

**MAP Update on the
Crisis in Lebanon
July 2006**



Background

The state of Israel has been bombing Lebanon intensively since the capture by Hizbullah of two Israeli soldiers in a cross-border raid on 12 July. Fuel depots, the electricity grid, roads and bridges have been targeted throughout Lebanon. In addition the southern suburbs of Beirut and southern Lebanon have been virtually destroyed. The cost of the damage is estimated at several billion US dollars according to *as-Safir* newspaper.

So far there have been well over 300 reported casualties, and about 1500 injuries as a result of the bombing in Lebanon. An estimated half a million or more people have also been displaced. Most European, Canadian and US nationals have been evacuated and much of the Lebanese and Syrian casual labour force has also fled by car, bus or taxi across the border to Syria. Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi Chinese and Philippine labour remain to face the onslaught along with the remaining Lebanese and Palestinian population.

Diplomatic initiatives to achieve a ceasefire have so far been unsuccessful and there are no apparent interlocutors to negotiate between Hizbullah and Israel. Hostilities might go on for some time, and there is a real possibility that a total breakdown of the Lebanese state could result.

Current needs

With electricity disrupted there has been a breakdown in basic public services such as water supply, sewage disposal and rubbish collection. While most hospitals and buildings have private generators, the shortage of fuel means that frontline services, such as fire and ambulance services are at risk. Government offices are closed, but the telephone and telecommunications network is still functioning for the time being.

In times of crisis and uncertainty, essential food items are often withdrawn from the market. In Lebanon today, there are shortages of flour, rice, sugar, tea, cooking oil, and gas. Local and international organisations have set up local food distribution to the most vulnerable.

While there are currently no reported shortages of essential drugs for people suffering from chronic illnesses, this will be a critical issue for those who are displaced. So far, despite the disruption, pharmacies continue to be well stocked. That situation could change quickly.

Temporary shelters have been established in schools, mosques and churches throughout southern Lebanon by the Lebanese Red Cross. There has been some distribution of non-food items to displaced people and these goods, so far, have been available from the local market. However, with roads inaccessible, and the airport and major ports closed, MAP is deeply concerned that stocks will soon run out.

Key organisations

Both ICRC and UN agencies are well represented in Lebanon as Beirut is the regional centre for West Asia. These organisations have enormous capacities to respond with food, emergency water services and fuel distributions to run emergency services. Both are expected to announce

relief operations, following the statement from the Israeli military that it would allow humanitarian corridors between Cyprus and Lebanon.

While government offices are currently closed, most hospitals and essential services continue to function, rationing power, repairing the water distribution networks and fire fighting. The Lebanese civil defence has responded to the destruction caused by the bombing as best they can, repairing some of the damage to the port and roads in and around Beirut. The **Higher National Council** and the **Lebanese Ministry of Finance** have set up bank accounts where donations can be received.

In addition to the **Lebanese Red Cross**, there are several Lebanese non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with considerable local capacity. These include the Islamic charities, the Middle East Council of Churches, and an extensive NGO network throughout Lebanon. Several NGOs have issued appeals through the Internet for local, small-scale distributions of food and other essential items.

There is an extensive network of clinics and primary health care centres run by the public sector, NGOs and private health services that provide first aid. Most shops are also reported to be open. Goods are available and people expect trade through Syria to pick up despite the disruption to the road network.

About MAP

With 22 years experience in Lebanon, MAP is well-placed to provide long-term developmental support to those worst affected by the current crisis. MAP has excellent operational relations with a broad range of local partner organisations. While raising money to provide immediate humanitarian relief, MAP is also awaiting the results of a rapid assessment in Beirut, to be conducted by **Merlin**, an international health NGO. Once this assessment is available, MAP will prioritise its response to the longer term needs on the ground.

In the meantime, MAP's London office is coordinating MAP's response in Gaza and in Lebanon, raising awareness of the issues and conditions on the ground, and raising money to ensure MAP can respond to the humanitarian crisis. The current crisis has earned massive media coverage from a range of sources whose credentials vary enormously. MAP's experience on the ground over so many years means we are best placed to provide accurate and informed analysis of the political environment in which we operate. MAP's field staff and partner organisations are a valuable resource in this respect.

MAP's response in Lebanon

With the humanitarian situation worsening, MAP anticipates the need for a wide range of interventions. In the medium term, MAP is well-positioned to help those who fall through the net. The media spotlight will eventually move on from Lebanon, but the suffering will continue.

Anticipated interventions include:

- Help with essential drugs to the most vulnerable whose support organisations are no longer functioning
- Expanding primary care where clinics have been closed
- Trauma counselling especially for children psychologically disturbed by the bombing
- Housing and rehabilitation for families returning to destroyed homes and neighbourhoods
- Business start up loans to individuals whose places of work were destroyed

Help with essential drugs to the most vulnerable whose support organisations are no longer functioning

This will primarily be done through financial grants to NGOs working with vulnerable groups. It will need to be carefully monitored over a limited time period. Co-ordination with the Lebanese Ministry of Health will be essential if interventions are to be sustainable.

Expanding primary care where clinics have been closed

This will be based on ongoing needs assessments when people return to find the physical infrastructure destroyed. Such a programme will depend on requests by health NGOs for mobile clinics and demand for specialist services depending on the specific vulnerabilities of the communities in question. It could involve financial assistance and medical and managerial expertise to set up and run health and rehabilitation programmes.

Trauma counselling especially for children disturbed by the bombing.

This will mainly be done through NGOs working with children and youth in co-ordination with local municipalities based in schools and health clinics. They should focus on the areas targeted by the Israeli air force outside the camps. The main NGOs include Mouvement Social and NGOs active in running summer youth camps for whom plans were well advanced.

Housing and rehabilitation of public health infrastructure for families returning to destroyed homes and neighbourhoods

This will have to be in co-ordination with a wider reconstruction effort which, if current institutional arrangements remain, will take place through CDR in the Prime Minister's office. One can anticipate grants for the immediate repair of national infrastructure, large loans being made available for the repair of buildings, and also - given the level of real estate speculation in Lebanon - a need for regulation and monitoring by the civil society sector.

Business start up loans to individuals whose places of work were destroyed.

Demand for this will be huge and mostly uncoordinated. Micro financing institutions might be able to respond effectively in helping people get back on their feet. Such a fund, should it be made available, would need managerial arrangements to target and evaluate the applicants.

Conclusion

If the consequences of the current assault on Lebanon are to be reversed, programme interventions need to focus on rehabilitation, reconstruction and development needs and especially the mechanisms that ensure victims participation in rebuilding their lives. MAP is uniquely well-placed to do this.