exchange rate of USD.

No economic recovery mechanism or livelihood assistance initiatives were reported by the residents in the area. It was indicated that several NGOs would distribute aid and food packages along the main roads and areas but would not enter the poorer inner areas of Karantina. The Syrian resident also reported that, as a Syrian, he did not receive any aid.

Small entrepreneurs need repairs to their shops and replacement of damaged materials (e.g. refrigerators, surveillance systems, doors, windows, walls). However, small business owners unanimously expressed their worry that they would not be able to continue operating and that they are not in a position to invest in repairs considering the situation. As previously noted, they have lost their clientele due to the halting of most jobs in the areas; and on a more general level, all residents have lost purchasing power.

This assessment revealed no recent comprehensive socioeconomic mappings for the Karantina area.

However, there was a security mapping conducted by Fawaz and Gharbieh in 2010. There is a dire need for a mapping of workers in Karantina and the informal and formal networks connecting workers and businesses to different markets.

The most urgent need is repair to shelters. Residents report feeling unsafe; the destruction of doors and windows leave many vulnerable to theft and other dangers. A resident reported that he is not going to work because he has no door to protect his family in the house. This fear is leading to distrust and increased tension between Lebanese and Syrian neighbors. **With a lack of skilled workers and a near-absolute inability to purchase materials, the local market alone cannot respond to the existing shelter rehabilitation needs.**

Women were more prone to physical harm from the blast as they were much more likely to be at home than working husbands. This reality was confirmed by our observations of the families we interviewed in which girls were the most affected. In one instance, a young girl was kept hidden in a closed room so that no one would see her injured face that required four stitches.



IV. BOURJ HAMMOUD



Map of Bourj Hammoud and surrounding areas as taken from Google Maps on August 13, 2020 and demarcated by the research team.

A. Overview

Bourj Hammoud, located on the periphery of Beirut, is near the industrial area where many workers and their families reside. Many of the residents are employed in the service industry in other parts of Beirut. The Nabaa neighborhood of Bourj Hammoud lies at an important intersection of main roads connecting major hubs and sectors, strategically placing itself at the eastern gate of Beirut's center. Small businesses

and workshops make up Bourj Hammoud's local economy but most do not survive beyond five years. Characterized by failing infrastructure and inefficient access to basic urban services, this neighborhood suffers from poor living conditions. The influx of Syrian refugees in 2012 led to an increased population density, further straining basic services and resources. NGOs are widely active in this area, although at times their services lack coordination.

The explosion amounted to around 300 injured and 11 dead, according to residents. Bourj Hammoud lacks necessary healthcare services for such a densely populated area. Where small healthcare centers can only handle limited demand, two primary centers handle the bulk of the area. Bourj Hammoud has one of the few nursing homes that offers services to both the region and Nabaa's populace.

B. Assessment

Different businesses experienced different levels of damage which correlate to the type and age of construction.

Older buildings, with failing infrastructure and in dire need of maintenance, were the most affected. A car mechanic reported complete destruction of his small garage. They were not able to assess losses as they could not access the merchandise amid the debris. They tried to save as much



Metal workshop in an old building in Bourj Hammoud with heavy damage to building structure. Photo taken August 12, 2020

merchandise as possible, but the losses were significant. Considering the dollar exchange rate, the loss of merchandise has halted the mechanic's ability to operate. Other businesses reported shattered glass and damaged doors, walls and roofs which some have been able to fix and others have not.

Bourj Hammoud is full of small entrepreneurs and small businesses. Nearly all residential buildings have small shops on their ground floors. From small cell phone shops to barbers, clothes shops, shoe shops, "\$1" shops, flight agencies and others, nearly everything and anything can be found in Bourj Hammoud. Shops in the area mostly rely on people coming from other areas in Beirut and Metn. Considering the low socioeconomic status of residents, this creates strong competition and decreased revenue.

Prior to the economic crisis and devaluation of the Lebanese Lira, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Beirut Blast, most small businesses did not survive more than five years (UN). This raises a serious question about the viability of small businesses in the area. In addition, most businesses reported decreased revenue in the past year due to the factors mentioned above. For instance, a tool shop reported that due to the explosion, more individuals were buying tools and materials such as nails; however, the shop mainly relies on selling tools and materials to companies whose orders generate higher sales - companies that are now closed or have halted their operations.

