

# Lebanon

## AT A GLANCE



### Country data *(2005 figures, unless otherwise noted)*

- 2006 Human Development Index: 0.774, ranked 78 of 177 countries
- Population (2006): 4.1 million
- GNI per capita Atlas method (2006, current US\$): 5,490
- Under-five infant mortality rate: 30 per 1,000
- Population undernourished (2001–03): 3 percent
- Population with sustainable access to improved water source (2004): 100 percent
- Official development assistance (ODA): 243 million
- 2006 Corruption Perception Index: 3.6, ranked 63 of 163 countries

Sources: World Bank; United Nations Development Programme, 2006; Transparency International, 2006.

### The crisis

#### Lebanon

- Approximately 1,200 Lebanese militants and civilians killed and 4,400 injured;
- One million people displaced; 40,000 to Cyprus, 150,000 to Syria;
- 100,000 trapped in south with declining food, water, medicine, fuel reserves;
- 107,000 homes damaged or destroyed; infrastructure damage estimated at US\$3.5 billion; economic losses of US\$12 billion; unemployment rose from 8–10 to 25 percent;
- 85 percent of farmers lost crops valued at approx. US\$150 million; unexploded ordinance from cluster bombs killed 27 civilians since end of hostilities.

#### Israel

- 19 soldiers and 43 civilians killed; 894 civilians injured; 400,000 in the north displaced;
- War cost US\$5.3 billion; incurred US\$1.6 billion loss to economy; businesses lost US\$1.4 billion;
- 12,000 buildings (incl. schools and hospitals), 6,000 homes were damaged.

Sources: International Crisis Group, 2006; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2006; UNHCR, 2006; OCHA, 2006; Lebanon Higher Relief Council; National Demining Office; Government of Lebanon; Oxfam, 2006; World Bank.

### The humanitarian response

- Total humanitarian aid exceeded US\$514 million (incl. projects listed/not listed in Flash Appeal); principal donors: U.S. (US\$109 million / 21.1 percent); Saudi Arabia (US\$63 million / 12.3 percent); EC/ECHO (US\$58 million / 11.3 percent); Italy (US\$33 / 6.4 percent); United Arab Emirates (US\$25 million / 4.9 percent); OECD-DAC members (US\$357 million / 69.4 percent of total funds);
- Gulf countries also contributed significantly with over \$125 million (25 percent);
- The initial UN Flash Appeal request for \$155 million was revised to \$96.5 million; the total response was \$119 million (total funding only to projects listed in Flash Appeal), a coverage of 123.3 percent;
- The principal donors for Flash Appeal were EC/ECHO (US\$25 million or 21.1 percent), the U.S. (US\$18 million or 15.0 percent), Norway (US\$7 million or 5.8 percent), Canada (US\$5 million or 4.5 percent), France (US\$5 or 4.3 percent), and Sweden (US\$5 million or 4.3 percent); members of the OECD-DAC contributed over US\$98 million or 82.8 percent of total funds;
- The UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) supplied \$5 million for initial humanitarian operations.

Source: OCHA, Financial Tracking Service.

# Lebanon

## Crisis of Civilian Protection

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### Introduction\*

Both Lebanon and Israel suffered humanitarian repercussions from the 2006 July War in Lebanon between the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and the Lebanese Party of God (Hezbollah). The ensuing humanitarian crisis was considered primarily one of “protection,” with a brief emergency phase, and significant internal displacement of civilians and infrastructure destruction.

This “Second Lebanon War,” lasted 34 days. A cease-fire between Hezbollah and IDF went into effect on 14 August. In early September, a strengthened UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL II) was deployed to ensure the cessation of hostilities.

Due to the disparate levels of destruction caused by the massive military response from Israel, international

institutions, national NGOs, and foreign states attempted to relieve the devastation of Lebanon. Initially characterised by its rapidity and the emphasis placed on protection issues, international humanitarian aid also emerged as increasingly politicised, irrevocably affecting the neutrality and independence of implementing agents.

