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A Diagnostic Assessment of Lebanon's Aid Management System During Conflicts

Executive Summary

Lebanon's aid management system is fundamentally characterized by profound institutional fragility, pervasive corruption driven by sectarian patronage networks, and a chronic lack of transparency and coordination. These systemic deficiencies severely undermine aid effectiveness, perpetuating a cycle of dependency rather than catalyzing structural change (The Century Foundation, n.d.). On-the-ground interviews with practitioners confirm this reality, highlighting a chronic lack of coordination described as a **"missing bridge" between local and international efforts**, a fragmented data landscape that hinders accountability, and a complete absence of dedicated national disaster budgets or strategic stockpiles.

The country has been engulfed in a series of compounding crises since 2019. A severe economic collapse has led to Lebanon's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) plummeting by nearly 40% by the end of 2024 (World Bank, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c; Timep, 2025). This economic devastation was exacerbated by the catastrophic Beirut Port explosion in August 2020 and the prolonged 2023–2024 conflict with Israel. This recent conflict displaced over 1.2 million people at its peak, with approximately 90,000 to 100,000 individuals remaining internally displaced by mid-2025 due to destroyed homes, unexploded ordnance, and persistent instability (Human Rights Watch, 2025). Lebanon also continues to bear the significant burden of hosting a large Syrian refugee population (UNHCR, 2025c).

A notable political development in early 2025 was the election of General Joseph Aoun as President in January, followed by the subsequent formation of a new government under Prime Minister Nawaf Salam in February. This transition presents a potential, albeit fragile, window for addressing long-standing governance issues and potentially unlocking more effective international support.

To break the entrenched cycle of dependency and dysfunction, systemic reforms are imperative. Core recommendations include establishing a unified and accountable aid governance authority, mandating and enforcing International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)-compliant data publication standards, strengthening independent oversight bodies, genuinely empowering local civil society organizations, and reforming public procurement and aid import regulations. Furthermore, international donors must recalibrate their engagement to conditionally build state capacity, ensuring that aid fosters resilience rather than perpetuating weakness.

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List of Abbreviations

- **3RF** - Reform, Recovery, and Reconstruction Framework

- **CDR** - Council for Development and Reconstruction

- **CIB** - Central Inspection Bureau

- **CoA** - Court of Accounts

- **CoM** - Council of Ministers

- **CSO** - Civil Society Organization

- **DRMU** - Disaster Risk Management Unit

- **EU** - European Union

- **GEC** - Government Emergency Committee

- **GDP** - Gross Domestic Product

- **HRC** - Higher Relief Committee

- **IATI** - International Aid Transparency Initiative

- **IMF** - International Monetary Fund

- **IMPACT** - Inter-Ministerial and Municipal Platform for Assessment, Coordination, and Tracking

- **LAF** - Lebanese Armed Forces

- **LEAP** - Lebanon Emergency Assistance Project

- **LFF** - Lebanon Financing Facility

- **LMS** - Logistics Management System

- **LRF** - Lebanon Recovery Fund

- **MOF**-Ministry of Finance

- **MoPH** - Ministry of Public Health

- **MoSA** - Ministry of Social Affairs

- **NACC** - National Anti-Corruption Commission

- **NGO** - Non-Governmental Organization

- **OMSAR** - Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform

- **PPA** - Public Procurement Authority

- **RDNA** - Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment

- **UNDP** - United Nations Development Programme

- **UNHCR** - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

- **UNICEF** - United Nations Children's Fund

- **UNIFIL** - United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

- **WHO** - World Health Organization

1. Introduction: Lebanon's Enduring Crises and the Aid Landscape

Lebanon has been embroiled in a relentless series of cascading crises since 2019, which have fundamentally reshaped its socio-economic fabric. The nation's severe economic collapse is starkly illustrated by a cumulative contraction in real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of nearly 40% between 2019 and the end of 2024, with a 7.1% contraction recorded in 2024 alone (World Bank, 2025). This economic downturn has been accompanied by a dramatic devaluation of the Lebanese pound, which has lost over 98% of its value since 2019, leading to hyperinflation and widespread monetary poverty. By 2022, an alarming 70% of Lebanese households were living on less than $140 per month (World Bank 2024).

The country's vulnerabilities were further exposed by the catastrophic Beirut Port explosion in August 2020, which devastated large swathes of the capital, and the subsequent escalation of conflict from October 2023 into November 2024, which had devastating effects with severe human, economic, and social losses. According to the data released by the Lebanese government, the fatalities were much higher than in previous wars.

Table 1: Impact of the 2023 War	
Length of the War	**13-month (October 8, 2023-November 27, 2024)**
Number of Fatalities	4,000
Number of Injured	17,000
Number of Internally Displaced	1,237,892 (until November 26, 2024)
Number of Individuals Who Lost Their Jobs	166,000
Source: The Presidency of the Council of Ministers-Weekly Situation Analysis-59 (November 25, 2024)	

Table 2: Damages and Economic Losses		
Sector	**Damages ($Million)**	**Losses ($Million)**
Agriculture and Food Security	79	742
Commerce, Industry, and Tourism	612	3,410
Education	151	414
Energy	98	209
Environment and Debris Management	512	790
Health	208	700
Housing	4,580	363
Municipal and Public Services	41	192
Transport	198	173
Water, Wastewater, and Irrigation	356	171
Total	**6,834**	**7,1644**
Source: World Bank, & National Council for Scientific Research—Lebanon. (2025, March). *Lebanon Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA)*. Washington, DC: World Bank.		

International aid has consistently served as a critical lifeline throughout these multifaceted emergencies, providing immediate humanitarian relief and supporting reconstruction efforts (The Century Foundation, n.d.). For instance, donors pledged over $800 million in humanitarian assistance following the major escalation of conflict in late 2024 (L'Orient Today, 2024). However, the continuous influx of external assistance has primarily addressed immediate symptoms rather than driving fundamental reforms, leading to a persistent cycle of dependency where aid acts as a recurring band-aid rather than a catalyst for sustainable development.

The compounding crises in Lebanon—economic collapse, political paralysis, and recent conflicts—are not isolated incidents but instead form a destructive feedback loop that exacerbates the challenges of aid management. The severe economic downturn critically weakens state institutions, rendering them less capable of effectively managing and distributing aid. Nor can one ignore long-standing structural and regulatory deficiencies that have eroded state capacity, entrenched clientelistic networks, and pushed international actors to channel assistance through civil society organizations (CSOs). This institutional weakness, in turn, reinforces the tendency of international donors to bypass the state, which further erodes state capacity by denying it essential resources and expertise. This dynamic perpetuates a vicious cycle of mistrust and dependency, making it exceedingly difficult for aid to transition from immediate relief to sustainable development and self-reliance (The Century Foundation, n.d.).

A significant shift in Lebanon's political landscape occurred in early 2025 with the election of General Joseph Aoun as President in January and the subsequent formation of a new government under Prime Minister Nawaf Salam in February. This development represents a critical, albeit fragile, opportunity for Lebanon to potentially break from past patterns of aid mismanagement. The new leadership has publicly committed to addressing long-standing issues, including corruption, reaffirming the state's monopoly over arms, and committing to implementing much-needed fiscal, governance, financial, economic, and sectoral reforms.

The implementation of these reforms could, in theory, unblock stalled international support and facilitate more effective aid governance. However, the deeply entrenched political economy of elite capture and resistance to meaningful change, as observed historically and persistently in Lebanon, means this opportunity is highly vulnerable to internal obstruction and may require sustained domestic and international pressure to overcome these deep-seated obstacles. The success of this new political phase in transforming aid management will depend on its ability to overcome these.

This report presents a comprehensive diagnostic assessment of Lebanon's aid management system, with a particular focus on its effectiveness and performance during recent conflicts and crises. It meticulously maps existing institutional frameworks, reviews aid flow mechanisms,

analyzes current reporting and transparency practices, and draws crucial lessons from historical experiences of post-war reconstruction. The overarching objective is to formulate actionable recommendations designed to enhance aid governance and ensure a more effective, transparent, and accountable delivery of assistance across Lebanon.

