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Report of the Director-General

Seventh Supplementary Report: ILO support for the emergency response to the crisis in Lebanon

► Crisis in Lebanon

1. Since the current armed conflict began in the region in October 2023, there has been an ongoing exchange of fire, mainly concentrated along the Blue Line separating the south of Lebanon from northern Israel, with large numbers of civilians from the border areas displaced in both countries. Since late September 2024, there has been a marked increase in the intensity, frequency, magnitude and geographical depth of attacks in both countries. In Lebanon, airstrikes have taken place across the country, especially in South Lebanon, the eastern and northern Bekaa Valley and the southern suburbs of Beirut. On 10 October 2024, a ground incursion by the Israeli Defence Forces in South Lebanon began.
2. On 18 October 2024, the Lebanese authorities reported that 2,412 had been killed, 11,285 had been wounded and more than 1.2 million people, accounting for about one fifth of the population, had been displaced since the escalation of hostilities in Lebanon. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that, as of 16 October 2024, nearly 405,000 people (30 per cent Lebanese and 70 per cent Syrians) are believed to have fled escalating violence in Lebanon and crossed into the Syrian Arab Republic. The crisis has had a catastrophic impact on civilians, creating a dire humanitarian situation. Basic services have been disrupted and critical infrastructure destroyed. Five hospitals in Lebanon are out of

service following recent attacks and 100 primary healthcare facilities have closed.¹ Furthermore, the education sector has suffered tremendously, with half of Lebanon's public schools now being used as collective shelters and 40 per cent of students displaced.²

3. This humanitarian crisis in Lebanon is unfolding against a backdrop of financial and economic collapse since 2019 that has had a dramatic impact on the country's institutions, public services, labour market and social protection system. A large influx of Syrian refugees hosted over the past decade in Lebanon has been a further burden only partially offset by humanitarian assistance. The economic downturn has led to severe inflation, widespread poverty and the sharp devaluation of the Lebanese pound, eroding the purchasing power of citizens and limiting access to essential services such as healthcare and education.
4. The impact of the crisis on ILO operations in Lebanon and the Arab States region is outlined in the Appendix.

► Emergency response

5. The large number of internally displaced persons has put tremendous pressure on Lebanon. Years of economic crisis and a weakened State mean that the Government lacks the resources and capacity to respond effectively and is dependent on the assistance of the United Nations (UN) and foreign aid. An emergency response operation has begun, coordinated by the Government-led Emergency and Relief Committee, with UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community groups undertaking most of the implementation.
6. Upon the request of the Government, the ILO has developed its own Emergency Response Plan for Lebanon to contribute to the wider UN response. The ILO plan is built around its mandate and expertise, seeking to add value to the humanitarian response and to prepare the ground for recovery, in line with the ILO's role in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The plan builds on existing ILO projects in Lebanon and is implemented in collaboration with national and local authorities and ILO constituents.
7. The ILO response plan is articulated around the following initial pillars, which may still evolve in the coming weeks as the added value the ILO can provide is further fine-tuned: social protection, infrastructure rehabilitation, sustaining jobs and livelihoods, and working with constituents. The ILO's interventions were initiated with US\$400,000 of Regular Budget Technical Cooperation funds allocated in early October 2024 by the Regional Office. Development cooperation projects have been repurposed to respond to the crisis. There is ongoing close coordination with current ILO donors in this respect, which include the Governments of Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as well as the European Union. To date, an initial US\$3.4 million from projects has been repurposed for the emergency response, which consists of the interventions outlined below.

¹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "[Lebanon: Flash Update #35 - Escalation of hostilities in Lebanon, as of 14 October 2024](#)" and "[Lebanon: At a Glance - Escalation of hostilities in Lebanon, as of 14 October 2024 \(assistance provided since 27 September 2024\)](#)", 16 October 2024.

² 360 Consulting, "[Lebanon: Crisis Response Insights - Weekly Update # 2](#)", 16 October 2024.

Social protection

8. In partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the ILO have taken immediate measures to support vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities. Through the national systems and infrastructure set up by the partners in 2023 for a National Disability Allowance, it was possible to immediately make an advance payment on the scheduled allowance to over 27,000 individuals aged 15-30. In addition, an additional emergency top-up of \$100 was allocated to more than 5,000 beneficiaries from the crisis-affected areas. A similar top-up for a target group of 4,603 refugees with disabilities from the most affected areas of the country is also in progress.
9. The ILO is also working with the Ministry to enable outreach to disability cardholders for data verification and enrolment in an emergency cash assistance programme. Technical assistance is also under way in conceptualizing an Emergency Social Protection Platform led by the Ministry, aiming to improve the coordination and delivery of cash assistance for displaced households in Lebanon.
10. Finally, the ILO is also devising an intervention, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and the National Social Security Fund, that aims to address the gaps in social health insurance for the vulnerable displaced population by reducing the financial burden of large out-of-pocket healthcare expenditures for a predefined package of health services. In addition to the direct reimbursement of copayments for the eligible population, the initiative will seek to streamline the Fund's internal processes to accelerate claims processing for the displaced population, ensuring quicker compensation for healthcare providers and minimizing delays for patients in accessing care.
11. It is important to note that this ILO intervention complements humanitarian distribution of food and non-food items as well as immediate cash assistance. It was possible to move fast because of previous investments in developing national systems and capacities under the National Social Protection System. The ILO has been the lead advocate for this initiative as part of a wider effort to transition from UN- and NGO-administered cash assistance schemes to national social security schemes.

