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The Port of Beirut Blast and Global Lessons on People-Centered Recovery

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Introduction

Since 2019, Lebanon has been struggling with concurrent crises: the catastrophic financial crisis, the Port of Beirut blast, the global COVID-19 pandemic, political paralysis and social upheaval, and the Syrian refugee crisis. Underlying all these crises and the failure to resolve them is pervasive state failure. With increasing and noticeable gaps in leadership, how could recovery and reconstruction efforts address these gaps while avoiding widening them? This is the challenge that particularly emerged following the Port of Beirut blast. In response, the European Union (EU), World Bank (WB), and United Nations (UN) advanced a novel, inclusive framework called the 3RF that aimed at broadening public participation while also engaging state authorities to respond to the consequences of leadership gaps and to rebuild trust and integrity of public institutions.

This policy brief aims to provide a global perspective on the practice of people-centered recovery, specifically focusing on the lessons learned beyond the context of Lebanon. This brief offers an analysis of the urgent challenges faced by Lebanon due to its compounded crises. It identifies three priorities that need to be addressed immediately: first, urgently responding to the needs of the most severely impacted and vulnerable; second, ensuring that relief efforts do not undermine public institutions; and third, guaranteeing

that recovery efforts remain inclusive and that no one is left behind. It then delves into the broader concept of people-centered recovery to identify generalizable principles and challenges. To illustrate these principles, this brief presents case experiences from Iraq, Haiti, and Jordan that best address the three pressing challenges identified earlier in Lebanon's context.

The Port of Beirut Blast and Lebanon's Concurrent Crises

On 4 August 2020, the Port of Beirut witnessed one of the largest explosions in modern history. The explosion had catastrophic consequences, with a death toll of over 200 and more than 6,500 people were injured (The World Bank Group, the European Union, and the United Nations, 2020). It also caused extensive property damage, leaving around 300,000 individuals displaced from their homes. According to the World Bank's Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA), damaged physical assets resulting from the blast were estimated to be between \$3.8 to \$4.6 billion USD and economic losses between \$2.9 to \$3.5 billion USD (The World Bank Group, the European Union, and the United Nations, 2020).

The explosion struck Lebanon amidst many interconnected crises, including a devastating economic and financial collapse, widespread social and political unrest, a persistent pandemic, and an entrenched Syrian refugee crisis. It intensified the existing vulnerability in the nation, deepened public skepticism towards the government, and further exposed the widespread corruption, incompetence, and mismanagement underlying concurrent crises.

In this sense, the blast and the context of concurrent crises in Lebanon presented a significant challenge: how could relief, recovery, and reconstruction efforts safeguard against elite-capture mismanagement and heightened public mistrust in the government, but also not further weaken the legitimacy of the state and its public institutions and services?

The World Bank, the EU, and the UN put forward the 'Lebanon Reform, Recovery, and Reconstruction Framework' (3RF) to meet this challenge. The 3RF introduced a novel reform, recovery, and reconstruction framework that would unite the three international sponsors, the government of Lebanon, and representatives from civil society and the private sector. This all-encompassing and inclusive framework was driven by what seemed to be a commitment to implement a people-centered approach to all aspects of recovery and reconstruction needed following the blast, as well as to the wider systemic and institutional reforms required to stabilize the country's concurrent crises.

Demonstrating a push towards implementing a people-centered framework, the 3RF was launched on 4 December 2020, for a duration of 18 months, with a focus on prioritizing the needs of residents, especially those most impacted by the explosion.

Understanding People-Centered Recovery and the Global Lessons Learned

The devastating explosion at the Port of Beirut and the ensuing 3RF response highlighted the need for disaster and crisis responses that center people, particularly those most affected and vulnerable, at the heart of recovery efforts. The significance of a sincere emphasis on people-centered recovery cannot be overstated, as exemplified by the difficult lessons learned from the 3RF. People-centered recovery is no mere buzzword; it requires a steadfast and persistent commitment to succeed. While the forthcoming report 'Reform, Recovery, and Reconstruction after the Port of Beirut Blast' will help highlight key lessons learned from the 3RF, this brief helps break down the concept behind people-centered recovery and draw lessons learned from global experiences.