### Dynamics of the conflict: Hezbollah vs. Israel and regional power politics

The 2006 Lebanon War has its roots in the broader Arab–Israeli conflict. Originating out of the first Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1978—to combat the Palestine Liberation Organisation’s (PLO) use of Lebanon as a

\* The opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of DARA.

base to attack Israel—and the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, Hezbollah declared its founding principles in a 1985 “Open Letter,” giving as its primary *raison d’être* armed resistance against Israeli occupation. When the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1991) officially ended with the US-endorsed and Saudi-sponsored 1989 Taef Accords, Hezbollah did not disband its militia as demanded. Nor did it disarm, as stipulated in UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701. The eruption of hostilities was the result of competing international interests, regional alliances, and continued confrontations with Israel over the Shebaa Farms territory and the issue of political prisoner swaps. In the aftermath of the 2006 Lebanon War, Hezbollah has sought political leverage within the country’s sectarian mix. Humanitarian aid has been used by forces both in favour and against Hezbollah to advance political ends.<sup>1</sup>

Since the Taef Accords, the Lebanese political system has been increasingly characterised by sectarian confessionalism, entailing a delicate balance among various religious communities in government, parliament, and the civil administration: the Prime Minister is Sunni, the Speaker of Parliament is Shia, and the President is Christian. Lebanon lacks a strong central authority, a fact which has helped to feed the power of militias, such as Hezbollah, and the development of complex socio-political identities and loyalties. In addition, the involvement of Syria, Israel, and the PLO, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s, are examples of complex regional and international politics. Representative of a large section of the Shia population, Hezbollah is classified as a terrorist organisation by numerous governments, including the United States and the United Kingdom—but not the EU—and maintains close connections to both Syria and Iran. Hezbollah is both a political and paramilitary organisation and has been a major force in Lebanon, having gained democratic representation in the Parliament since 1992.

The immediate political backdrop of the 2006 Lebanon War was the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in February 2005, the installation of a new, Western-backed, anti-Syrian government led by Fouad Siniora following the popular protests of the Cedar Revolution, and the withdrawal of Syrian troops in the spring of 2005. This led to increasing tension between the US/Israel vision of the Greater Middle East and the Iran/Syria/Hezbollah “Shia axis.” However, the trigger for the conflict was the 12 July killing on Israeli territory of three Israeli soldiers and the abduction of two others by Hezbollah.

Considered a *casus belli* by Israel, the IDF launched intensive aerial bombing of Lebanon, targeting civilian infrastructure such as the airport, roads, bridges, and energy plants. An Israeli naval blockade was established along the Lebanese coast, and repeated IDF ground invasions were attempted. In response, Hezbollah fired more than 4,000 rockets at northern Israeli towns. Both sides systematically failed to distinguish between civilian and military targets.

The hostilities came to an end on 14 August with the implementation of a UN-sponsored ceasefire called for by Security Council Resolution 1701, which does not address the causes of the conflict, including political divisions within Lebanon, the reform of state institutions, or perhaps most importantly the relevance of resolving the broader regional conflict. Though incurring substantial economic damage to Israel, the war devastated the Lebanese economy, weakened its government, and further polarised politics.

### Impact of the crisis: Civilian displacement and economic destruction

The consequences of the 34-day conflict for Lebanon were devastating. This was not a typical humanitarian crisis, but principally one of protection. Due to their proximity to military targets, Lebanese civilians were injured or died. Collateral damage also included displacement and the loss of their livelihoods.

During the conflict, some 8,600 were reported injured in Lebanon and Israel combined. In Lebanon, some 1,200 people, mostly civilians were killed, and an estimated 4,400 were injured; in Israel, 158 people, including 43 civilians, were killed, with 1,500 injured. Lebanon suffered massive infrastructure damage. At its peak, the conflict displaced up to 1.5 million people, many finding shelter in schools or with host families.<sup>2</sup> More than 40,000 Lebanese fled to Cyprus, 150,000 to Syria, and some 60,000 foreigners were evacuated.

Israeli bombing of key infrastructure had an immediate and long-term impact on the Lebanese population and economy. The World Bank estimates that 107,000 homes were either damaged or destroyed and infrastructure damage was estimated at US\$3.5 billion. Total economic losses for Lebanon—a country already heavily indebted and ranked 78th in the UNDP Human Development Index in 2006—were estimated at US\$12 billion. Losses to the Israeli economy are estimated to be close to US\$7 billion. South Lebanon suffered most, and

since the hostilities coincided with the harvest, around 85 percent of farmers lost crops, valued at approximately US\$150 million.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, due to the level of destruction of infrastructure, including roads and bridges, international and Lebanese humanitarian agencies could not access the affected civilian population, many of whom lacked food, water, medicine, or fuel for transportation.