2. Historical Context and Post-War Reconstruction Experiences

Lebanon's history with aid and reconstruction offers crucial lessons, as patterns of both success and failure tend to repeat across different crises. Understanding these historical experiences provides essential context for the current challenges in aid management.

Amidst the Lebanese Civil War, the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) in Lebanon was established in January 1977 to address the extensive destruction and urgent infrastructural needs resulting from the conflict. The CDR was intended to function as an autonomous, central body directly accountable to the Council of Ministers, tasked with coordinating and managing both international and domestic aid for reconstruction, overseeing project implementation, and laying the groundwork for the country's economic and social recovery by developing comprehensive plans and policies. This structure was designed to streamline efforts, bypass bureaucratic obstacles, and efficiently utilize funds for the monumental task of national reconstruction.

2.1 Horizon 2000 and Solidere Model

Following the end of the civil war and the appointment of PM Rafik Hariri, the "Horizon 2000," a thirteen-year national recovery program (1995-2007) that set public investment goals across all economic sectors, was launched. This centralized reconstruction program aimed to double per capita GDP and restore Lebanon's position as a service provider in the Middle East. The plan prioritized extensive rehabilitation of physical infrastructure, including electricity, telecommunications, water supply, roads, expressways, ports, and the airport. This program was primarily financed through extensive borrowing that led to massive budget deficits and a rapid accumulation of public debt.

The other feature of the postwar model is the reconstruction of downtown Beirut through a privatized model led by Solidere (Société Libanaise pour le Développement et la Reconstruction du Centre-Ville de Beyrouth), a private real estate corporation established in 1992. Solidere adopted a market-driven approach to reconstruction. It appropriated property rights from thousands of individuals in exchange for shares in the company.

2.2 Post-2006 Israel–Hezbollah War Reconstruction: The Waed Model and the Lebanon Recovery Fund (LRF)

The "Waed model" refers to Hezbollah's distinct and highly influential reconstruction initiative following the 2006 July War, primarily focused on rebuilding the heavily damaged southern suburbs of Beirut and areas in South Lebanon. This model was characterized by its autonomy from the Lebanese state, driven by Hezbollah's affiliated "Jihad al-Binaa" organization through the private entity "Waed" (meaning "Promise"). Waed bypassed the state official institutions, directly managing everything from damage assessment and compensation distribution to the comprehensive planning and construction of new buildings. Consequently, the Waed model stands as a unique and complex case study in post-conflict reconstruction, demonstrating how a non-state actor can effectively undertake massive rebuilding efforts while simultaneously advancing its own political and social agenda.

In parallel with Waed, the Lebanese government and the international community undertook broader reconstruction efforts for the country as a whole. This led to the establishment of the Lebanon Recovery Fund (LRF) in 2007, a multi-donor trust fund administered by the UNDP. The LRF funded 25 projects across various sectors, implemented by UN agencies in coordination with Lebanese line ministries. While the LRF had some successes, particularly in quickly channeling donor funds to urgent needs, it largely bypassed the country's public financial systems, thereby doing little to strengthen Lebanese state institutions.

It is worth noting that following the Paris III international conference for support to Lebanon, organized after the 2006 Israeli war, aid coordination transiting through the State was centralized at the Ministry of Finance, and coordinated with the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. The Donor Coordination Unit (DCU) was established at the Ministry of Finance and assigned responsibility for the "coordination of external assistance, notably to develop and strengthen aid coordination and management, with a view to ensuring transparency and accountability of resource use and achieving a stronger impact of aid on national development outcomes. Donor coordination comprised the mobilization (pledging with follow-through to commitment), programming, tracking, monitoring of implementation, reporting, and evaluation of aid" (Ministry of Finance of Lebanon, 2007). However, with time and the successive political crises and changes in government, this institutional set-up seems to have been dismantled.

2.3 Beirut Port 2020 Blast Reconstruction: The 3RF Framework

The catastrophic explosion at the Port of Beirut on August 4, 2020, inflicted immense human suffering and widespread devastation across the Lebanese capital. The blast resulted in over 200 fatalities, more than 6,500 injuries, and displaced an estimated 300,000 people from their homes.

The international community responded to the Port of Beirut Blast by launching the Reform, Recovery, and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) in December 2020, which was conceived as a collaborative and strategic partnership involving the Government of Lebanon, civil society organizations, and the international community. Its primary purpose was to serve as a comprehensive roadmap for operationalizing the findings of the Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) and other critical assessments conducted in the wake of the Beirut Port explosion. The overarching objectives of the 3RF were to address the urgent needs of the affected population, facilitate reconstruction efforts, and, crucially, to help restore public trust in governmental institutions by fostering transparency and accountability.

Complementing the 3RF, the Lebanon Financing Facility (LFF) was established as a multi-donor trust fund by the World Bank, in close cooperation with the United Nations and the European Union. The LFF serves as a vital financial instrument, channeling resources directly to affected populations and supporting the broader reform agenda outlined by the 3RF.

The intended governance structure of the 3RF envisioned a new partnership model in which the Government of Lebanon would assume primary responsibility for delivering recovery and reconstruction. This leadership was to be underpinned by robust inter-ministerial coordination and supported by strong collaboration with development partners, active engagement with civil society, and dedicated institutional, financial, and monitoring arrangements. Civil society organizations were explicitly tasked with contributing expertise and monitoring progress to achieve an inclusive and transparent process.

Furthermore, the 3RF's principle that reconstruction support is "conditional to satisfactory reform progress" represented a deliberate attempt by international partners to leverage aid as a catalyst for systemic change.

2.4 Post 2023-2024 War: The Pending Reconstruction

When the Israeli war on Lebanon intensified in September 2024, displacing more than one million people, the United Nations and humanitarian partners launched a Flash Appeal in October 2024, initially seeking $426 million for immediate relief, subsequently extending it with an additional appeal of $371 million to address early recovery needs in 2025 (Humanitarian Action, 2025a). In 2023, the Lebanese government established a Government Emergency Committee to coordinate relief operations alongside the UN and international organizations, publicly affirming its commitment to a "coordinated, transparent, and accountable response" (Humanitarian Action, 2025a). Despite these assurances, the Lebanese government looked unprepared when violence intensified in September 2024, and this committee proved not ready to manage the influx of displaced despite all public promises made by governmental officials.

The government faced significant challenges during the conflict in effectively distributing aid,

with persistent issues including fragmented institutional structures, lack of unified operational procedures, insufficient transparency in aid allocation, and weak monitoring systems, echoing previous experiences from post-2006 and post-2020 Beirut port blast reconstruction efforts. Financially, between July and December 2024, Lebanon received only around 20% of the requested $3 billion intended for economic stabilization and humanitarian relief, reflecting heightened donor fatigue and underlying distrust stemming from concerns about mismanagement and governance inefficiencies. Recognizing these shortcomings, the Lebanese government pledged in early 2025 to establish a dedicated, independently monitored reconstruction fund to manage post-war recovery and reconstruction, emphasizing stronger accountability mechanisms and improved governance frameworks to regain donor confidence and ensure effective and equitable distribution of reconstruction assistance.

Table 3: Key Economic and Humanitarian Indicators (2019-2025)			
Indicator	2023	2024	2025 (Proj.)
Real Sector			
Real GDP Growth (%)	-0.8%	-7.1%	4.7%
Inflation (CPI, Annual %)	221.3%	45.2%	15.2%
Informal Employment		60% of Total Workforce	
Poverty Rate		80% of Households	
Source: World Bank, Lebanon Economic Monitor, Spring 2025			

Table 4: Historical Reconstruction Experiences (Comparative Summary)		
Period/Model	Characteristics	Challenges
Horizon 2000	Centralized, debt-financed, infrastructure-focused	Accumulated debt, elite capture
Solidere	Private, market-driven downtown reconstruction	Expropriations, inequality
Waed Model (2006)	Hezbollah-led, autonomous from state institutions	Sectarian/political agendas
Lebanon Recovery Fund (2006)	Internationally administered, quick response	Bypassed state institutions
3RF (2020)	Government, civil society & international cooperation	Conditional reform progress

Pending Reconstruction (2024)	Government pledges accountability	Institutional fragmentation, distrust

3. Institutional Frameworks for Aid Management

Lebanon's aid management landscape is a complex and fragmented web of governmental bodies, international organizations, and civil society actors, frequently characterized by overlapping mandates and a pervasive lack of coordination. This intricate institutional environment often hinders the effective and efficient delivery of aid.