What is people-centered recovery?

Although crises, disasters, and complex emergencies may share similarities, their specific characteristics and severity can differ depending on their location and context. As a result, while recovery and relief efforts may be guided by broad, general principles, they are often complex and varied.

The United Nations Secretary-General's 'Our Common Agenda' stresses the need to increase funding for social protection, the reduction of informal workers and businesses by integrating them into the formal economy, and the necessity to invest in green and digital economies. Moreover, the UN's 2030 Agenda emphasizes 'leaving no one behind,' which the UN states can only happen if transformative, sustainable, people-centered, and inclusive approaches are implemented.

This echoes General Assembly Resolution 66/290, passed in 2012, which guides the implementation of human security and acknowledges the linkages between dignity, survival, and livelihoods. According to the UN Trust Fund for Human Security (2016), 'human security calls for people-centered, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people and all communities,' with people-centeredness being the first fundamental principle within human security.

When engaging and emphasizing the most vulnerable and impacted individuals or groups, the responsibility is substantial and personal, and the expectations for relief and recovery efforts are more demanding. This highlights the importance of recognizing the unique needs and challenges faced by those most affected and ensuring that recovery efforts rise to that responsibility and are tailored to meet those needs in a fair, inclusive, and transparent manner.

In other words, the success and effectiveness of a recovery plan that prioritizes the needs of people largely hinges upon the thorough implementation and integration of its guiding principles. By placing the needs of those affected and disproportionately vulnerable at the forefront, the recovery process can be more fair, just, and effective. Failure to prioritize inclusion or to nominally approach people-centered recovery may further marginalize those who have already suffered, exacerbate the hardships they face, and undermine public confidence and trust in the respective relief and recovery response.

What are some defining features of people-centered recovery?

- The core objective of a people-centered recovery strategy is to shift the traditional hierarchical or top-down approach to disaster or crisis recovery towards a more inclusive, participatory, and bottom-up approach. This approach centers on the people affected by the crisis or disaster, empowering them to participate actively in the recovery process rather than passive recipients of aid and support. This ultimately leads to more effective and sustainable outcomes.
- There is no uniform approach to people-centered recovery. Some approaches draw on technological advancements to boost the role of CSOs and affected communities as ‘watchdogs’ to strengthen transparency and accountability; others emphasize their more formal participation in all aspects of the decision-making tied to recovery and relief response. Different models may also differ in the range of stakeholders they involve to represent public interests and the degree to which they allocate responsibility to them in the recovery process.
- People-centered recovery largely orbits around the understanding that greater inclusion of the public in shaping or monitoring the decisions that affect them will have an empowering cyclic effect and foster greater public participation in the recovery process.

- The concept of a people-centered recovery engages the public in the decision-making or monitoring process, without, however, taking away from the responsibilities of public institutions and the government.

What are some of its common challenges?

- Although the concept of a people-centered recovery aims to balance increasing the public's responsibilities while maintaining the accountability of the state and its institutions, there may be instances where competition or conflicts of interest between the two arise.
- When decision-making and recovery efforts lack coordination and collaboration amongst stakeholders, this can lead to critical setbacks. To prevent inefficiency, confusion, and mismanagement, it is crucial to establish transparent communication channels, assign clear roles and responsibilities, and cultivate a collaborative environment.
- As resources become scarce, public involvement often decreases due to a lack of motivation, opportunity, and a general feeling of helplessness.
- During a recovery or relief response, stakeholders may have disputes regarding the authentic representative of public interest or the most capable of overseeing technical aspects.
- In situations with an increased risk of elite capture and mismanagement, placing responsibility on the public or civil society organizations (CSOs) may shift the blame away from the state's failure. This pressures CSOs and the broader public to assume roles and responsibilities they are not responsible for or equipped to handle.
- State authorities may be unwilling to relinquish decision-making authority and may impede or obstruct processes that curtail their authority.
- Tensions may arise over which entity has the ultimate authority to shape the overall design and framework of the recovery and relief response and determine the degree to which the public (affected communities, CSOs, or the private sector) can participate, the role they can play, and their selection.
- When stakeholders lack trust in each other, it can impede progress and exacerbate preexisting tensions in societies. This highlights the importance of fostering trust and collaboration among stakeholders, particularly in contexts where social cohesion is fragile.