Skilled workers who can support reconstruction and recovery exist in the area including carpenters, glaziers, and blacksmiths, however many do not have access to materials. When asked, they were reluctant to provide information on remuneration stating the fluctuating exchange rate and other factors (providing quotations for specific jobs). Despite this reality, people who required repairs in their homes noted that skilled workers often do not have time to to repair the damages at their houses.

The majority of damages reported to homes were shattered glass, damage to walls and ceilings, and damage to furniture. As mentioned previously, damages were more prominent in older buildings as is the case of the Nabaa' neighborhood. In fact, one household reported a complete destruction of their walls and ceiling, the repair of which would require at least 15-20k USD.

Since the explosion, several initiatives mapping repair and construction needs have launched and spread throughout social media and mainstream channels.⁴

Many skilled workers have offered low cost or free services to affected populations; however, such initiatives are unable to meet the heightened demand for skilled workers. Similar channels can be put in place, perhaps in cooperation with local groups and the municipality, to put vulnerable workers in the area in contact with residents who need repairs. Such a mapping would be beneficial, especially as the local market, although overwhelmed, seems to be able to respond to shelter rehabilitation needs.

Residents in the area, mainly youth, built informal networks of protection in cooperation with the Lebanese army to protect businesses that have lost their doors and windows from looting. Additionally, most shops in the area have either already repaired damages (glass doors and windows) or have implemented temporary measures such as nylon covers.

⁴ One key initiative is that of "Naqabti tantafid", a grassroots group of engineers and architects, that mapped building rehabilitation needs in Moudawar and made it available to interested parties.

‘V. KHANDA’ AL-GHAMI’



Map of Khanda' Al-Ghami', by UN Habitat.

A. Overview

Families originally from Beirut have primarily inhabited Khanda' Al-Ghami' for around 70 years, creating a diverse neighborhood with a mixture of inhabitants from various confessions, including Christians, Muslims, Armenians and more recently Syrians. Most houses (estimated at 60%) require considerable maintenance and are considered inadequate shelters. The local communities' health needs are most served by two NGO-managed dispensaries: Makassed Association and Al Hayea Alssohiah. These dispensaries include physicians from various specialties offering medical checkups (UN Habitat rapid profiling). Khanda' Al-Ghami' has a very close-knit community, reminiscent of a village in the middle of the city. It should be noted that residents of Khanda' Al-Ghami' reported that they were not receiving adequate aid, support, or attention since the explosion.⁵

⁵ Khanda' Al-Ghami' is an area under the political and de facto security control of the Amal Movement (the political party of the Speaker of the House Nabih Berri) and by Hezbollah, although to a lower extent. There is restricted access for project implementation in the area because of its strategic location (overseeing the parliament, the Serail and downtown Beirut).

B. Assessment

Businesses reported damages ranging from 400 USD to 4,000 USD, with most damage being to glass, doors, walls, ceilings and electricity. In one instance, the damaged electrical wiring of a cafe caused a fire, destroying materials. Additionally, a print shop reported that the shattered glass pierced through a whole set of printed merchandise worth 3,000 USD that they could no longer deliver to the client. A barber reported that he had to obtain debt to fix his glass door worth 700 USD at the exchange rate of 8,500 LBP (meaning a total of around 6,000,000 LBP); considering that as a barber he only charges 5,000-10,000 LBP/person, it will take him months to cover this loss and his debt. For the same reason, he was unable to purchase a metal door to protect the shop.

The area has a variety of small businesses including mini markets and small shops, cafes and restaurants, a tailor, glaziers, a barber, a clothes shop, carpenters, and a blacksmith. All shops have been severely affected by the economic crisis, COVID-19, and the explosion. **There is a very low chance of sustainability for these businesses without intervention and effective economic policies.**

The area has 6-7 glaziers, 6-7 carpenters and 1 blacksmith. Currently, the main problem is the price of imports. **For instance, the price of a glass panel used to be 16 USD, it has increased to 26 USD due to increased demand after the explosion. This is coupled with the increase in exchange rate;** for instance, the glazier would charge at the exchange rate of 8,500 LBP even if the exchange rate of the dollar on the market went down to 5,000 LBP.