3.1 Roles and Mandates of Key Governmental Bodies

On paper, the country has a detailed structure for crisis response. The national disaster response framework, updated in 2023, outlines the specific roles for each ministry and public body, establishing a clear hierarchy and coordination mechanism through a National Operations Room. It defines four stages of response—Detection/Warning, Assessment/Activation, Containment/Relief, and Recovery/Withdrawal—and sets three national alert levels (Green, Yellow, Red) to trigger mobilization. However, the performance during the 2023-2024 conflict reveals a significant gap between this official framework and the reality on the ground.

To understand the roles of various government entities in Lebanon, it is essential to first differentiate between humanitarian aid and development aid. Humanitarian aid is defined by its focus on providing immediate relief to populations affected by crises, such as the provision of shelter, food, and medical care in the aftermath of a conflict or disaster. It is designed for short-term, life-saving interventions and is often delivered through a flash appeal mechanism. In contrast, development aid is oriented toward long-term goals, aiming to support the country's economic, social, and environmental stability, rebuild infrastructure, and strengthen national institutions and systems for delivering basic services. This form of assistance seeks to address the underlying structural vulnerabilities that make a country susceptible to future crises. As such, it is critical for long-term recovery and reconstruction.

The **Lebanon Response Plan (LRP)**, for example, is a framework co-led by the Government of Lebanon and the United Nations, which explicitly integrates both components, adopting a "humanitarian–peace–development nexus approach." It allocates significant funding toward both immediate humanitarian interventions and stabilization efforts, recognizing that addressing Lebanon's long-term needs is essential.

In this context, several government entities are nominally responsible for aspects of aid management, yet their effectiveness is frequently undermined by political interference, persistent overlapping, and systemic weaknesses:

- **Council of Ministers (CoM):** As the government, the CoM holds ultimate executive authority to articulate the public policy of the state in all fields as stipulated by the Lebanese Constitution, including the power to declare states of emergency and approve public budgets for aid. In theory, it also leads to donor coordination (The Century Foundation, n.d.). A recent development in June 2025 saw the CoM endorse a transparent, data-driven area-based prioritization methodology for the World Bank's new Lebanon Emergency Assistance Project (LEAP), signaling a potential, albeit nascent, shift towards more coordinated government-led reconstruction efforts (World Bank, 2025d; World Bank, 2025e; World Bank, 2025f). This endorsement aligns with international best practices for emergency projects. It aims to streamline administrative and decision-making processes within the implementing agency, the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) (World Bank, 2025a, 2025 b, 2025c). Many other entities responsible for aid management fell under the prerogative of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

- **Government Emergency Committee (GEC):** Following the escalation of the Israeli war in 2023, the Council of Ministers established the Government Emergency Committee (GEC) through decisions 33/2024 and 52/2024 to coordinate the humanitarian response. Coordinated by the Minister of Environment, its membership comprises ministers from key sectors, including health, social affairs, and public works. The GEC's mandate includes coordinating with local and international bodies, unifying aid data, ensuring transparency, and overseeing relief efforts. Despite this official mandate, the GEC report from February 2024 explicitly states that it operated without any state funding, relying entirely on a team of volunteers and partnerships with the private sector for logistics and office space. This dependency was further institutionalized through a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NORCAP), which provided expert staff to build the GEC secretariat's capacity in policy, planning, partnerships, and monitoring, with all costs covered by the Norwegian government.

- **Higher Relief Committee (HRC):** The HRC is legally mandated to respond to national crises, disasters, and wars, including damage assessments and coordinating relief and reconstruction aid. A critical aspect of its power is a legal provision that permits only the HRC and the Lebanese Red Cross to import humanitarian aid without customs duties, effectively granting the HRC a virtual monopoly over in-kind aid inflows (The Century Foundation, n.d.; Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, n.d.a). This legal "choke point" has reportedly been exploited, with the HRC demanding up to 30% of incoming aid's value be allocated for distribution through its channels, often via local NGOs affiliated with influential political figures, thereby enabling state or factional capture of humanitarian assistance (The Century Foundation, n.d.; Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, n.d.a). The

HRC continues to operate, as evidenced by a Hezbollah MP discussing the need for its swift action on damage surveys in June 2025. Still, its reporting remains fragmented and conspicuously omits a detailed accounting of cash aid on its rudimentary website (The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies). This lack of transparency from a central recipient of relief consignments represents a significant gap in accountability (Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, n.d.a). According to the National Response Plan, the HRC's role is to accept and distribute donations as instructed by the Council of Ministers.

- **Disaster Risk Management Unit (DRMU):** Established in 2010 with support from the UNDP, the DRMU was envisioned as a central authority for disaster and crisis coordination. Historically, it has consistently failed to fulfill this role, often being marginalized and bypassed during major emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the 2023–2024 conflict response (The Century Foundation, n.d.). However, a more nuanced understanding of the DRMU's role emerges from recent events. During the 2023–2024 conflict, the DRMU demonstrated a partial and ad-hoc functionality, actively coordinating with various government entities to establish collective shelters, deliver basic assistance, and improve the collection of displacement data (International Organization for Migration). For instance, by February 2025, nearly all collective shelters operational in North Governorate between September and November 2024 had been vacated, with only one remaining in Tripoli, accommodating ten displaced families, indicating DRMU's involvement in managing shelter transitions (ACAPS, 2025). This suggests that while the DRMU may not have fully achieved its initial mandate as a central, overarching authority, it possesses a limited but operational capacity that is leveraged in specific crisis contexts, indicating a pragmatic adaptation within the fragmented system where existing, albeit imperfect, capacities are utilized. The National Response Plan assigns the DRMU a central role in the National Operations Room, alongside all key ministries and security agencies. Its ability to fulfill its mandate remains questionable, having been marginalized and bypassed during major emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2023–2024 conflict response

- **Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF):** The military assumed an unprecedented role in emergency management after the 2020 Beirut Port explosion, tasked with primary responsibility for relief operations and aid distribution (The Century Foundation, n.d.). The LAF continues to receive significant international support to cover salary payments and supply military vehicles, spare parts, and other needed equipment, bolstering its operational capacity amidst ongoing challenges (This Is Beirut, 2025a; This Is Beirut, 2025b). The UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) also coordinates humanitarian missions with the LAF, further highlighting its ongoing involvement in aid-related activities (Security Council Report, 2025; United Nations, 2025).

- **Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA):** MoSA leads social assistance programs and, in partnership with the Ministry of Interior, launched the IMPACT platform for needs mapping and cash aid distribution to vulnerable households (The Century Foundation, n.d.). UNHCR continues to coordinate household profiling with MoSA, ensuring emergency coordination and response in shelter, protection, and life-saving assistance (UNHCR, 2025a; UNHCR, 2025b). UNICEF also works with MoSA to drive long-term transformational change aimed at safeguarding children's rights and preventing their vulnerability to exploitation, abuse, neglect, and violence (UNICEF, 2025a; UNICEF, 2025b). Despite these partnerships, MoSA has faced criticism for reportedly clinging to outdated beneficiary lists and political quotas for aid, rather than fully utilizing the more accurate data generated by the IMPACT platform (The Century Foundation, n.d.).

