

# Gender-Based Violence Information Management System

## Ongoing Impact of COVID-19, Economic Situation and Beirut Blast

### Quarter 3 – 2020


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#### Background

Three months have passed by since the Beirut port explosion, causing a large humanitarian loss across of the Lebanese, refugee and migrant community. According to the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), the death toll has reached nearly 200, over 6,000 injured and more than 300,000 displaced<sup>1</sup>. Of the 300,000 displaced, approximately 84,000 of whom are women of reproductive age (15 - 49 years), including 24,000 adolescent girls. The explosion affected many neighborhoods across of the greater Beirut region including migrant and refugee residing areas. Due to the ongoing economic crisis Lebanon has been facing, many communities, including Lebanese, are unable to repair damages and secure food and non-food items. Debris is still reported inside of houses and in some neighborhoods with cleaning operations still ongoing. Furthermore, it has become more difficult for people to protect themselves against COVID-19, as the number of cases has significantly risen since the explosion, with an estimate of 2,000 confirmed cases daily.

In light of this, the third GBVIMS quarterly report will aim to provide analysis on the impact of the Beirut port explosion, increase of COVID-19 cases and spiraling economic crisis. The data in this report is provided by the fourteen (14) data gathering organizations that coordinate the GBVIMS through a National Steering Committee in Lebanon<sup>2</sup>. The analysis has been triangulated with other sources including, protection monitoring reports, focus group discussions and impact assessments.

#### Trends: Increase in Child Survivors and Sexual Assault Incidents



**Data collected through the GBVIMS indicates a 5% increase in child survivors, quarter three (13%) compared to quarter two (8%). In quarter three 5% of incidents reported are survivors of child sexual abuse. Incidents of child sexual abuse has increased 21% among boy survivors, between Q3 (26%) and Q2 (5%).** Some child protection actors indicate that the increase in reporting has been a result of the ongoing distribution of awareness raising material on sexual violence against males. Analysis suggests that the closure of schools has increased the risk of children being exposed to violence

<sup>1</sup> <https://lebanon.unfpa.org/en/publications/beirut-explosion-situation-report-no5>

<sup>2</sup> The data quoted above is only from reported cases and does not represent the total incidence or prevalence of Gender-Based violence (GBV) in Lebanon. These statistical trends are generated exclusively by GBV service providers who use the GBV Information Management System (GBVIMS) for data collection in the implementation of GBV response activities across Lebanon and with the informed consent of survivors. Fourteen organizations contributed to the trends. This data should not be used for direct follow-up with survivors or organizations for additional case follow-up. This information is confidential and must not be shared outside your organization/agency. Should you like to use this data or access more information on the GBV IMS, please contact the Inter-Agency GBVIMS Coordinator, Dana Dib ([dib@unfpa.org](mailto:dib@unfpa.org)).

within the households and increased the number of street working children. Protection monitoring reports indicate that the increase of sexual assault incidents against children has been prominent among Palestinian's in the southern camps, due to the dire economic conditions, high levels of unemployment and children being home-schooled. One of the contributing factors is due to the limited control exercised by Lebanese authorities within Palestinian refugee camps, often resulting in impunity of perpetrators. Furthermore, there is limited access to the Lebanese justice system for persons residing in camps. GBVIMS data indicates that 1% of survivor's are Palestinian.

Incidents of domestic violence and intimate partner violence have been on the rise since the outbreak of COVID-19 and the implementation of lockdown measures. **Data collected through the GBVIMS highlights this trend, with 78% (Q3 2020) of incidents perpetrated by an intimate partner or family member, in comparison to 81% in Q2 2020.** The explosion did not only result in humanitarian consequences but also financial, with significant loss. This comes in a critical time where Lebanon continues to struggle financially and with the outbreak of COVID-19 and its consequences. It is reported that more than 800,000 individuals are currently unemployed, more than 50% of the population is living under the poverty line<sup>3</sup> and 23% are expected to live below the extreme poverty line at the end of 2020<sup>4</sup>. The poor living conditions Lebanon has been facing increases the risks and vulnerabilities upon women and girls.

**The most reported type of Gender-Based Violence incident remains physical assault accounting for 35% in Q3 and psychological/emotional abuse, 32% in Q3.** However, women and girls report that they are constantly being exposed to different types of incidents of violence, such as verbal harassment and through online platforms. The general security situation in Lebanon has increased tensions among communities and burden among women and girls, especially in refugee informal settlements. The economic situation has left many people unable to pay rent or repay debt, which has resulted in evictions, harmful copings mechanisms and infractions in conflict with the law. Many persons including refugees have reported increased threats, exploitative situations and violence when reporting an employer's inability of paying their salary.

