



Sonia, 8 år, leker på Rädda Barnens barnvänliga plats. Explosionen i Beirut skedde samtidigt som hennes födelsedagskalas.

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## Two weeks on: Families in Beirut's disaster zone are still in dire need of support to rebuild and recover

**Beirut, August 19** - Two weeks after the explosion that tore through Lebanon's capital Beirut, many vulnerable families in the affected areas are still in dire need of support, Save the Children warned today.

Families are still living in houses with structural damage, with limited access to basic healthcare and other services.

To help those most in need, Save the Children has stepped up its response in Beirut. It has supported 734 households through shelter kits for damaged houses, opened child-friendly spaces where children can safely play and interact with friends, helped 245 adults and children through psychological first aid, and provided 4,800 hot meals and food parcels for the most vulnerable.

Even though many young volunteers, grass roots organisations and NGOs have worked hard to support affected communities, the scale of the destruction and needs are so large that more support is urgently needed to ensure families have a safe place to live and access to medical and psychological care, Save the Children said.

An assessment carried out by Save the Children among 470 households in ten of the most affected areas of Beirut lays bare the grim reality in the aftermath of the explosion. The assessment, conducted a week after the explosion, covered neighbourhoods within a 4km radius from the Port of Beirut. The data showed that:

- One in four families (24%) had no access to healthcare, with many having to skip routine treatments or unable to obtain medicines.

- 17% of the homes had collapsed ceilings, 11% had damaged beams and 26% experienced damage to the balcony.

- 18 children had been temporarily separated from their parents or were unaccompanied.

- 32% of families reported the need for psychosocial support to help parents and children cope with their experiences.

These bleak realities are the result of the explosion, compounded with the impact of the economic crisis that Lebanon has been experiencing for almost a year, the assessment showed. A quarter of the households affected in the blast had or have no member with an income, with only 6% of the families maintaining any savings.

Sonia, 8, had just blown out the candles on her birthday cake and had taken a piece to her neighbour, when the explosion happened on August 4th. *“I was*

*crying and crying, I was afraid, I was afraid about my father.”*

*“[At home] The wall up there was broken, and ... this is the kitchen and that’s the living room, they both [are damaged].”*

Sonia’s mother Hanan said: *“Sonia wanted to get downstairs just to see her father, [to see] if he’s alright, she had an extreme crying episode. Then I think she passed it, but... there are things that might have changed in children’s psychology. She doesn’t want to talk about that issue, she says, ‘get it out of your mind, get it out of your mind’. All the children I know are in need for someone to think about them, to change their mood.”*

Overwhelmed hospitals and unaffordable private healthcare have contributed to people not receiving urgent or routine medical treatment. Pregnant women, children and people with disabilities are in a particularly vulnerable position. More than half (55%) of the families/people interviewed by Save the Children reported that they have on average two persons in the household with chronic illness or in critical medical condition.

Juliet, an 84-year-old resident of Beirut, said: *“I have never seen damage like this. To see my country damaged like this, it’s terrible. Isn’t it terrible for the young men and women who were killed?... Those people whose houses were destroyed and were displaced.*

*“My grandchild now doesn’t let his mother go out, he doesn’t let his father leave. His mother has to go to work, he doesn’t let her, he says ‘What if you died mum? Who is going to raise us?’. A 9-year-old boy, isn’t it terrible? I still don’t get what happened.”*

Save the Children is concerned that the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in Lebanon will lead to more immediate needs re-surfacing, including the most vulnerable populations Lebanon.

Jad Sakr, Save the Children’s Country Director in Lebanon, said: *“The explosion made no difference between rich and poor – everyone was impacted. Now that the dust has settled, the disastrous consequences for families in Beirut are starting to unfold. Many can’t afford to fix their damaged homes.”*

*“People are telling us that their daily life has now become about prioritising what to spend the little money they have on: food, repairs or medication for their children. Save the Children’s teams, and other organisations and volunteers, are*

*working around the clock to support families to ensure they don't have to make those difficult decisions. This is a national disaster that will need the efforts of everyone involved to put people on the first step on the long road back to recovery – the hard work has just begun.”*

## **ENDS**

### **Notes to editors**

- -To assess the situation in Beirut following the explosion at the port on 4 August, Save the Children conducted a household assessment of the situation and areas that need immediate humanitarian intervention in the week after the explosion. The data covers specific areas within the disaster zone with a focus on vulnerable families.
- -In total, 470 cases were assessed in affected neighbourhoods surrounding the blast site.
- -More than half of the households interviewed (65%) reported that their houses were not assessed yet and 91% reported that no one guaranteed them that their houses would be repaired.
- -At the time of the survey, 12% had received assistance since the incident, including food (78%), CASH (11%), hygiene (9%) and shelter (2%).
- -There were 8% households reporting that they have someone with physical or mental disability in their HH of whom 32% were due to the disaster related. So far, Save the Children distributed 4,800 hot meals, provided psychological first aid to 245 children and adults, and helped 734 households with weatherproofing kits. It distributed 1,240 protective kits for the Lebanese Red Cross and provided safe spaces for 70 children to come to socialise and play.

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