- **Ministry of Public Health (MoPH):** During crises, the MoPH provides medical relief, including treatment costs for blast victims (The Century Foundation, n.d.). While it was the only ministry to attempt partial compliance with transparency directives after the 2020 explosion by publishing aid data, this information was in static PDF format and updated irregularly (The Century Foundation, n.d.; Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, n.d.a). In a positive development, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Union (EU) are supporting the MoPH in upgrading the Karantina medical supplies warehouse with a digital Logistics Management System (LMS). This initiative, funded by the EU, aims to enable improved real-time inventory tracking, streamlined communication, and data-driven decision-making in the management of critical medical supplies, thereby boosting resilience and transparency in the medical supply chain (ReliefWeb, 2025b; ReliefWeb, 2025c; World Health Organization, 2025a). UNICEF also partners with the MoPH to provide health services and support for war-wounded children, including the launch of the Assistance & Care for War-Wounded and Affected Children (ACWA) programme in March 2025 (UNICEF, 2025a; UNICEF, 2025b).

- **Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR):** Established in 1977, the CDR has served as the government's primary agency for large-scale infrastructure and reconstruction projects, although it has been widely viewed as vulnerable to political influence and cronyism (The Century Foundation, n.d.). A strategic shift in donor engagement is evident in the World Bank's new Lebanon Emergency Assistance Project (LEAP). Approved in June 2025, LEAP explicitly mandates "critical reform measures" within the CDR to ensure its operational readiness for the project. These measures include the establishment of a complete and functional CDR Board of Directors and streamlining administrative and decision-making processes, in line with international best practices for emergency projects (World Bank, 2025a, 2025 b, 2025c). This represents a strategic shift by major donors towards demanding concrete institutional strengthening *within* the state as a prerequisite for large-scale reconstruction aid, moving beyond the previous approach

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of solely bypassing dysfunctional government channels. This could serve as a significant test case for whether conditional engagement can genuinely rebuild and empower state capacity for aid management. The CDR President announced in June 2025 that reconstruction work under LEAP would commence before the end of the year (L'Orient Today, 2025a).

- **Central Inspection Bureau (CIB):** An oversight body, the CIB achieved notable success by developing the IMPACT e-governance platform in 2020 (The Century Foundation, n.d.). IMPACT remains an open data portal designed for monitoring needs and aid delivery, theoretically promoting transparency and coordination, and includes a complaint management system (Central Inspection Bureau, n.d.a; Central Inspection Bureau, n.d.b). Despite its technical sophistication and successful use by municipalities to map vulnerable families, its data has been largely ignored by higher-level decision-makers who revert to outdated patronage lists for aid disbursement, demonstrating a political unwillingness to utilize transparent data for equitable distribution (The Century Foundation, n.d.; UNICEF, 2025a). This highlights a critical disconnect between technical capacity for transparency and the political will to implement it (The Century Foundation, n.d.).

- **The Judiciary:** Lebanon's judiciary is largely lacking in independence and highly susceptible to political pressure, which severely hinders accountability for corruption and mismanagement (The Century Foundation, n.d.). The system remains paralyzed, primarily due to judicial strikes and thousands of unresolved cases, which further erode public trust in its ability to uphold justice and the rule of law (Obeid & Partners, n.d.a; Obeid & Partners, n.d.b). This paralysis directly impacts the prosecution of corruption cases related to aid, contributing to a culture of impunity (The Century Foundation, n.d.).

- **Council for the South:** Established in the 1970s to support development in southern Lebanon and the Western Beqaa, this body occasionally becomes active in relief efforts for the South, often paralleling the HRC's role and contributing to overlapping mandates and competition for resources (The Century Foundation, n.d.). For instance, during the 2023-2024 conflict, the Council for the South requested and received a government allocation of approximately $7.9 million to assist displaced residents and even sought customs exemptions for donated relief items (The Century Foundation, n.d.). UNIFIL also provides economic benefits to Lebanon, including aid to residents and the LAF, and an influx of US dollars into the economy, particularly in the South (INSS, 2025a; INSS, 2025b).

- **The Ministry of Finance (MOF)** serves as Lebanon's central financial authority, wielding considerable power over all public funds, including international aid and grants. Its formal mandate encompasses overseeing public expenditures, preparing the national budget and monitoring its execution, managing customs, and overseeing land registration, among other responsibilities. Since the onset of the 2019 financial crisis, the MOF has faced

systemic weaknesses that have hindered its ability to perform its core public financial management functions effectively.

- **The Court of Accounts (CoA)** possesses broad legal authority as an administrative court tasked with financial oversight and the prosecution of financial violations. Its mandate covers institutions, associations, and other entities or companies that maintain financial relationships with the state, municipalities, or public institutions through contributions, assistance, or loans. The court's jurisdiction includes both ex-ante audits to ensure legal compliance and ex-post evaluations of financial management. Despite recent efforts to increase penalties for violators and enhance transparency mechanisms, the institution continues to face deep structural constraints that undermine its oversight capacity. Successive governments have shown a willingness to bypass CoA oversight altogether, as illustrated by the submission of the 2025 budget to Parliament without the legally required audit-ready closure of accounts for 2023.

4. Aid Flow Mechanisms and Practices

The operational dynamics of aid flow in Lebanon reveal a complex interplay between direct delivery channels, state-mediated processes, and various funding instruments, all heavily shaped by political considerations and significant corruption risks.

4.1 Channels of Aid Delivery: Direct vs. State-Mediated

International aid enters Lebanon through a diverse array of sources, including foreign governments, UN agencies, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and diaspora groups. In recent crises, a significant portion of donors have actively sought to bypass Lebanese state institutions due to profound concerns about mismanagement and corruption (The Century Foundation, n.d.).

As argued earlier, this trend became particularly pronounced after the 2020 Beirut Port explosion, with donors such as the United States and France publicly declaring their intention to route emergency aid "directly to the Lebanese people" through NGOs or UN channels, rather than through government ministries. For example, USAID directly delivered medical supplies to hospitals, deliberately avoiding involvement by the Ministry of Public Health.

However, the aid landscape is not entirely devoid of state involvement. Lebanese law stipulates that only the Higher Relief Committee (HRC) and the Lebanese Red Cross are authorized to import relief materials duty-free (Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, n.d.a). This legal provision effectively compels even some international organizations to interface with the HRC for bringing in goods. In practice, many donors and NGOs have had to hand over shipments to the HRC or

secure its approval for customs clearance. The HRC's reported practice of taking a "cut" (allegedly up to one-third) of aid shipments for its distribution is a direct consequence of this monopoly (Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, n.d.a). Thus, even when donors intend to circumvent the state, they sometimes find themselves inadvertently interacting with state-affiliated bodies, and in the worst cases, witnessing part of their aid diverted into political hands (The Century Foundation, n.d.).

In essence, Lebanon has evolved a hybrid system of aid channels: a "direct" channel where donors fund and work through international or local NGOs, UN agencies, or municipalities, aiming to exclude central government middlemen; and a "state-mediated" channel where aid, especially in-kind goods, must pass through designated state institutions, especially the HRC. The lack of a unified channel means Lebanon misses opportunities to gain a comprehensive view of what aid is arriving and where it is being allocated.

4.2 Funding Instruments, Disbursement Processes, and Associated Delays

International financial support to Lebanon has been substantial on paper; however, actual disbursements on the ground often lag significantly, creating a "reality gap" that fuels public distrust. Following the October 2024 Paris conference, which pledged approximately $800 million in humanitarian aid and an additional $200 million for security forces, only 13.9% ($108 million) of the humanitarian pledges had been disbursed to NGOs by November 2024 (Al-Monitor, 2024; L'Orient Today, 2024). Similarly, between July and December 2024, Lebanon received only about 20% of the $3 billion it had requested for stabilization and recovery purposes.

Much of the medium- to long-term aid, particularly loans or budget support, has been explicitly tied to reforms and reaching an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Under the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF), for example, portions of funding for reconstruction projects would only be unlocked if Lebanon enacted specific governance reforms (The Century Foundation, n.d.). However, Lebanon's political class has consistently been unable or unwilling to meet these conditions, directly delaying disbursements (L'Orient Today, 2025c). Even for aid that was not conditional, delays have stemmed from bureaucratic and logistical issues on both the donor side (e.g., slow internal procedures) and within Lebanese implementing agencies (e.g., administrative hurdles, weakened capacity) (The Century Foundation, n.d.).