Furthermore, GBVIMS data in Beirut Mount Lebanon indicates a **6% increase in incidents of child marriage between the month of August (4%) and September (10%)**. Data from focus group discussions indicates that parents are resorting to child marriage as a negative coping mechanism due the harsh economic conditions and many adolescent girls are being subjected to domestic violence incidents at home and are turning to early marriage as an escape of their reality. Child marriage incidents are reported in all areas across of Lebanon, case managers in the South have reported that the age group of girls getting married early have recently changed. Parents have been marrying off their daughters at a younger age (13-14) compared to last year (age 16-17). Data from protection monitoring reports indicates that the recent increase in child marriage incidents has been reported also among the Palestinian population across of Beirut/Mount Lebanon, North and South.

### Impact of the Beirut Blast

The Beirut port explosion left an indescribable disaster, leaving thousands of people with limited to no access to basic needs, such as water, food and shelter. Moreover, the explosion resulted in psychological

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<sup>3</sup> Beirut Explosion – Rapid Disaster Response Plan – August 2020 <https://www.abaadmena.org/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/20-00268\\_pb15\\_beirut-explosion-rising-poverty-en.pdf](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/20-00268_pb15_beirut-explosion-rising-poverty-en.pdf)



trauma and distress among all persons, including street and working children. **Data collected through the GBVIMS in Beirut Mount Lebanon indicates a 6% increase in sexual assault incidents between the month of August (10%) and September (16%).** Case managers noted that women and girls volunteers have reported an increase in incidents of harassment when distributing food kits and conducting street clean ups, especially the first few days following the blast. The increase in reporting was a result of the presence of many humanitarian actors and the availability of information. **Data from the GBVIMS highlights this by indicating a 6% increase between July (13%) and September (19%) of survivors reporting incidents taking place in the street and 15% reported having no relation with the alleged-perpetrator.** Based on that, women and girls have been taking precautionary measures when helping out the community, such as working in groups, avoiding isolated places and poor lighting conditions when dark, all whilst ensuring that COVID-19 safety measures are in place. **GBVIMS data in Beirut Mount Lebanon indicates, the most two types of incidents reported occurring in the streets are incidents of sexual assault (11% in September), this is highlighted with a 5% increase in sexual assault incidents occurring in the streets between July (6%) and September (11%).** This increase has been a direct result of the Beirut explosion. The explosion caused widespread household instability, family tensions and heightened protection risks caused by unequal gender relations. Destruction of people’s homes and shelter exacerbates risks of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and the mental health impact of losing one’s home, identity and safe space.

The Rapid Gender Assessment conducted by ABAAD, UN Women, Care, UNFPA and ESCWA <sup>5</sup>also pointed out that discriminatory practices, fear of harassment or abuse are deterring women from receiving equitable humanitarian assistance. At the same time, women and marginalized groups remain in urgent need to access health services, especially first aid care. **Furthermore, GBVIMS data indicates that in quarter 3, 4% of incidents are perpetrated by landlords.** Sector data indicates that SGBV survivors have faced eviction threats and are being exposed to harassment by landlords. In addition, exploitation incidents often go unreported, in particular among the refugee community, as many are not able to report the incident to authorities due to absence of a legal residency. The Internal Security Forces indicates a 104% increase in incidents of sexual exploitation between the month of July and August<sup>6</sup>. Protection monitoring reports indicate that the increase of sexual exploitation and sex work is among women and LGBTI+ communities. In response to the increased incidents, humanitarian organizations have been distributing messages in leaflets related to the protection of sexual exploitation & abuse and focusing particular attention to vulnerable groups such as women and children at risk, LGBTI+ and persons with disabilities. GBVIMS data indicates that 1% (Q3) of survivors who have some form of disabilities.

The Beirut blast caused the destruction of many safe spaces, however organizations set up immediate alternate safe spaces, where case management and mental health services were made available. According to the recent mapping of services conducted by the SGBV sector, 15 organizations are currently providing services in the affected areas, of which 12 provide case management services. Nevertheless, many females and males hesitated to reach out to the needed services, as they had feelings of pride and

<sup>5</sup> [https://lebanon.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/rapid\\_gender\\_analysis\\_october\\_28\\_2020\\_final\\_1.pdf](https://lebanon.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/rapid_gender_analysis_october_28_2020_final_1.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <http://isf.gov.lb/ar/article/9113032>

shame asking for help or did not believe that they were a priority group to receive assistance. In addition, 34% did not know where to register for needed assistance<sup>7</sup>.



