

Beirut port explosions UNHCR's response update

August 2021

One year ago, a deadly explosion rocked the heart of Beirut killing more than 200 people, injuring over 6,500 and damaging over 74,000 homes.

UNHCR's Beirut blast response has been targeting the most affected and vulnerable

Lebanese, refugees, stateless people and migrant workers alike based on their needs.

A phased approach was adopted to ensure that immediate protection and shelter assistance reached those in urgent need. Medium and long-term responses were being planned in

parallel and implemented once the situation allowed for it, supporting the recovery of the communities affected.

The Office also took the co-leadership of the inter-agency coordination in the protection and shelter sectors.



The ruins of the giant grain silos stand amid the devastated port of Beirut. Photo: ©UNHCR/Houssam Hariri

Overview of the response – Protection

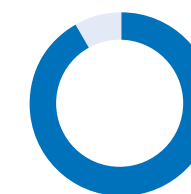
The people affected and their communities have been put at the heart of UNHCR’s response. The massive explosion was highly traumatic for Beirut residents who experienced or witnessed injuries, loss of life and mass destruction of homes and belongings. This was particularly harsh on older people having gone through the civil war, children, female-headed households, and deprived or marginalized communities. UNHCR focused its efforts on providing people with services and assistance to secure their basic rights and dignity, while laying the foundation for emotional and material recovery and resilience.

Mental Health & Psychological Support (MHPSS) & Psychological First Aid (PFA)

Psychological first aid and psychosocial support has been an integral part of all the stages of our response – from emergency to recovery – to help survivors recover and rebuild their self-confidence and resilience. Frontline staff are trained in PFA to receive and appropriately respond to calls from persons in distress, and refer individuals in need to specialized services, including tailored MHPSS.

MHPSS interventions

Over 650 instances instances of PFA provided in the first days of the response



Over 2,050 MHPSS beneficiaries. This represents **92%** of UNHCR's Flash Appeal target. Needs however remain very high.

Community Engagement, Mobilization & Outreach

UNHCR immediately deployed mobile teams to affected areas to exchange with and assess affected populations of all nationalities. This effort was complemented by the presence of 13 Outreach Volunteers already trained by UNHCR and who were deployed in affected areas. UNHCR ensured that refugees were not left behind in the response or cut off from information. Existing capacity was directed to make over 10,000 calls to every refugee and their families known to reside within a 5 km radius from the port, while leveraging well-established mechanisms, such as refugee networks on social media. Additionally, a protection hotline was set up for all victims, advertised through social media and staff on the ground.

Outreach

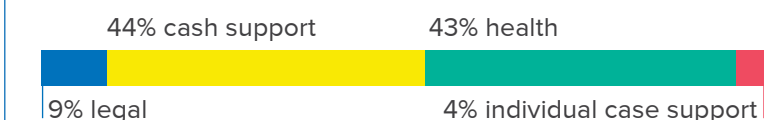


Over 10,000 people reached through home visits, OV's, community activities, hotlines and mobile teams' interviews

This enabled the identification of **more than 2,000 individuals** whose situations needed to be referred to specialized partners for support:



10,000 calls to refugees in a 5 km radius of the port



Individual case support services

Emergency Cash Assistance as well as counselling was provided to vulnerable persons, such as isolated older or disabled persons, who have been impacted by the blast and in need of tailored support. This has enabled families to cover urgent medical needs, recover necessary belongings, and pay for other immediate survival needs. This also includes crucial rehabilitation support for people who sustained serious injuries from the explosions.

Support services



Emergency Cash Assistance

Individual case management

Rehabilitation

Target: 8,962 individuals

Reached: 8,799 individuals

Target: 1,000

Reached: 940

Target: 310

Reached: 330

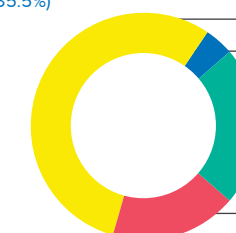
Legal aid

Tailored legal aid has been important to help people obtain legal documents that were lost during the explosion. UNHCR teams also assisted the most vulnerable on challenges related to contracts and tenancy rights, e.g. to mitigate the risks of eviction or increase in lowered rent, in the context of our shelter repair and rehabilitation programme. Such Housing, Land and Property (HLP) issues are expected to remain an area of need as repairs and rehabilitation continue, whether conducted by humanitarian actors, local actors or through self-recovery, especially in the difficult current economic context.