Despite these persistent challenges, the World Bank approved a new US$250 million Lebanon Emergency Assistance Project (LEAP) in June 2025. This project is structured as a US$1 billion scalable framework designed to kickstart urgent repair and reconstruction of damaged public infrastructure and lifeline services in conflict-affected areas (World Bank, 2025d). Other significant funding requirements for 2025 include UNICEF's Lebanon Appeal, which has received US$658.2 million (26% funded as of March 2025) (UNICEF, 2025a), and UNHCR's Lebanon

operation, which was only 15% funded as of the same month (UNHCR, 2025a). The EU is providing €93 million in humanitarian aid in 2025 (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, 2025a). As of December 2024, UN and NGO implementing partners reported receiving $1.63 billion in funding for 2024, with $655 million committed for 2025 and beyond (United Nations in Lebanon, 2025a).

The persistent and significant gap between international aid pledges and actual disbursements, as evidenced by the low percentage of Paris conference pledges disbursed and the shortfall in stabilization financing, continues to fuel public distrust. This "reality gap" creates what has been termed a "fog of reconstruction" (The Century Foundation, n.d.), where citizens hear of billions in aid being announced at international conferences but witness only slight tangible improvements in their daily lives. This situation suggests that donor conditionalities, while intended to drive reform, may inadvertently contribute to the public's disillusionment and reliance on informal or parallel networks if tangible improvements are not seen quickly. This dynamic ultimately undermines the very goal of state-led recovery and self-reliance, as citizens lose faith in formal channels and seek alternative means of support.

Table 5: International Aid Pledges vs. Disbursements (2024-2025)

Aid Source/Type	Pledged/Required Amount	Disbursed/Received Amount	Status/Date
Pledges/Requirements			
Paris Conference (Oct 2024) Humanitarian Aid	$800 million	$108 million (13.9%)	Disbursed by Nov 2024
Paris Conference (Oct 2024) Security Forces Aid	$200 million	N/A	Pledged
Lebanon's Requested Stabilization Financing (Jul-Dec 2024)	$3 billion	20% of the requested	Received by Dec 2024
World Bank LEAP Project (Total Scalable	US$1 billion	US$250 million (initial)	Approved June 2025

Framework)			
UNICEF Lebanon Appeal (2025)	US$658.2 million	26% funded	As of March 2025
UNHCR Lebanon Operation (2025)	N/A	15% funded	As of March 2025
EU Humanitarian Aid (2025)	€93 million	N/A	Ongoing
Total Donor Funding (UN/NGO reported)			
Received (2024)	N/A	$1.63 billion	As of Dec 2024
Committed (2025 and beyond)	N/A	$655 million	As of Dec 2024

Case Study: The UAE Humanitarian Shipment (January 2025)

The flow of a 2,210-ton shipment of humanitarian aid from the United Arab Emirates in January 2025 provides a clear, documented example of the state-mediated aid channel. Official correspondence shows the following process:

- The Prime Minister issued Decision 7/2025, formally accepting the in-kind donation.

- The decision explicitly tasked the **Higher Relief Committee (HRC)** with coordinating with all relevant authorities to receive the shipment at the Port of Beirut and clear it exempt from all customs and taxes, based on its legal mandate.

- Crucially, the same decision stipulated that after receipt by the HRC, the aid's contents were to be handed over in their entirety to the **Government Emergency Committee (GEC)** for distribution according to the GEC's approved mechanism.

This case exemplifies the HRC's role as a legal and logistical gatekeeper for in-kind aid, even when another government body, such as the GEC, is the intended final distributor.

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5. Reporting and Transparency Practices

Deficient reporting and transparency practices severely undermine the effectiveness and transparency of aid in Lebanon. A lack of common data standards, irregular disclosures, and weak enforcement of transparency laws create an environment where tracing aid flows is exceedingly difficult, thereby enabling mismanagement and corruption (The Century Foundation, n.d.).

5.1 Current Reporting Mechanisms and Platforms

Several platforms and mechanisms ostensibly exist today to report on aid flows in Lebanon, but each possesses significant flaws:

- **Unified Donor Coordination Platform (Monitor of Countries' Donations):** This online platform, launched by the government's Emergency Committee after the Beirut blast, was theoretically designed to align with International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) standards for aid transparency. In practice, however, the platform remains scarcely functional. Key information fields, such as the names and contact details of aid recipients or implementing partners, are often left blank, and many purported documents or reports are unavailable for download. Data updates are irregular and incomplete, with months usually passing without new information.

- **Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) Aid Page:** The MoPH was the only ministry to attempt compliance with transparency directives after the 2020 explosion, establishing a section on its website that listed received medical aid and its distribution. While a positive step, the format and scope of this data limit its usefulness. Information is published as static PDF documents, which cannot be easily aggregated or cross-checked. The page only covers aid distributed by the ministry, omitting cash donations or aid handled by other actors. Updates also ceased after a period, reflecting a lack of institutional mandate or capacity for regular maintenance. In a positive development, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Union (EU) are supporting the MoPH in upgrading its Karantina medical supplies warehouse with a digital Logistics Management System (LMS). This EU-funded initiative aims to enable improved real-time inventory tracking, streamlined communication, and data-driven decision-making in the management of critical medical supplies, thereby boosting resilience and transparency in the medical supply chain (World Health Organization, 2025a).

- **Higher Relief Committee (HRC) Website:** The HRC maintains its own rudimentary website where it occasionally posts scans or images of documents related to aid, such as lists of incoming relief shipments (The Century Foundation, n.d.). However, much of this data is in

unsearchable JPG image format, and it conspicuously omits any detailed accounting of cash aid or how aid was distributed on the ground (Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, n.d.a). This lack of standardized, comprehensive data from the central recipient of many relief consignments represents a significant transparency gap.

- **IMPACT Platform (Central Inspection Bureau - CIB**): IMPACT (Inter-Ministerial and Municipal Platform for Assessment, Coordination, and Tracking) is a more sophisticated digital platform developed by the Central Inspection Bureau (CIB). It functions as an open data portal where municipalities input data on households in need and aid distributed, which can then be aggregated centrally (Central Inspection Bureau, n.d.a; Central Inspection Bureau, n.d.b; The Century Foundation, n.d.). It includes features such as live dashboards, GIS mapping, and a complaint management system, theoretically adhering to the principles of full transparency and traceability. Indeed, during the lockdown period, municipalities successfully used IMPACT to map hundreds of thousands of vulnerable families. The Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) in Lebanon has been utilizing the IMPACT platform in managing its cash transfer program. Through this platform, households can register for aid, undergo initial eligibility screening, and later be visited by social workers for verification before receiving assistance. The process relies on digital tools, such as Proxy Means Testing, to ensure objective targeting and reduce clientelism. IMPACT also provides dashboards and monitoring tools, enhancing transparency and oversight by allowing both MoSA and the Central Inspection Bureau to track data flows and performance. The use of IMPACT is also helping build a National Social Registry, intended to unify household data for future policy planning.

In addition to government-led mechanisms, there are other platforms—not necessarily operated by state agencies—that track aid flows to Lebanon. Examples include the UN-OCHA Financial Tracking Service (https://fts.unocha.org/countries/124/summary/2024 and the UN Aid to Lebanon tracking page (https://lebanon.un.org/en/110415-aid-lebanon-tracking-development-aid-received-lebanon.

5.2 Challenges in Data Standardization, Publication, and Traceability

A significant impediment to effective aid tracking in Lebanon is the pervasive lack of a unified platform and data standard or measurement system across the multitude of actors (The Century Foundation, n.d.). Each agency or donor may report aid in different units and categories, making it extremely difficult to reconcile data. For instance, analyses have found over 15 different units of measurement used in aid records, including metric tons, boxes, "meals," and pieces, with no conversion or consistency (Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, n.d.a). This fragmentation severely hinders traceability, making it nearly impossible to track an aid flow from donor

commitment to the end beneficiary (The Century Foundation, n.d.).