The Israeli use of cluster bombs has also had a lasting impact on South Lebanon. The UN estimated that these cluster bombs, used intensively along the Litani River, have contaminated wide areas, making the return of the displaced to villages and fields a deadly risk. According to the National Demining Office, by June 2007, 27 civilians had been killed following cessation of hostilities.

### **International donor response: Strong humanitarian response, weak pressure for peace**

International donors rapidly mobilised support for UN agencies and NGOs to alleviate suffering. However, the international community lacked decisiveness and unity in calling for the protection of civilians and safe humanitarian access. Therefore, for many humanitarian actors, the Lebanon crisis underlines the need to define the parameters of a protection crisis more precisely, as well as the responsibilities and actions to be taken by all relevant actors, including donors, the UN, NGOs, and civil society.

The Lebanon situation created malaise and frustration among humanitarian actors. The perception of agencies in the field was that the international community was late and weak in its public condemnation of the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and in calling for an immediate ceasefire and the protection of humanitarian space.<sup>4</sup> International media coverage was very critical of the damage to infrastructure, the exodus of civilians, and the divisions in the international community. Media coverage appears to have been somewhat unbalanced, with claims made of human rights violations which were, in fact, not committed, journalists doctoring photographs, and often exaggerating and misinterpreting civilian damage and involvement.

When the war started, it was the expectation of many that the UN would intervene quickly. When it was unable to stop the hostilities, seriously tarnishing its image, neutrality, and legitimacy in the Middle East, donors stepped in, with remarkable speed and generosity. The international community contributed over US\$514

million in relief assistance. This was, in part, in response to 24 July UN Flash Appeal, which requested US\$155 million—revised downward to US\$96.5 million following the cessation of hostilities—and the change in the humanitarian situation. The Appeal received US\$119 million, representing 123.3 percent of funds requested. The UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) supplied an additional US\$5 million for food, medicine, logistics, and security for initial humanitarian operations. The extremely high level of funding was due to a combination of factors, including the political subtext of the response, the high degree of media coverage of the crisis, and the contributions of Arab State donors. The situation was made more complex by the fact that the Lebanese authorities did not usually have a say as to where funds were directed, which left decisions about the destination of funds in the hands of political actors. Officially, Hezbollah claims to have used the money (some US\$380 million given by Iran) for reconstruction and financial compensation to the families of victims of Israeli attacks.<sup>5</sup>

The United States was the principal donor of humanitarian aid, with over US\$109 million (21.1 percent). The next largest donors were Saudi Arabia (over US\$63 million or 12.3 percent), the EC/ECHO (over US\$58 million or 11.3 percent), Italy (US\$33 or 6.4 percent), and United Arab Emirates (US\$25 million or 4.9 percent). Members of the OECD-DAC contributed over US\$357 million or 69.4 percent of the total funds. Gulf countries, referred to as “new” or “emerging” donors, contributed significantly to the crisis with over US\$125 million (25 percent).

Implementing agencies in the field praised the timeliness and flexibility of donors (Principles 5 and 12 of the GHD—in particular EC/ECHO, DFID, and USAID/OFDA—for proposal design, reallocation and provision of funds.<sup>6</sup> As soon as needs assessments had been made, EC/ECHO announced two financial contributions, in two tranches of €10 million, on 24 and 26 July, respectively. Contracts were typically issued quickly and NGOs attributed the few delays to the significant turnover of EC/ECHO’s technical assistants during the first month of the crisis. For its part, DFID announced its first financial contribution of £2 million on 20 July and a second of £2.2 million on 22 July.

However, many implementing agencies felt that donor policy was driven by political interests and not only humanitarian needs. Donor behaviour must also be seen in the light of efforts to counter the national influence of Hezbollah, and regional influence of Iran, and

to support the incumbent US-backed government, within the broader context of the Middle East, in particular Israeli-Palestinian relations, the conflict in Iraq, and the global “war on terror.”