Shelter rehabilitation and service delivery through labour-intensive works

12. The ILO has been implementing an Employment-Intensive Infrastructure Programme in Lebanon for several years. This allowed the ILO to move quickly to enhance living conditions for displaced families in collective shelters, while providing work opportunities for those within the vicinity of the shelters and municipalities.
13. Coordination and site selection has been conducted in conjunction with both the Government's emergency response coordination body and the Shelter Working Group (led by the UNHCR), using the ILO's rapid assessment mechanism to identify the required interventions in cooperation with other actors to avoid duplication. Immediate activities in the shelters include production and installation of temporary partition panels to create designated living spaces, improvements to the existing toilets and showers and drainage in the buildings, provision of solar power for lights and charging, and the refurbishment of kitchens to enable communal cooking. At the same time, the ILO will extend enhanced cash-for-work activities (following ILO standards), including cleaning facilities, street clearing, cooking in communal kitchens and construction. Further work to prepare the buildings used as shelters for the upcoming winter is being assessed. This includes repairing heating systems, windows and doors and checking

for any structural deficiencies. The ILO's work under this intervention will reach an estimated 8,000 beneficiaries.

Support to social partner organizations

14. The ILO is consulting with the tripartite constituents and supporting their involvement in the overall response, including in the areas mentioned above. In addition to its work with the Government, the ILO is responding to requests for support to the social partner organizations to provide services to their affected members.
15. The ILO has supported the General Confederation of Lebanese Workers (CGTL) and the National Federation of Workers' and Employees' Trade Unions of Lebanon (FENASOL) in establishing crisis cells to effectively address the urgent needs and increasing demands of approximately 600 displaced members, including the workers directly involved in the response to the emergency situation. Leaders from both organizations are being assisted in their efforts to collaborate and to join the national emergency committee, enabling them to influence government actions more effectively.
16. Further, the ILO is working with FENASOL and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to support migrant domestic workers, who are particularly vulnerable due to issues such as unpaid wages and limited access to shelters. This area of work is being further developed, including the preparation of guidance for employers of domestic workers and the establishment of a referral and complaints mechanism to provide adequate support to care workers, including domestic workers, in addition to collecting data and providing additional support to care workers through both the CGTL and FENASOL.
17. The ILO is also supporting the Association of Lebanese Industrialists (ALI) and strengthening its capacity to address the needs of enterprises and better support displaced communities. This includes facilitating dialogue between the ALI and its members and the larger humanitarian response agencies, such as UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP), to explore options for Lebanese businesses to manufacture products required by the humanitarian response. The ALI has begun creating a business helpdesk to support its members in accessing information on customs and administrative procedures, procurement opportunities and bidding processes, identifying requested goods and services from buyers, and facilitating logistical solutions.
18. Additionally, the ALI, as the main representative of the private sector, is coordinating with other employers' and business organizations on their engagement in the rapid assessment of the impact of the war on enterprises and their workforce. This research will examine constraints on access to raw materials, inputs, imports and markets, alongside financial and logistical difficulties such as liquidity shortages, supply chain disruptions and rising operational costs. The information collected will enable the ALI to adapt its services and to advocate for programmatic and policy measures, including financial assistance in the form of loans, grants and wage subsidies; technical guidance in areas such as skills development and digital solutions; and policy interventions, including in the areas of tax relief, job retention policies and easing regulations.

Sustaining jobs and livelihoods

19. Beyond the immediate response set out above, the ILO is also examining how jobs and livelihoods may be sustained. The agriculture sector is among the hardest hit by the current conflict, with farmers and agricultural workers in affected regions being forced to leave their

farms and their primary source of income. This disruption poses significant risks to both agricultural production and food security in the country.