The opacity surrounding cash aid represents a critical accountability blind spot. None of the government-related platforms provides meaningful data on cash assistance delivered or received (The Century Foundation, n.d.; Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, n.d.a). For example, following the Paris conference in October 2024, which pledged $800 million, no public information was released on whether or how those funds were disbursed into Lebanon's system (The Century Foundation, n.d.). This glaring omission means the public cannot verify whether pledged funds have actually arrived, been deposited into the treasury or special funds, or been spent correctly, leaving cash highly susceptible to diversion (The Century Foundation, n.d.). The chaotic state of data has led analysts to describe it as a "data desert," a landscape where meaningful information is scarce or absent (The Century Foundation, n.d.). This contributes to a "transparency illusion," where the appearance of transparency exists. Still, the substance is hollow, allowing those in power to maintain deniability and confusion (The Century Foundation, n.d.) and create duplications in aid allocations from the donors' side.

5.3 Proactive Transparency Efforts by the Government Emergency Committee

While the overall landscape is one of opacity, the official records of the Government Emergency Committee (GEC) from the 2023-2024 conflict show a notable and documented effort to champion transparency. These initiatives, while struggling against systemic resistance, indicate that the desire for accountability exists within certain parts of the state apparatus.

- **Request for Independent Audit:** In November 2024, the GEC coordinator formally requested that the Council of Ministers appoint a specialized firm to audit all in-kind and financial aid provided through government bodies since the start of the conflict, aiming to "ensure transparency and good governance". The GEC followed up by consulting the Public Procurement Authority on the correct legal procedure to hire such a firm in compliance with public procurement law.

- **Collaboration with the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC):** When the NACC requested information on aid management in October 2024, the GEC not only complied but also formally proposed that the Prime Minister issue a circular compelling *all* ministries, public institutions, and municipalities to cooperate fully with the NACC and provide it with all required data. The Prime Minister later issued this circular in November 2024.

- **Invoking the Access to Information Law:** To build a comprehensive picture of incoming aid, the GEC sent a formal request to the Director of Civil Aviation in November 2024, invoking the Access to Information Law (Law 28/2017). It demanded detailed

information—including sender, recipient, cargo type, weight, and the official manifest—for every aircraft that had landed with humanitarian aid since September 23, 2024, stating the goal was to make the information public.

- **Creation of a Public Platform:** The GEC report explicitly states that it launched an online platform to publish all data on aid received from friendly countries, making information available to the public in real-time and supported by official documents.

These documented actions demonstrate an apparent attempt by a state-led body to implement best practices in transparency and accountability. That these efforts did not translate into a system-wide shift underscores the depth of the political and institutional obstacles to reform detailed in this report.

6. Stakeholder Perspectives: Main Findings & Implications from Interviews

The following section presents the main findings and implications derived from a series of key informant interviews conducted with central and local government officials, as well as representatives from national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies. **These ground-level perspectives strongly corroborate the report's broader analysis, highlighting a significant disconnect between formal aid structures and their operational reality.**

6.1 Key Findings from Stakeholders

A synthesis of the interviews reveals several critical, cross-cutting themes regarding the state of Lebanon's aid management system.

- **Fragmented Institutional Architecture**: Interviewees consistently noted that **while institutional mandates appear clear on paper, they are contradictory and overlapping in practice**. The national disaster management framework lacks a comprehensive legal mandate and adequate resources. During crises, ad-hoc bodies like the Government Emergency Committee (GEC) or individual governors become the *de facto* coordinators. Still, their effectiveness is heavily dependent on the individuals involved and tends to fade after the emergency subsides.

- **A "Two-Tier" Coordination System**: A significant gap exists between different levels of coordination. At the international and sector level, coordination among UN agencies and NGOs works relatively well. Similarly, hyper-local coordination between municipalities, the Lebanese Red Cross, and field-level NGOs is often strong. However, **the bridge connecting these two tiers to a unified, government-led national response is weak or**

missing entirely. This structural gap prevents a coherent response, leading to duplication and inefficiency.

- **Data and Transparency Gaps**: The existence of multiple, parallel data platforms—such as the GEC's portal, the UN's ActivityInfo, and the Central Inspection Bureau's IMPACT platform—was a recurring theme. These **systems do not communicate with each other, resulting in a fragmented data landscape that hinders a comprehensive overview of aid flows.** A significant disparity was also noted between robust data collection for displaced Syrian households versus weak data for affected Lebanese nationals.

- **Weak National Accountability**: **While donor-driven accountability mechanisms, such as audits, are relatively strong within the confines of specific projects, national oversight bodies are chronically under-resourced and ineffective**. The judiciary's role in aid oversight is minimal, and political interference often undermines needs-based aid allocation in favor of patronage networks.

- **Lack of Preparedness and Resources**: A critical and unanimous finding was the **complete absence of dedicated disaster budgets, purpose-built public shelters, and strategic stockpiles of relief items**. The system relies heavily on volunteers and ad-hoc measures, such as using schools as shelters, which is unsustainable and disrupts other essential services.

6.2 Implications

The interviews confirm that Lebanon's aid management system operates as a fragmented, hybrid model where a resilient but localized and informal response runs in parallel to a more structured international one. The chronic weakness of the central government's coordinating role forces both local authorities and international partners to create workarounds. **This hollows out state capacity over the long term and reinforces a cycle of dependency on external actors and ad-hoc solutions.** The lack of interoperable data systems makes true transparency impossible, fueling the "fog of reconstruction" and enabling the elite capture and political interference mentioned throughout this report. Ultimately, without a legally mandated and properly resourced central authority to bridge the local and international tiers, aid will continue to be delivered inefficiently, inequitably, and without effective national oversight.

7. Key Challenges Hindering Effective Aid Governance

Effective aid governance in Lebanon is hindered by a confluence of systemic challenges, many of which are deeply rooted in the country's political economy and institutional culture. These obstacles are not merely administrative but are profoundly political, reflecting entrenched interests that benefit from the status quo.

7.1 Elite Capture and Lack of Transparency

Corruption in Lebanon is endemic, permeating all levels of government and public administration. The country consistently ranks among the worst globally in corruption indices, scoring 22/100 on Transparency International's 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index, placing it 154th out of 180 countries (Transparency International, n.d.a). A core driver of this corruption is the power-sharing system that has divided state positions and resources among sectarian political leaders. This has entrenched patronage networks in which jobs, contracts, and services are allocated to loyalists. Public sector hiring is primarily based on sectarian allegiance or nepotism rather than merit, leading to bloated payrolls and undermining bureaucratic competence. These networks ensure that state resources are captured and redirected for the benefit of political elites and their clients. When it comes to reconstruction and aid, such elite capture manifests at every stage:

- **Planning and contracting:** Large reconstruction contracts are often awarded to firms closely tied to ruling politicians. Studies have shown that a small number of politically connected firms were awarded a disproportionate share of significant infrastructure projects, often through formal competitive bidding processes that were mere formalities. This undermines fair competition and can lead to inflated costs and subpar work.

- **Aid allocation:** Decisions on where aid projects are implemented can be influenced by political zones, with anecdotal evidence suggesting that politicians steer aid to their constituencies or interfere to ensure that NGOs contract individuals from their own sect.

- **Service delivery:** The weakness of public services often means that citizens turn to sectarian leaders who have established parallel welfare systems. This creates a clientelist dependency, where people rely on the sectarian leaders for aid rather than the state, allowing the leader to claim credit and loyalty.

Recent Studies show that citizens' trust in the government in Lebanon is unambiguously lower in 2024 compared with 2013 and 2016. The same pattern is observed for parliament, with trust having declined significantly since 2016.

7.2 Fragmented Institutional Landscape and Weak Coordination

Lebanon's governmental apparatus for crisis management is structurally deficient and highly fragmented. This reality persists despite the existence of a detailed National Response Plan designed to unify efforts. The government's own assessment of the 2023-2024 response confirms this gap between plan and practice. The GEC's "Lessons Learned" report highlights critical weaknesses, including the "lack of effective coordination between government agencies," the "multiplicity of actors operating without a unified coordination mechanism," and the "absence of clear mechanisms for managing shelters and registering the displaced."