Legal aid interventions

Beneficiaries: 1,694 (135.5%)

Target: 1,250



Breakdown:

- 55%** Legal awareness
- 4%** Legal assistance
- 23%** Legal counselling
- 18%** Housing, land and property rights support

Overview of the response - Shelter

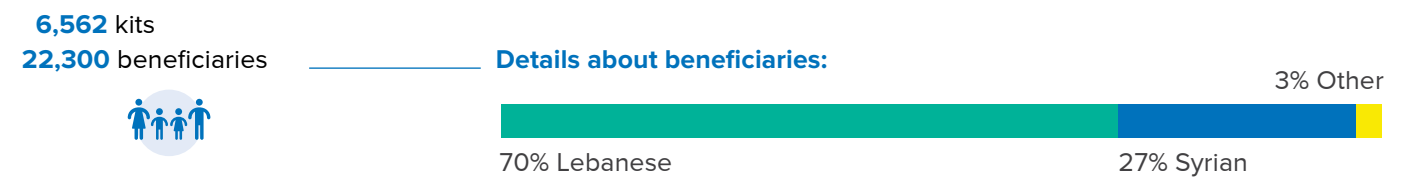
Having an adequate and safe home is a central part of protection. Broken doors and windows expose those who live behind them to the outside and deprives them of their privacy.

Problems in the house can impact an individual's - and especially children's - health, education, security, livelihoods, family life, and increase the risks of gender-based violence (GBV). Older persons or people living with disabilities prior to the explosion, or as a result thereof, as well as other vulnerable populations need special attention and adapted interventions.

The Shelter Sector estimated that some 290,000 people were in need of shelter repairs and targeted about 117,500 among the most vulnerable families.

Weatherproofing kits

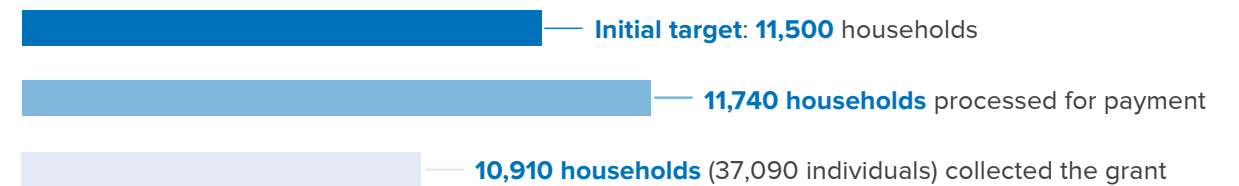
Immediate and urgent needs were addressed through the distribution of over 6,500 UNHCR weatherproofing kits containing plastic sheeting, timber, plywood and associated tools. Partners adapted distribution modalities to bring materials as close to homes as possible, going as far as the doorsteps of individuals with reduced mobility. This brought an initial degree of privacy, dignity and safety to more than 22,000 individuals in the first days of the response.



Cash for shelter assistance

UNHCR supported self-recovery efforts through a shelter cash grant of USD 600 provided directly to eligible households. Over 11,700 of the most vulnerable families affected by the explosions were selected for this programme, close to 11,000 of which collected the one-time grant from UNHCR. They are identified according to the damage level to their homes and their socioeconomic vulnerability, based on the information collected through the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment coordinated by the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) with UNHCR's support. Specific care has been taken to include families who are hardest to reach, including those without a mobile phone or internet access.

11,500 targeted households:



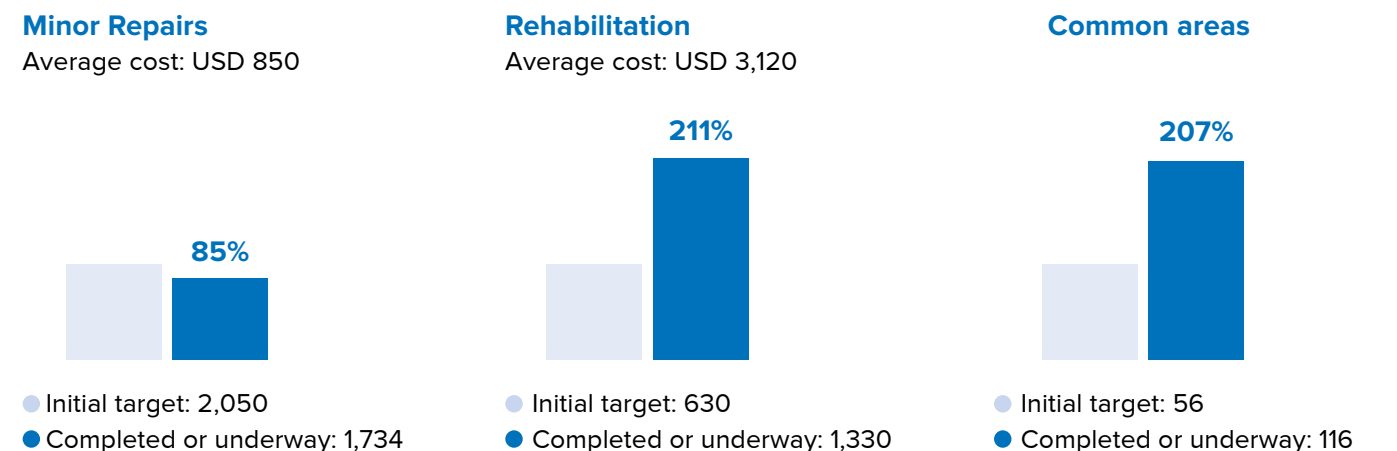
Minor repair and rehabilitation programme