Traditionally, crisis exacerbate conditions and place women and girls at higher risks of violence. GBV case managers report that many survivors did not disclose incidents of SGBV, but were more concerned in accessing services related to livelihood, shelter services, hygiene kits and dignity kits. United Nations agency's distributed more than 36,500 dignity kits<sup>8</sup> to women and girls in the affected areas<sup>9</sup> since the port explosion. The distribution of dignity kits also serve as an important opportunity to listen to women and girl's primary concerns and raise awareness about the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights. The provision of the kits also becomes a possible entry point for introducing services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Moreover, it was no surprise that case managers reported that persons that had the courage to access services were related to mental health, as the explosion resulted in the majority of people suffering from trauma. Abaad reports that between June and August 2020 they received 1,472 calls to their helpline in comparison to 342 in the same period in 2019<sup>10</sup>.

## Vulnerable Groups

Evidence from previous crises demonstrate that persons with disabilities, migrant domestic workers and LGBTI+ persons face increase risks, racism, discrimination and restrictions in accessing services and enjoy their rights. The pre-existing vulnerabilities have increased since the Beirut port blast, with hundreds who have lost their homes and many of which can not afford the needed repairs. A qualitative Joint Rapid Multi-Sectoral Gender Assessment<sup>11</sup> was carried out to measure the impact of the Beirut Blast among women in the LGBTQI+ community, older women, domestic migrant workers and women of reproductive age, found out that participants have all been affected by the blast, with the psychological effects the most obvious<sup>12</sup>. The impact of the explosion has pushed some of the most vulnerable affected persons to move towards negative coping mechanisms, including sex work. This tragedy comes after hundreds of migrant workers have been made homeless by their employers or have been evicted. Since April 2020, the Anti-Racism Movement (ARM) has reported that they have received 600 calls from migrant workers threatened with eviction<sup>13</sup>. Migrant workers are at disproportionate risk of contracting COVID-19 due to the overcrowding in housing and inability to take all precautionary measures. In addition to migrant domestic workers, people living without identification documents as well as refugees are particularly vulnerable<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>7</sup><https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documentsreports/documentdetail/899121600677984471/beirut-residents-perspectives-on-august-4-blast>

<sup>8</sup> 34,000 dignity kits were distributed by UNFPA and 2,500 by UNICEF. In addition, UNICEF distributed separately 5,000 sanitary pads the first few days after the Beirut blast. The dignity kits contain sanitary pads, soap, towels, toothbrushes, toothpaste and recently added reusable face masks to the contents of the kits.

<sup>9</sup> <https://lebanon.unfpa.org/en/publications/beirut-explosion-situation-report-no6>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.abaadmena.org/documents/ebook.1601377248.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> [https://lebanon.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/rapid\\_gender\\_analysis\\_october\\_28\\_2020\\_final\\_1.pdf](https://lebanon.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/rapid_gender_analysis_october_28_2020_final_1.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://lebanon.unfpa.org/en/publications/beirut-explosion-situation-report-no5>

<sup>13</sup> Homelessness Among Migrant Workers on the Rise <https://www.armlebanon.org/content/homelessness-among-migrant-workers-rise>

<sup>14</sup> UN Women: 2020 Beirut Port Explosion Response Plan: <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/08/un-women-2020-beirut-explosion-response-plan#view>

## Recommendations

- Ensure wide dissemination of leaflets on protection (hotline, available services, legal aid) from sexual exploitation and abuse and safety messages for women and girls responding to the Beirut explosion.
- Ensure that case management services continue to be available with expanded access at established safe spaces in Beirut.
- Ensure update of the referral pathway in the areas affected by the blast and further dissemination of information on services available.
- Continue to advocate to ensure that individuals at risk, especially women head of household, members of the LGBTQI+ community can access cash assistance programs (accompanied with case management for those in need and alternatives for livelihood opportunities).
- Ensure the ongoing revision and amendment of the remote SGBV case management guidelines, ensuring content is tailored to the needs of survivors.
- Increase the availability of Mental health and Psychosocial services through a strengthened coordination mechanism between the SGBV and MHPSS sector.
- Increase the availability of livelihood services through a strengthened coordination mechanism between the SGBV and livelihood sector.
- Advocacy for a strengthened SGBV response and increased funding in Palestinian camps.
- Increased coordination among the GBVIMS steering committee and organizations working in Palestinian camps on the possibility of inclusion as users of the GBVIMS.
- Strengthened coordination between the GBVIMS and CPIMS+ Steering Committee on data triangulation of trends against boy survivors of child sexual abuse.