Most houses have shattered glass and damages to windows and doors. **Oftentimes, building integrity is questionable due to the nature of old construction that did not receive maintenance.** Some families had to relocate. A mitigation strategy must be put in place to avoid further displacement.

Due to the community's close-knit nature, there is an informal network of skilled workers. In this village-like area of the city, community members are known by name and profession. It was easy for residents to pinpoint 6-7 glaziers, 6-7 carpenters, and 1 blacksmith. However, the main impediment to the implementation of repairs is a lack

of financial support. Residents are unable to afford the ever-increasing prices of imported materials needed for repairs.

The area has not benefited much from aid from outside NGOs and other initiatives. However, from inside Khanda' Al-Ghami' itself, people came together to cook and distribute food as well as to keep the area safe. It is crucial that communities receive support from more coordinated networks during the economic recovery phase.

Small shops need immediate and short-term solutions especially as their businesses did not receive any assistance - including temporary solutions such as nylon covers for windows and doors. However, broader economic reforms, in the form of financial and business-related support and more coordinated mechanisms, must take place for those businesses to survive. Businesses have unanimously reported a decrease in revenue following both the economic crisis and the explosion.

The local market seems diversified and competent enough to address existing shelter rehabilitation needs. However, a subsidy provision plan is needed for rehabilitation to occur and longer-term strategies must be implemented to provide proper maintenance and safe shelters to the inhabitants of Khanda' Al-Ghami'.



Damage to building infrastructure in a residential area in Khanda' Al-Ghami'. Photo taken August 11, 2020

VI. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key findings from this assessment are summarized below, along with recommendations to consider for an effective livelihoods response.

A. Damages

Damages caused by the explosion were significant in the three areas studied: Al-Moudawar and Karantina, Bourj Hammoud, and Khanda' Al-Ghami', affecting both homes and businesses. Home repair needs are mostly related to windows and glass, but also include replacement of furniture. Important to note here is that Beirut apartments often have glassed balconies and glassed rooms (i.e. one side of the room is made entirely of glass windows with no or minimal concrete walls). Home losses also include furniture and basic assets such as refrigerators and ovens. Business losses include damaged doors and windows, but also damaged stocks, raw material and productive equipment.

It was extremely difficult for the assessment team to estimate the cost of repairs, due largely to the following factors:

i) there is high demand for construction workers and prices are increasing alongside increased demand; and ii) most needed materials are affected by the instability of the USD - LBP exchange rate, as well as by the port blast itself. All of this is expected to increase prices.

Recommendation. Emergency interventions may consider providing needed raw construction material, especially construction glass, as most vulnerable households cannot afford material costs. Additionally, the provision of basic needs equipment for homes, such as fridges or ovens, and productive equipment for businesses is a key priority. A voucher system that supports vulnerable households to acquire material and hire skilled workers in partnership with NEF may be considered.

Repairs should urgently take place in the most vulnerable and affected shelters, especially those of old hazardous buildings. It is evident that many shelters are not viable in the long term and prone to structural damage.

A strategy must be put in place for vulnerable shelters to urgently provide quick-fix solutions and then more long-term solutions coupled with a mitigation program to avoid further homelessness and displacement. A subsidy provision plan is suggested for rehabilitation to occur and longer-term strategies must be implemented to provide proper maintenance and safe shelters.

B. Small businesses

Prior to the economic crisis and devaluation of the Lebanese Lira, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Beirut explosion, most small businesses did not survive more than five years. Overall, most vulnerable entrepreneurs' businesses are characterized by their informality, low entry cost, and limited lifetime (successful businesses are often "copied", increasing the number of similar businesses and lowering profit, which speeds market exit). All businesses in the area under assessment have been highly impacted by the current economic and financial crisis and by COVID-19. Businesses have unanimously reported a decrease in revenue following both the economic crisis and the explosion. Many are currently unable to overcome these impacts and may not be able to resume economic activities without support.