### **Implementation of the humanitarian response: Humanitarian access and the Hezbollah dilemma**

During the first emergency phase, the humanitarian priority was the evacuation of civilians and the provision of protection, food, shelter, medical attention, water and sanitation, and psycho-social support to those trapped by the fighting. Humanitarian access and space immediately became an issue. UN agencies had to negotiate prior notification with the IDF, so that convoys could move without being targeted. OCHA reported that 20 percent of planned convoys were cancelled due to problems of coordination with the IDF. In addition, humanitarian aid convoys were disrupted by heavy shelling, the destruction of roads and bridges, and the inability of drivers to get to work. The poor security situation also made it difficult to deploy needs assessment missions.<sup>7</sup>

During the crucial first phase of the crisis, the response came predominantly from within Lebanon. Local community networks and coping mechanisms, developed during earlier conflicts, allowed Lebanese civil society to respond immediately and effectively with basic necessities, such as food, medicine, and fuel. Two other national organisations also played an important role in the crisis, namely the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) and Hezbollah, which mounted a well publicised campaign, using its local social networks, to address the most urgent needs of those affected, offering money to each homeless family. It is important to note that these institutions had been in place since the late 1980s, with Hezbollah offering services which the government of Lebanon was not providing to the poorer suburbs of Beirut, the Shia “belt of misery.” With the 2006 war, these mechanisms went into full effect, without funding from the state. Such offers may have reinforced Hezbollah’s popularity, particularly among the Shia population in Lebanon, as well as throughout the Middle East.

Nevertheless, the international community also reacted quickly, launching a large-scale response employing international humanitarian actors already present in Lebanon.

Following the ceasefire, the response had to adapt to the massive and rapid return of internally displaced

persons (IDPs) and refugees, most of whom returned to their homes in South Lebanon, despite the fragility of the situation, devastation of infrastructure and homes, and the threat presented by unexploded ordnance. Return programmes included protection from submunitions, and the provision of water and sanitation, primary health care, basic materials for shelter, and psychosocial support. Later, some income-generating activities were developed. However, some implementing agencies considered the responses to be too supply-driven and materialistic. Aid was not always targeted towards needs, nor adapted to the local context. According to the Humanitarian Practice Network, “agencies need to be more sensitive to the local context, particularly given the increasing number of humanitarian responses in middle-income countries like Lebanon. It is not enough simply to roll out distributions according to the traditional model.”<sup>8</sup>

Lebanon became a field for intense recovery and rehabilitation programmes, with multiple donors pursuing varied political and aid agendas. The presence and influence of Hezbollah remains problematic for the United States and Israel, and their Arab allies, whereas the EU does not label the Shia group “terrorist”, and has adopted different means of engagement, namely through the Civil Military Cooperation concept of UNIFIL II. Some donors pressed UN agencies and NGOs not to use Hezbollah’s social networks, nor to have coordination contact with them. In practical terms, this was considered unrealistic and unconstructive by field actors, as it created operational obstacles and impeded assistance to returnees in many villages.<sup>9</sup> Ironically, after the attack against the Spanish contingent of UNIFIL on 24 June 2007, UNIFIL has come to rely and depend on Hezbollah for “protection,” after having been deployed to protect Israel against Hezbollah.

Some European countries adopted a more pragmatic approach, guided by the assessment of humanitarian needs and the understanding that collaboration with Hezbollah was inevitable and essential for effective humanitarian access. In practice, many implementing partners had contact with Hezbollah members, with donors turning a blind eye. NGOs implementing programmes with US funds faced particular problems, due to very strict guidelines. In fact, the policies emerging from the “war on terror” have created a new reality under which humanitarian organisations have to work. As a result, many implementing partners would have preferred an open dialogue with donors on this issue, to

protect them against possible legal implications and avoid the politicisation of aid.

Similarly, donations by Arab States were often influenced by political considerations. Sunni Arab regimes, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in particular, but also Egypt and Jordan, aimed to support the weakened Lebanese government against the Hezbollah-led opposition, which was heavily financed by Iran and Syria. Many Gulf countries are economically tied to Lebanon, particular via investment in construction and tourism, and for them quick recovery carried a financial interest.

