



In response to the explosion, International Medical Corps team has been going door-to-door in the Bourj Hammoud, Karm El-Zaitoun, Geitaou and Mar Mikhael neighborhoods to distribute household hygiene kits to affected residents and PPE to volunteers helping with clean-up and recovery efforts.

On August 4, 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate stored at Beirut's port exploded, killing more than 220 people and injuring more than 6,500. Some 300,000 people have left homeless, with scores still reported missing. In the immediate aftermath of the explosion, efforts were focused on providing immediate lifesaving assistance and protection to those affected by the blast.

As the response moves into its second month, International Medical Corps continues to provide immediate health, mental health care and gender-based violence (GBV) services while shifting the focus toward medium- and long-term projects and activities, including structure rehabilitation and repair, comprehensive and affordable primary healthcare, support for persons with disabilities, GBV case management, and longer-term mental health and psychosocial support.

In addition, Lebanon has seen a dramatic increase in the spread of COVID-19 since last month's explosion. Since the blast, the number of cases has increased by approximately 220%.¹ The country has registered between 500 and 600 cases almost every day since mid-August. In response, government officials imposed a lockdown and curfew at the end of August; however, for the hundreds of thousands who have been displaced, these orders have been difficult to follow.

As the number of cases has increased, Lebanon's health system has been stretched to capacity. Damage to health infrastructure is significant. Three major hospitals were destroyed in the explosion and three others were partially damaged. The World Health Organization has reported that approximately 500 hospital beds were lost as a result of the explosion.² In addition, primary healthcare centers (PHCCs) and dispensaires, private clinics, pharmacies and stand-alone laboratories were damaged in the blast. In a rapid assessment conducted by the World Bank, approximately 36% of health facilities were affected by the explosion, limiting their ability to provide care.³ In addition to the physical damage to health infrastructure and equipment, the facilities that are functional have experienced a radical increase in the number of patients, which has further depleted medical supply stock—especially personal protective equipment (PPE), which was already in severe shortage. This is particularly concerning, as the number of healthcare workers with COVID-19 has steadily increased throughout the crisis. So far, more than 670 healthcare workers have been diagnosed with COVID-19, with more than 80 new cases confirmed between August 30 and September 1 alone.

FAST FACTS

Our Footprint

- International Medical Corps has partnerships with more than 50 primary healthcare centers (PHCCs) throughout Lebanon, supporting primary healthcare services for Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese at facilities in Bekaa, Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Akkar and other areas throughout the north and south.

Our Response

- Since the explosion, International Medical Corps has delivered 26 shipments of medical supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE)—including masks, gloves and gauze—to 18 PHCCs and eight hospitals in Beirut.
- The team has provided more than 1,200 medical consultations and 1,500 psychological first-aid consultations through mobile medical units that were deployed to highly impacted areas of Geitaoui-Karm El Zeitoun, Mar Mikhael, Bourj Hammoud and Mdwair.

¹ <https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/09/02/908726243/after-beirut-explosion-lebanon-sees-a-spike-in-coronavirus-infections>

² <http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/lebanon/who-lebanon-strategic-response-plan-27.9.20.pdf?ua=1>

³ <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/650091598854062180/Beirut-Rapid-Damage-and-Needs-Assessment.pdf>

International Medical Corps Response

International Medical Corps has been active in Lebanon since 2006. We have partnerships with more than 50 PHCCs and hospitals, and our activities focus on the needs of both refugees and vulnerable Lebanese residing in Greater Tripoli, Akkar, Beirut and Mount Lebanon, Bekaa and the South. International Medical Corps provides quality healthcare services, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and GBV prevention and response programming.



International Medical Corps immediately deployed MMUs to provide critical care to residents in the affected areas following the explosion.

Immediately following the explosion, International Medical Corps deployed two mobile medical units (MMUs) along with MHPSS and mobile GBV support services to highly affected areas surrounding the port. The MMUs and MHPSS shelters were stationed at Bourj Hammoud, Karm El-Zeitoun, Geitaou and Mar Mikhael, areas that are densely populated and were highly vulnerable before the explosion. All of the target areas have widespread structural damage, including collapsed buildings and buildings on the verge of collapse. In Bourj Hammoud, between 70% and 90% of the dwellings were destroyed or partially destroyed. In Karm El-Zeitoun, 70% of houses are partly destroyed, and in Geitaou, approximately 95% of the population currently lives in a partially damaged building. All of these areas lacked access to basic services in the immediate aftermath of the explosion. Many of the major healthcare facilities in these areas were either severely or partially damaged, causing a disruption in services.

The remaining facilities were overwhelmed with casualties from the explosion; many reported that their intensive-care units were already near capacity due to COVID-19.

To meet and support these urgent health needs, International Medical Corps stationed MMUs and MHPSS shelters in the target areas following the explosion. The teams provided medical consultations for 1,121 patients—including wound care for 130 patients—and distributed medication to 549 patients.

International Medical Corps also provided psychological first aid (PFA) sessions to more than 1,500 people and GBV consultations to more than 200. In addition to providing medical consultations and PFA sessions, International Medical Corps also distributed PPE and hand sanitizer to more than 2,000 civil society volunteers supporting recovery and clean-up efforts, and 1,140 household hygiene kits to residents who were affected by the blast.

As the immediate humanitarian needs resulting from the explosion have decreased, response efforts have shifted toward supporting existing healthcare facilities and ensuring continuity of care. International Medical Corps is continuing to work closely with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) to ensure that our activities align with the country's overall recovery strategy to strengthen PHCCs and hospitals, and to improve overall quality and access to healthcare services. International Medical Corps has so far distributed PPE to 27 healthcare facilities and medical supplies to 23 facilities, and plans additional distributions in the coming weeks.

International Medical Corps is also working to expand our network of PHCCs in Beirut to ensure that facilities across the city have the necessary support to continue providing essential care. The need for mental health and psychosocial support services is still high following the explosion. We are working closely with Lebanon's National Mental Health Program to develop a series of training sessions for frontline healthcare workers and will begin conducting Mental Health Gap Action Program (MhGAP) sessions over the next few weeks. As we expand our partnerships with PHCCs, we will continue to work with each facility to identify gaps in services and assess the need for MHPSS and GBV support.

Though most recent efforts have focused on the response to the explosion, refugees and vulnerable Lebanese continue to have urgent needs related to the economic crisis and COVID-19. To date, Lebanese currency has lost around 80% of its value. Hyperinflation has limited households' ability to access food and other essential items, including medicines. Nearly one out of every three Lebanese is unemployed.⁴ The explosion further exacerbated these crises, overwhelming traumatized residents. In response to these urgent needs, International Medical Corps will continue coordinating closely with the MoPH and our local and international partners to address gaps in services and strengthen recovery efforts.



In response to increased health and mental health needs, International Medical Corps' team provided integrated services through MMUs.

⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WFP-0000116784.pdf>