Support for minor repairs or rehabilitation has been provided to households and owners in need through professional contractors. UNHCR repaired 1,734 housing units with interventions costing up to USD 1,500 and rehabilitated 1,330 housing units for up to USD 4,500. UNHCR also supported the repair and rehabilitation of a further 123 housing units in heritage buildings inhabited by vulnerable households (see below). Tenants and owners maintained a voice in how repairs look like and UNHCR ensured that previously substandard apartments were upgraded to meet requirements of dignity. This enables families who live in these apartments to feel comfortable in their homes and support their recovery from the trauma experienced on 4 August.

UNHCR's support for minor repairs and rehabilitations for People of Concern to the organization remains ongoing to ensure a smooth transition with other interventions, notably in the framework of the 3RF.

Common areas

Individuals and families in Beirut exist within their communities, which have also been affected by the explosions. For this reason, UNHCR made sure to include building entrances and stairs in the minor repair and rehabilitation programme. In addition to the above, 116 communal areas, such as sidewalks and stairs, have been repaired to enable inhabitants of affected neighbourhoods to rebuild their community life in safe, improved and inclusive spaces.



Not only bricks...



The devastation caused by the Beirut port explosion.
Photo © UNHCR/Houssam Hariri

The damage done by the explosion goes much further than the individuals it affected or the homes they live in. It has affected intangible elements such as community life, cultural heritage and much more. In recognition of this, and of its importance for recovery, UNHCR supported small interventions designed to make all the difference.

Heritage

UNHCR repaired and rehabilitated 123 damaged apartments and 27 common areas in heritage buildings home to vulnerable families, often with older members. These repairs were carried out by specialized partners with expert oversight. Particular aspects related to Housing, Land and Property have been integrated into the action to ensure that vulnerable tenants maintain their right of tenure and the heritage status of the building is maintained.

This attention to the valuable cultural and architectural heritage of the neighbourhoods in the vicinity of the post was also reflected through its leadership within the sector. UNHCR notably organized 9 online training sessions and 9 field visits with the Arab Center for Architecture attended by 150 humanitarian respondents and contractors.

In preparation for winter, UNHCR also provided a total of 1,280 kits weatherproofing kits to help protect heritage buildings from the elements. This was aimed at helping minimize the impact of the weather conditions on the buildings, including minimizing the risk of collapse as a result of rains.

Community

The neighbourhoods where UNHCR intervened are home to people of diverse social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. UNHCR's programme has taken into consideration the social, cultural, economic and urban recovery aspects that are intimately interlinked with housing. This is also in line with, and paves the way for subsequent recovery and reconstruction approaches articulated under the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) prepared by the UN, EU and World Bank with wide community and institutional consultation. UNHCR has notably supported the creation of 'snapshots' to provide profiles of affected neighbourhoods where it operated, including housing, social life, demographic, integration, infrastructure and services. These profiles help inform interventions in those areas with the aim of improving the lives of its inhabitants while respecting distinct identities.



People walk past shattered cars and buildings in Beirut after the massive blast in the port area of the Lebanese capital. Photo © UNHCR/Houssam Hariri

UNHCR Lebanon is grateful for the support of its donors to our response to the Beirut explosions, including donors of flexible funds and private donors.



Australia, Canada, Denmark, EU, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Private Donors, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, United States

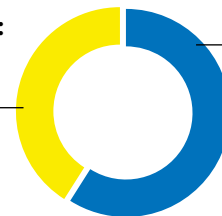
Funding situation for the Beirut port explosions response:



With donors generous funding, UNHCR helped over **100,000 affected persons** through all combined interventions

Overall needs:
USD 35M

Unfunded
34%
USD 12 M



Funded
66%
USD 23 M
as of 27 July 2021

UNHCR Lebanon operation



Funding:

USD 553.7 million requested for the UNHCR Lebanon operation in 2021

42% funded as of 27 July 2021
(USD 233.6 million received)



Workers undertook monumental clear-up tasks as buildings and cars lied shattered in Beirut after the massive blast in the port area. Photo © UNHCR/Houssam Hariri

Additional links

For further information, please visit – [UNHCR Lebanon website](#) or the [UNHCR data portal](#).

Support UNHCR's response in Lebanon: <https://donate.unhcr.org/sg/stand-with-lebanon/~my-donation>

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