As in many crises, coordination, one of the key GHD *Principles*, has become a major challenge. In addition to general coordination meetings, the UN introduced five clusters with weekly meetings: water and sanitation, logistics, shelter and non-food items, protection, and health. However, due to the brevity and the disruption caused by the conflict, it was difficult to hold the meetings regularly and to ensure the presence of the relevant personnel. The UN also established logistic hubs in Beirut, Damascus, Cyprus, and Tyre. While the logistics cluster, led by the World Food Programme, generally received praise, the protection cluster, led by UNHCR, has been criticised: "... the main objective of the protection cluster meetings was to produce papers for Geneva and New York. Topics discussed were often theoretical rather than practical and turnover of staff was high with five different chairs in two months. There was no agreed definition of what protection was in the context of Lebanon and so the objective for the cluster was unclear from the start."<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the UN and NGOs were generally satisfied with the cluster system, although they felt that the assessment phase should have been completed more rapidly. Finally, competition for funding was felt to have been an impediment to joint assessments and led to duplication. This was not exclusive to Lebanon, although it was exacerbated, in part, by the brevity of the crisis.

OCHA's deployment was regarded as late, with slow recruitment and strict internal security procedures having a negative impact on programme delivery.<sup>11</sup> Other criticisms were directed at the lack of information sharing, inappropriately targeted assistance because of inaccurate data—particularly the location and numbers of primary and secondary displacements—and poor tracking of assistance. It has also been suggested that OCHA failed to sufficiently engage local NGOs and civil society, as well as many Arab donors, due, in part, to cultural insensitivity or the lack of transparency.<sup>12</sup>

The general consensus was that information management could have been improved and that there were gaps and duplication where aid could have been better targeted, particularly for vulnerable groups. On 31 October 2006, OCHA declared the emergency period over and withdrew.

## Conclusion

The international community was, regrettably, unable to intervene earlier than it did in the 2006 Lebanon War. In the face of the many difficulties of coordination, cooperation, and communication—caused largely by the highly political nature of foreign aid in Lebanon—the international humanitarian response did include reconstruction efforts, but these were further complicated by the weak government of Lebanon. Thus, the rapid response by Lebanese civil society was pivotal in the first days of the conflict. In its support for this protection crisis, international donors must be assessed in context of the politics of the region and in light of their aim to reduce the influence of Hezbollah, and, by extension, that of Iran. In part reflecting this motivation, the response was over-funding (123 percent of the UN Appeal).

Some donors gave strict instructions to implement partners to avoid contact with Hezbollah, an approach considered impractical due to the organisation's deep-rooted presence in Lebanese society. This underscores the urgent need for the humanitarian response to address the legal, moral, and operational implications to comply with Principle 2 of the GHD, namely, to deliver aid according to the fundamental principles of neutrality, independence, and impartiality. Although the crisis was correctly identified as one of protection, the difficulties of humanitarian access were not sufficiently addressed. The concept, implications, and response to a protection crisis must be better defined, moreover in a non-sectarian a manner as possible. The response was also considered too supply-driven and should have given greater consideration to the local context of a middle-income country like Lebanon, and to the availability and capacity of local experts and development agencies already present. However, humanitarian agencies did recognise donor efforts to respect Principles 5, 12, and 13 of the GHD in providing timely and flexible funding.

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- 7 OCHA, 2006b.
- 8 Mahdi, 2007, p. 2.
- 9 DARA interviews, Lebanon, July 2007.
- 10 OCHA, 2006a.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 DARA field interviews, July 2007.

## Notes

- 1 See International Crisis Group, 2007.
- 2 International Crisis Group, 2006; UNHCR, 2006; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2006; Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007.
- 3 OCHA, 2006; International Crisis Group, 2006; Oxfam, 2006.
- 4 DARA field interviews, July 2007; Freeman (2006) reports that, in protest against UK policy, Oxfam GB declined DFID funds, saying that, "as a humanitarian agency we have to be impartial. Our partner organisation in Lebanon told us that they would find difficulty in accepting money from the British government."
- 5 International Crisis Group interview with Abdel-Halim Fadlallah, 23 September 2007, from ICG, 2007, p. 20, footnote 170.
- 6 DARA field interviews, Lebanon, July 2007.