Despite attempts to establish central bodies, such as the Disaster Risk Management Unit (DRMU), no single framework or chain of command has ever been established. Instead, multiple agencies with overlapping roles proliferate, leading to:

- **Inefficiencies:** Multiple entities attempt the same task, or conversely, each assumes another will handle an issue, resulting in inaction. For example, after the Beirut blast, both the HRC and the Army separately collected damage data with little initial coordination, leading to discrepancies and delays (The Century Foundation, n.d.).

- **Inter-agency conflict:** Bodies often clash over authority, and ad-hoc committees may override line ministries, causing resentment and duplication (The Century Foundation, n.d.).

- **Failed information sharing:** A glaring outcome is the failure to maintain a united platform for aid data, with various agencies insisting on separate reporting or no reporting at all. Even basic tasks, such as agreeing on a single beneficiary list for relief cash assistance, have been protracted.

- **Donor confusion:** Donor support for Lebanon has long been perceived as a result of absent government leadership and ad hoc decision-making over the years. This support often lacks a clear interlocutor, leading to uncoordinated interventions where different donors unknowingly fund similar projects or neglect specific communities. While some attempts by UN agencies were initiated to fill this gap, these efforts remain limited without the authority and leadership of the Lebanese government.

7.3. Limited Engagement and Empowerment of Civil Society

While civil society organizations (CSOs) are active and have filled many gaps in aid delivery, their ability to influence aid governance remains limited:

- **Tokenistic inclusion:** As observed with the 3RF, CSOs are often given a seat at the table but not an authentic voice. Their on-the-ground insights are underutilized, resulting in a

misalignment between aid and actual needs.

- **Ambiguity in selection:** The process of selecting which CSOs represent "civil society" in coordination bodies is often decided by donors or the government, sometimes favoring less critical voices and undermining CSO unity.

- **Funding constraints:** Many Lebanese CSOs rely on international funding, creating a dilemma where pushing too hard risks jeopardizing their financial sustainability.

8. Recommendations: A Phased Approach to Aid Reform

Lebanon's aid management system is fundamentally broken, characterized by a deeply entrenched political economy of corruption, pervasive institutional fragmentation, and a chronic lack of transparency. Repeatedly, from post-civil war reconstruction to the most recent conflict, aid has served as a critical lifeline but has consistently failed to catalyze sustainable change or build state resilience. Instead, a pattern persists: aid flows in, immediate relief is achieved, but funds are at risk of being captured by elites, reforms stall, and underlying vulnerabilities endure, setting the stage for the next crisis.

This analysis demonstrates that Lebanon's challenges are not merely technical or administrative; they are profoundly political and institutional in nature. What the country lacks is the political will to consolidate systems and introduce accountable and transparent mechanisms. International donors, often frustrated by the lack of political will to implement reforms, usually bypass the state to deliver aid. While pragmatic in the short term, this approach inadvertently perpetuates state weakness, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy where the state remains too feeble or untrustworthy to be entrusted with aid, thereby justifying continued circumvention that further weakens it. Even civil society, though formally invited into aid governance forums, often finds its inclusion superficial, lacking genuine power-sharing, reducing its participation to mere decorum rather than genuine democratic engagement.

Breaking out of this vicious cycle of dependency and dysfunction requires a fundamental shift in approach. The following recommendations outline ambitious steps to foster a more effective, transparent, and accountable aid management system for Lebanon. Their comprehensive implementation would demand genuine political will, both domestically and among donors, offering a path toward ensuring that aid truly serves the interests of the Lebanese people and lays the groundwork for sustainable recovery.

8.1 Short-to-Medium-Term Recommendations

These recommendations aim to establish the core infrastructure for transparent aid management and empower key players to initiate the reform process. They can be prioritized and initiated relatively quickly, setting the stage for more complex, long-term changes.

A) Mandate and Enforce IATI-Compliant Data Publication: A unified national digital platform for all aid data that fully complies with International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) standards must be implemented. This requires that every aid transaction (financial or in-kind) is transparently recorded in a standardized, machine-readable format. The platform should capture allocations, expenditures, and beneficiary details, updated in real time, and crucially, include feedback mechanisms for the public and watchdogs to report discrepancies or concerns and receive responses. This is the most critical and immediate step, as it provides instant visibility and a single source of truth for all aid flows.

B) Strengthen Independent Oversight and Accountability Mechanisms: The capacity and independence of key oversight institutions—notably the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), the Public Procurement Authority (PPA), and the Court of Accounts (CoA)—must be significantly enhanced. This entails fully staffing them with qualified professionals, ensuring they have sufficient and protected budgets, modernizing their practices to align with international best practices, and empowering them to conduct independent audits and investigations into aid-related corruption. Strengthening these existing bodies is a foundational step that can't wait.

C) Empower and Integrate Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Aid Governance: The approach to including CSOs must move beyond performative gestures to genuine participation at all stages of aid management. CSO representatives, selected through a transparent and rotating mechanism, should be formally included in decision-making committees for needs assessment, project design, allocation decisions, and monitoring and evaluation. This is an immediate and tangible step toward genuine democratic engagement, ensuring that aid interventions are relevant and practical on the ground.

8.2 Long-Term Recommendations (Systemic and Institutional Reforms)

These recommendations represent the more ambitious, strategic shifts that require sustained political will and a fundamental change in how aid is managed in Lebanon. They build upon the foundations laid by the short- to medium-term steps.

A) Establish a Unified and Accountable Aid Governance Authority: A single, independent national authority should be created with a clear legal mandate to coordinate all aid (planning, needs assessments, allocation, distribution, and reporting) across governmental, international, and civil society actors. This authority addresses the pervasive fragmentation and overlapping

mandates that currently lead to inefficiencies and turf wars. A centralized coordination body would streamline processes, reduce duplication of efforts, and serve as a single point of contact for donors, thereby significantly improving coherence. This is a complex, long-term goal that will require sustained political effort to achieve.

B) Prioritize State Capacity Building with Conditional Engagement: The international community should recalibrate its approach of bypassing the state by coupling direct aid with strategic efforts to build state capacity. This means gradually routing more aid through government systems, but only as they meet governance benchmarks. For example, donors could pilot channeling funds through a reformed social affairs ministry system for cash transfers, conditioning the scaling up of this approach on verifiable performance metrics. Technical assistance, twinning programs, and training should be provided to ministries to equip them to handle aid funds accountably. Essentially, improvements should be rewarded with increased aid channeled through state systems, rather than permanently circumventing the state. This strategic approach fosters ownership and builds a more resilient and accountable state apparatus over time.

If implemented earnestly, these recommendations could help Lebanon begin to reverse its vicious cycle of aid dependency and governance failure. By establishing robust coordination, embracing transparency, enforcing accountability, leveraging civil society, and rebuilding state capacity, Lebanon can ensure that aid is not just a temporary fix but a fundamental building block for a more resilient and just society.

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Annex A: Interviews

A) Interviewees

Name	Title	Category
Ayman Dandash	Local Governance and Outreach Emergency Committee (GEC)	Central government
Salam Badredine	Director, Disaster Management Committee, Sahel Al Zahrani UoM; ER Coordinator, South Governorate	Local authority
Anonymous	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	INGO/UN
Maher Al Ali	Program manager/emergency response manager, SHIFT Association (Tripoli)	NGO
Anonymous	Response program manager	INGO
Anonymous	Global Emergency Coordinator	INGO/UN
Anonymous	Director of Program Development	INGO
Souraya Hamoud	Project Manager, Resilience in Local Governance, SALAR International (Akkar)	NGO
Rana Raad	Relations Coordinator, Crisis & Disaster Management Committee, Nabatieh Governorate	Local authority
Mortada Mhanna	Director, Disaster Management Unit, Tyre Union of Municipalities (Union of Tyre)	Local authority

B) Synthesis of Cross-Cutting Findings

Institutional & Legal Architecture: Formal Clarity vs. Operational Contradictions

Mandates are more explicit on paper than in practice; overlaps persist (e.g., MoSA–MEHE–DRR, HRC–EGC, Civil Defense–LRC). The DRM/DRR set-up lacks a comprehensive legal mandate and resourcing.