20. In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and based on a rapid assessment, the ILO is identifying key crops for which sustained production is critical for food security in the upcoming season. Based on the urgent needs of farmers to increase production, the focus is on ensuring farmers have access to necessary inputs, linking them to markets and securing adequate storage facilities. These efforts aim to prevent food shortages, reduce food insecurity and mitigate the risks of job losses within the agricultural sector. The ILO is also setting up schemes for short-term wage employment opportunities for displaced agricultural workers to sustain their livelihoods while supporting farmers in meeting their production needs ahead of the upcoming agricultural cycle.
21. The ILO is also working with the Ministry of Social Affairs to use its Social Development Centres to provide services to displaced people, with interventions already planned in certain areas around Beirut being expanded, increasing the number of emergency employment opportunities in cleaning municipal water infrastructures and providing essential services at the collective shelter centres.
22. Beyond the immediate response, the ILO is actively working with UN partners to plan for the recovery, including through a Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment planned by the UN, the World Bank and the European Union. The ILO intends to co-lead work on livelihoods and jobs and to involve its constituents for that purpose. It can be expected that in the eventual recovery, the large number of Syrian refugees remaining in Lebanon and their access to employment will be a significant issue. The ILO will advocate for decent work to be mainstreamed in the approach based on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.

► Draft decision

23. **The Governing Body took note of the information provided in document GB.352/INS/19/7 and the progress made by the Office in addressing the urgent needs of ILO constituents in Lebanon, and called upon Member States to contribute towards the full implementation of the emergency response plan.**

► Appendix

Implications for ILO operations in Lebanon and the Arab States region

1. September 2024 witnessed a marked change in the ongoing armed conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, with the southern suburbs of Beirut being repeatedly hit by airstrikes. One UN staff member and her son and a UN contractor have been killed and five UN peacekeepers have been wounded in the recent attacks on the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).
2. On 30 September, an airstrike hit the Cola area in Beirut, 3 kilometres from the ILO office. On 3 October, airstrikes hit the Bachoura area, 400 metres from the UN House and 2.1 kilometres from the ILO office. These marked the first strikes within central Beirut, and have since been succeeded by further attacks within close proximity of the ILO office.
3. Over the past few months, United Nations security measures and restrictions in Lebanon have been progressively ramped up. From 1 August 2024, all dependants of internationally recruited staff were required to leave the country until further notice. National staff living in vulnerable areas in parts of Beirut and the south and east of the country have been temporarily relocated elsewhere in Lebanon. Travel to certain areas of the country has been restricted, affecting programme implementation. A temporary suspension of incoming UN missions has also been imposed, excluding critical missions relevant to UN programmes in Lebanon.
4. The UN Security Management Team for Lebanon conducted a programme criticality assessment over recent months and decided that, as of the end of September, all non-critical international staff would be subject to mandatory relocation. As a result, the Office determined that eight international staff members qualified as being critical to the ILO's programme implementation in Lebanon. These eight staff may leave Beirut on missions, leave or to work remotely, but can return to Lebanon as and when needed. All Decent Work Technical Support Team technical specialists and other Regional Office staff have since left the country. Through a waiver, the UN has allowed international staff with Lebanese nationality living in Lebanon to remain in the country, which is the case for four ILO international staff.
5. On 30 September 2024, the International Civil Service Commission introduced a special hardship classification of "D" for Beirut for an initial period of three months. Alongside the earlier restrictions on dependants, this means that Beirut has become a non-family duty station.
6. The ILO has implemented all UN decisions referred to above and has taken further steps to ensure the safety and security of its staff. The current ILO premises have undergone strengthened security measures and staff have increasingly been teleworking to limit their movements.
7. The Office has made further arrangements to contribute to the costs for national staff members to apply shatter-resistant film to the windows of their residences (there had already been a requirement of the UN Department of Safety and Security for international staff to apply the shatter-resistant film). The Office has also contracted a service provider to assist with in-country relocation in the event of evacuation, including securing accommodation and transportation. The regional management team is regularly meeting with all staff to provide updates on the situation and on UN decisions that affect the ILO. Security preparedness updates and psychosocial support opportunities have been provided.

8. Recognizing the deteriorating situation in Lebanon, the Director-General intends to temporarily relocate the Regional Office for the Arab States and the Decent Work Technical Support Team for a period of one year. The Office is currently exploring relocation options, taking into consideration the existing ILO presence in various locations, preparing a relocation plan and making detailed calculations of costs, both in terms of the one-off move from Beirut and the ongoing costs of operating in different locations. Sessions will be organized to inform staff members. Aspects that have implications for staff will be subject to consultation with the staff members concerned and the Staff Union, and will be applied in accordance with the relevant rules and regulations.
9. All temporary arrangements have been put in place to ensure that the office can continue to provide services to constituents and to deliver the agreed programme of work across the region. This has required a number of extended missions outside Beirut and the implementation of remote working arrangements for both technical specialists and financial, programming and human resource staff.
10. When the Regional Office and Decent Work Technical Support Team is relocated, an ILO office will remain in Beirut to accommodate the national staff currently assigned to the Regional Office, the Decent Work Technical Support Team and development cooperation projects in Lebanon.