

An Emergency Response Plan for Lebanon

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Lebanese people are being exposed to daily crises and disasters threatening their lives and basic rights of human dignity. The gradual lifting of subsidies without any reforms or holistic strategies for social protection will be leading Lebanon toward a multilayered catastrophe leading to more chaos and armed conflicts.

The United Nations in Lebanon issued the “Emergency Response Plan (ERP)” for Lebanon few days ago as a response to the current Lebanese crisis. It is a 12-month coordinated multi-sectoral Emergency Response Plan (ERP) of humanitarian nature set under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), with the support of OCHA, the UN and NGOs. ERP aims to contribute in alleviating the suffering of the most vulnerable among the Lebanese and migrants affected by the crisis, and it complements the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) as the framework to address the impact of the Syria crisis in Lebanon.

The ERP document outlines the planned humanitarian interventions and recovery activities under three strategic objectives: “1) Saving Lives: to provide essential short-term support to most vulnerable people affected by the economic crisis for them to meet their critical basic needs; 2) Covid Response: to support the response capacity of the Lebanese health system in coping with the COVID-19 emergency; 3) Migrants: Enhance timely, unhindered and equitable access to protection assistance for migrants. The total amount of direct cash assistance to be provided by partners under the framework of the 2021-2022 ERP is about US\$ 140 million, approximately a third of the ERP’s overall funding requirement. Of this amount, US\$ 27.25 million (20 per cent) is planned to be distributed in the form of multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA) complementing other assistance including sector-specific cash and voucher interventions.”

The UN adopts the “Accountability to Affected Populations (APA)” mechanism in implementing the ERP to ensure the people-centered approach and community-centered approach. Integrating gender equality also reinforces the human rights-based approach. This will guarantee that the targeted population is structurally engaged in the process of humanitarian assistance.

The ERP comes in line with the International Conference in Support of the Population of Lebanon that was organized on Aug. 4, 2021, by videoconference and co-chaired by France and United Nations. Participating countries and entities responded to a further UN humanitarian appeal for 357\$ million for the upcoming year, pledging support in finance of a total of 370\$ million dollars, to which should be added substantial in-kind assistance. They highlighted in the co-chairs’ conclusions that this is a short-term support and is in no way a lasting solution for the challenges that Lebanon is confronting.

The humanitarian aid provided by the UN, international organizations, and embassies plays an alternative role of the state to provide the basic services and prevent community tensions and divisions that are spreading every day. The international community is always stressing that all emergency support provided to the Lebanese people is a temporary operation, and it is pressing on forming a reform-focused government that is empowered to implement the urgent reforms and a full-fledged comprehensive and inclusive government-led social protection strategy.

Speaking of reforms, the public procurement law, one of the essential reforms requested by the international community, was enacted in June 2021 after a long process of consultations and technical effort by various stakeholders. It was a huge step in implementing the structural reforms as it is key in addressing corruption in public sector and ensuring good governance. However, this law was challenged by a political party in front of the Constitutional Council as a trial to hinder its implementation. This constitutes an example of the complexity and struggle in implementing the series of reforms and long-term solutions that tackle the root causes of our crises.

A few years ago, Lebanon was calling the international community for sustainable developmental interventions as a host community for Syrian refugees due to the impact of Syrian crisis on Lebanon. Today, the international community is formulating humanitarian and emergency response plan to Lebanon as a targeted community. After entering this phase of deterioration, the question lies: How long will it take for the transition from humanitarian aid to developmental interventions in Lebanon?

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