Recommendation. Businesses need access to adapted financing to restart activities (e.g. repair damages, equipment, raw materials). It is recommended that emergency interventions provide financing to local businesses through grants and loan schemes, with grants comprising at least 60% of the total financing support. To sustain businesses in the long term, a broader economic strategy must be put in place given the ongoing and severe economic crisis.

Small shops need immediate and short-term solutions to restart activities in the near-term. This can include temporary solutions such as nylon covers for windows and doors. In the longer-term, broader economic reforms, in the form of financial and business-related support and more coordinated mechanisms, must take place for those businesses to survive amid the ongoing economic crisis.

C. Skilled workers and reconstruction

The most needed workers are skilled construction workers and contractors for house repairs. It is currently hard to assess remuneration of these workers, as there is a high demand for them. In fact, vulnerable households may be forced to wait for repairs, as skilled workers are in short supply and may prioritize working with wealthy households and businesses first. There is a premium to pay to be able to make the repair first.

Currently the market cannot respond to local needs, because households and businesses lack the financial resources to procure needed construction material. This is primarily due to the economic crisis and the devaluation of the LBP. There will also be pressure on construction workers to respond to increasing demand. It is not advised, however, to train new construction workers, as: i) this will create market saturation and may decrease the income of construction workers over the medium-term, ii) new trainees may not provide adequate quality of repair services because of lack of experience.

Recommendation. Shelter support interventions for vulnerable households and businesses will need to pay a premium price to start implementation with vulnerable households. They will need to organize quickly, create flexible procurement procedures, and consider making payments in cash (USD or black-market exchange rate equivalent), in order to contract skilled workers for needed work. Given the high demand for repairs, it is to be expected that workers may accept more work than they can deliver. It is therefore important to ensure exclusivity of workers for the required task.

Vulnerable skilled workers are in need of basic tools, equipment, and materials to return to work. The most lacking element is raw construction material. Subsidies must be put in place for both small businesses, skilled workers, and residents.

There is no mapping of skilled workers in the area and there is no specific certification requirement among them. Some have recognized diplomas for vocational training, though this remains limited and is not often required by clients. Construction workers are the most needed business currently.

The biggest risk associated with how to prioritize reconstruction is the social conflict that may arise between households that benefit from repair assistance and those that do not or for whom services are delayed. It is important to implement a fair and transparent selection process and allow for grievance and complaint procedures.

D. Coordination mechanism

There are no coordination mechanisms for economic recovery currently in place in Khanda' Al-Ghami' and Karantina. While Bourj Hammoud was a prioritized area of intervention within the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) for the Syrian crisis, and a network of local active NGOs exist in the area, there is still no overarching coordination mechanism in place to ensure coordination and complementarity in response, and to reduce duplication in program delivery.

Recommendation. **The creation of a coordination mechanism for early recovery is recommended to ensure inclusiveness, coordination, and complementarity of services as NGOs and others respond.** Working in Khanda' Al-Ghami' will require coordination with at least one of the local non-state de facto authorities, namely the Amal Movement or Hezbollah. Without this coordination, interventions in Khanda' Al-Ghami' will be extremely difficult if not impossible to implement.

E. Impact on women

It is unclear whether men or women make up a larger portion of direct victims (survivors) of the explosion. What is evident is that women are more likely to be indirect victims, in that they often have to provide physical and emotional labor to victims, while also serving as breadwinners and/or undertaking household work. Further, they are at higher risk of social and economic exclusion, especially when they face injuries, as was the case with a little girl locked in her room in Karantina. With the lack of employment, heightened tensions, and decreased shelter safety, women and children are also at increased risk of gender-based violence.

Recommendation. **A gendered approach cannot be overlooked in providing aid and support to the victims of the explosion. This should encompass medical and financial support, as well as psychological and psychosocial support, inclusive of education and socioeconomic factors. An in depth protection assessment should also be considered to mainstream protection into early recovery interventions.** Several policies can be implemented to improve the protection of women. For instance, in Iraq, a country with a similar socioeconomic, cultural and political framework, the French NGO Humanity & Inclusion recommends the employment of gender-balanced teams to ensure the constant presence of female health professionals to treat female patients. Moreover, encouraging the training of male family members to support women can prevent the burden of care falling uniquely on female family members and promotes a more equal share of responsibility for care within the household.



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