



World Food Programme



With physical distancing measures in place, Fatima receives unrestricted multi-purpose cash to support her family in the aftermath of the Beirut blast.
Photo: WFP/Ziad Rizkallah

WFP Lebanon / Beirut Explosion Response

4 Feb 2021

Overview

On 4 August 2020, the devastating explosion at a warehouse at the Port of Beirut killed nearly 200 people, injured over 6,500 people, and left more than 300,000 people without shelter in the Greater Beirut area. The country's only large grain silo was destroyed, and much of the port infrastructure and the surrounding residential and commercial neighbourhoods suffered widespread damage.

WFP estimated that 150,000 vulnerable people affected by the explosion were in need of assistance. In-kind assistance was provided in the immediate aftermath of the explosion through food parcels to families and communal kitchens and provision of wheat flour to bakeries. Assistance then shifted to cash assistance based on rapid needs assessments and six months later, WFP has provided 89,000 people with monthly cash assistance to cover food and other basic needs.

Lebanon is mired in one of the worst economic crises in its history, which has had devastating effects on the economic vulnerabilities and food security of refugees and Lebanese populations, including those not usually considered vulnerable. Food prices in Lebanon have nearly tripled over the past 12 months. At the same time, the Lebanese pound has lost around 80 percent of its value since October 2019. This has had a huge impact on the import-dependent economy and has eroded people's purchasing power and the value of their savings and salaries. Even before the explosion, 40 percent of the Lebanese respondents to WFP's phone survey were worried about not having enough food to eat.

Story Worth Sharing

The Beirut explosion left a heavy toll on Fatima and her family, who were already suffering from the country's economic melt-down and COVID-19 lockdown measures. Now, with a damaged house and repairs they can barely afford, Fatima says she's barely able to make ends meet. "My eldest son was forced to evacuate his house. He now stays with his brother," Fatima tell us. "On top of that, he was forced to shut his business down," she adds, explaining that these problems are also an integral part of the damage the explosion left behind.

Six months following the devastating explosion that took away lives and fractured livelihoods, WFP is supporting 89,000 of the most vulnerable people affected by the explosion, including Fatima's family, with unrestricted, multi-purpose cash. "This support is helping me buy gas [to cook], medicine, detergent and other necessities for the family," Fatima says. "However, prices are on the rise. I notice a difference every other week."

Fatima was also one of 11,000 people who benefitted from the family food parcels that WFP provided immediately after the explosion.



FOOD PARCELS

In the immediate aftermath of the explosion, WFP with its partner SHEILD supported 11,000 people with food parcels in the hard-hit Karantina, Bourj Hammoud, Gemmayze, Geitawi, and Khandaa El Ghamee neighbourhoods of Beirut. Each food parcel contains around 60kg of food items enough for a family of five for a month.

 **11,000**
people benefited from
food parcels



HOT MEALS

WFP distributed food parcels to local partners and NGOs to support communal kitchens providing more than 3,000 hot meals per day to affected families and volunteers cleaning up the neighbourhoods.

 **3,000**
hot meals / per day



WHEAT FLOUR

On 18 August, WFP brought in 12,500 metric tons of wheat flour to support food security in Lebanon following the explosion. In agreement with the Ministry of Economy and Trade, this wheat flour served to increase the weight of the standard bag of bread from 900 grams to 1,000 grams. This means all Lebanese families will get two extra loaves in the staple bag of pita bread for the same price for a period of 62 days.

 **12,500**
metric tons of wheat flour



 **89,000**
people benefit from
cash-based transfers

CASH-BASED TRANSFERS

Rapid needs assessments following the explosion revealed the urgent need for cash assistance to cover basic needs, including food. WFP is providing cash to 89,000 vulnerable people affected by the explosion who were left with little to no income, some even finding themselves homeless. This will increase their purchasing power and enable them to cover their food needs and other necessities such as healthcare or rent.

Beneficiaries were identified through NGO actors who are active in aiding those who have been displaced or have found their residences destroyed. In addition, WFP set up a web-based application form in early September to allow people to register themselves. WFP assessed each application received against specific vulnerability criteria to ensure that individuals or families in need receive adequate assistance.

For the explosion response, WFP also made available for the humanitarian community a platform using blockchain technology to allow for better coordination and avoid duplication of assistance to ensure maximum reach to affected families.

Donors: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, European Commission, Germany, Iceland, Japan, Norway, USA



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