During escalations, the GEC and governors often act as the de facto coordinating locus; effectiveness is heavily person-dependent and tends to fade after the emergency.

Coordination: A Two-Tier System with a Missing Bridge

International/sector-level coordination (HCT/ISCG under the LRP) works relatively well; hyper-local field coordination (governors/municipal unions/LRC/NGOs) often performs strongly.

The bridge to a unified, government-led national response is weak; joint simulations across ISF/LRC/Civil Defense are rare; activation protocols vary by governorate. And simulation exercises are largely absent at the governorate and municipal levels.

Aid Channels & Modalities: A Hybrid, Fragmented Reality

Lebanon operates both direct channels (e.g., UN INGO/CSO/municipal) and state-mediated channels (e.g., customs exemptions via HRC). Early-phase chaos is common without pre-coordination and guidance on acceptable in-kind aid.

Transparency & Data: Fragmented Platforms, Weak Interoperability

Parallel systems exist (GEC aid portal, DRR/IDP tracking, UN's ActivityInfo & FTS, Lebanon Aid Tracking, IMPACT, and municipal dashboards), but they do not interoperate.

Household-level data are robust for displaced Syrians but weak for Lebanese.

The absence of an official channel for communication and information dissemination.

Accountability & AAP

Donor/UN audits, as well as partner compliance, are comparatively strong; however, national oversight bodies remain under-resourced.

Complaints/feedback systems (AAP) are uneven; emergent actors lack onboarding/registration.

Evaluation and accountability are absent at the administrative level and among state-designated crisis-response leaders.

Readiness & Resourcing Gaps

No dedicated disaster budgets, purpose-built shelters, or strategic stockpiles; heavy reliance on volunteers; infrastructure/security constraints.

Political Economy & Funding Realities

Political interference undermines needs-based allocation; donor fatigue and the pledge–disbursement gap fuel a "fog of reconstruction."

C) Individual Interview Snapshots

Ayman Dandash — Governmental Emergency Committee (GEC)

Institutional & Legal: National Response Plan (2024) exists; implementation inconsistent; overlaps/gaps during large-scale displacement; leadership impact significant (daily inter-ministerial coordination under GEC).

Coordination: Stronger among international/local actors than within the state; municipalities often unaware of national units/roles.

Transparency/Reporting: Governor-centered receipt & distribution with signed documentation; public GEC platform for state-to-state aid; lack of a single, unified portal.

Accountability: Donor-driven oversight; governors under administrative accountability; Anti-Corruption Commission and Financial Prosecutor requested data. and NGOs also requested information in accordance with the Right to Access Information Law."

Operations: Disconnect between national plans and municipalities; need a single public communication channel.

Key Challenges: Enact DRM law; shelters strategy; strategic stockpiles; accountability for non-performance.

Salam Badredine — Sahel Al Zahrani UoM & South Governorate ER Coordinator

Institutional and Legal: Intended lead for Disaster Management Committee; competing ministerial roles created role confusion; coordination initially effective, later politicized.

Transparency/Reporting: Strict paper trail (signatures/IDs/phone/residence); hotlines; verified shelter presence via LRC; periodic public briefings.

Accountability: Reports sent to the-Corruption Commission; judiciary engaged on shelter abuse cases.

Operations: Municipal data-driven verification; unified partner group to reduce duplication.

Key Challenges: No budgets; no contingency plans; reliance on volunteers.

Humanitarian Affairs Officer

Institutional and Legal: HCT for strategy; ISCG for operations under LRP, co-led with GoL; overlapping mandates adapted for complementarity amid funding shrinkage.

Coordination: Forums inclusive of UN/NGOs; coordinated with GEC during escalation.

Transparency/Reporting: ActivityInfo (activities), FTS (funding), Lebanon Aid Tracking (human + devolpment); beneficiary-level reporting systematic for displaced Syrians; not for Lebanese.

Accountability: To GoL, donors, and affected populations; continuous monitoring and

lessons-learned.

Operations: LRP aligns with line ministries; bridging to long-term frameworks constrained by macro/governance factors.

Maher Al Ali — Program manager / emergency response manager SHIFT Association (Tripoli)

Institutional and Legal: Municipalities legitimate for data collection; overlaps with governorate/INGO roles; oversight gaps in targeting.

Coordination: Field-level groups function; national-level coherence weak.

Transparency/Reporting: Inconsistent data; duplicate phone numbers undermined reliability; no unified national platform.

Accountability: Donor/INGO mechanisms active; judiciary role minimal.

Operations: Municipalities primary reference for beneficiary lists; central alignment limited.

Key Challenges: Verification, bureaucracy, security interruptions, rural logistics.

Response program manager

Institutional and Legal: Clear roles on paper (PPA, Anti-Corruption Commission) vs. operational gaps; lack of a central aid tracking system.

Coordination: LCRP/3RF/LFF frameworks help where co-led; outside them, coordination is ad hoc.

Transparency/Reporting: Existing tools (e.g., IMPACT) are useful but fragmented and not comprehensive.

Accountability: Court of Accounts/Central Inspection under-resourced; donors' audits effective within project boundaries.

Operations: Better alignment when donors & government co-lead; hum-dev link remains weak.

Emergency Coordinator

Institutional and Legal: Some confusion (HRC vs. EGC; MoSA vs. DRR for displaced Lebanese); inter-ministerial coordination strong during emergency, weaker after.

Transparency/Reporting: Early shelter-data issues; improved later; DRM/DRR IDP platform widely used plus ActivityInfo; ministries run separate systems.

Accountability: Robust UN audit/compliance; independent ethics/investigation functions; reporting channels in place.

Operations: Need clearer LRP vs. recovery roles/funding; improve linkage of ministerial strategies with sectors.

Director of Program Development & Quality

Institutional and Legal: Undefined role for external/diaspora initiatives; responders operate in silos; no joint simulations across key services.

Coordination: Often late (weeks into crises); international actors now better controlled via LRP, but unvetted new groups disrupt.

Transparency/Reporting: Need permanent, reusable tools (website + social channels) standardized from national to governorate level; all aid must pass through a data system.

Accountability: Pre-register emergent actors; institute transparent complaints metrics; current state-led oversight not systematic.

Operations: Simplify plans by risk type; replicate a single mechanism nationally.

Souraya Hamoud — Project Manager, Resilience in Local Governance -SALAR International (Akkar)

Institutional and Legal: Mandates exist but are blurred; local authorities facilitate without commensurate powers/resources.

Transparency/Reporting: Fragmented information; political/technical/structural barriers to unified reporting.

Accountability: Oversight bodies constrained; judiciary/independent commissions under-resourced.

Operations: Donor agendas often dominate; hum-dev linkage remains partial under LCRP.

Rana Raad — Nabatieh Governorate (Crisis & Disaster Management Committee)

Institutional and Legal: Mandates generally clear; overlaps solvable through better communication; institutional coordination limited beyond existing gov't–NGO collaboration.

Transparency/Reporting: Municipal data collected; stability and final reporting back from NGOs are inconsistent; disaster body lacks formal structure and staffing.

Accountability: Donor-driven mechanisms more common than national systems; judiciary has no general aid oversight.

Operations: Mixed alignment with national/local plans; coordination reduces duplication but needs continuous strengthening.

Key Challenges: Inter-ministerial gaps; limited resources; access/security constraints; slow responses.

Mortada Mhanna — Tyre Union of Municipalities (Disaster Management Unit)

Institutional and Legal: National roles often assigned politically, not by capacity; local DMU (est.

2010) developed own protocols; during escalation, GEC leadership outweighed long-trained institutions.

Transparency/Reporting: Detailed database; shared with Anti-Corruption Commission; GPS app/dashboards/online surveys with LRC; access restricted to authorities/partners.

Accountability: Limited national audits; international partners granted read access to monitor distributions.

Operations: Strong needs-based alignment at peak; recovery-phase coordination collapsed amid funding/state withdrawal; exceptional measures (e.g., opening schools as shelters).

Key Challenges: No disaster budgets; energy/logistics constraints; central ministries largely absent from shelter management.