Global Lessons Learned from Iraq, Haiti, and Jordan

Reform, reconstruction, and recovery efforts in Lebanon faced have encountered three main challenges: urgently responding to the needs of the most severely impacted and vulnerable, ensuring that relief efforts do not undermine public institutions, and guaranteeing that recovery efforts remain inclusive and no one is left behind. Iraq, Haiti, and Jordan offer important lessons learned for Lebanon concerning people-centered recovery in addressing these challenges.

Iraq's experience with people-centered recovery draws attention to the importance of including affected communities in recovery and reconstruction, particularly in fragile contexts. Haiti, for its part, teaches us that restoring the integrity of public institutions and avoiding an over-dependence on NGOs is crucial in ensuring a successful recovery process. Meanwhile, novel approaches to recovery in Jordan provide valuable insights into the significance of promoting inclusivity, especially concerning gender and individuals with disabilities. Taken together, these lessons are essential for ensuring that recovery and reconstruction efforts are effective and sustainable and benefit all members of society.

Iraq: Centering impacted communities in recovery and reconstruction in fragile settings

Throughout the years, Iraq has struggled with fragility due to significant exogenous shocks and internal challenges, from the 2003 US invasion to the presence and rise of ISIS and proliferation of militia, pervasive elite capture and mismanagement, and civil clashes that have threatened social cohesion and undermined people's trust in the state and its public institutions. Nevertheless, there exist active efforts to advance people-centered recovery that emphasize inclusion and meeting individuals' and groups' needs that should not be overlooked.

Indeed, Iraq's recent recovery and reconstruction efforts have aimed to prioritize community and individual involvement, with a particular focus on empowering women and youth. Iraqis are at the forefront of efforts to improve public institutions' transparency, efficiency, and accountability. World Bank initiatives have focused on assisting governmental institutions, notably the Ministry of Planning, ultimately collaborating with all Iraqi ministries to conduct a Damage and Needs Assessment across 19 sectors within Iraqi governorates impacted by conflict. These assessments have examined losses, damages, and needs, with data gathered by experts on the ground and

through satellite imagery, online open sources, and social media analytics (The World Bank Group, 2018b).

The World Bank has also prioritized engaging women and young individuals in rebuilding their communities. As such, inclusive informal feedback sessions brought community members together to discuss, ideate, and eventually implement preventive measures and risk reduction initiatives. These public-private and stakeholder dialogues guarantee inclusive and people-centered recovery and help build intra-communal and inter-communal trust. Women actively participated in these dialogues. This was welcomed by their families and bolstered women's agency, engaged them in entrepreneurial and training endeavors, and empowered them economically. It also increased their societal roles as working individuals and volunteers. Security concerns, however, continue to challenge citizen engagement and participation, and more work is needed to build the capacity of communities across Iraq (The World Bank Group, 2021c).

In Mosul, the World Bank has likewise assisted Iraqis in implementing socioeconomic reforms and rebuilding damaged infrastructure, particularly through the Iraq Social Fund for Development project, which emphasizes the enhancement of 1.5 million households' living conditions through job creation and by guaranteeing their access to basic needs and services (The World Bank Group, 2018a). Different UN agencies additionally stressed the need to focus on internally displaced persons, youth, the elderly, and women within recovery strategies during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic to achieve sustainable, resilient, and inclusive recovery. Indeed, COVID-19 spurred broader, long-term adverse effects, including rising costs of living, job loss particularly felt by daily workers, and spikes in gender-based violence and insecurity (International Organization for Migration, United Nations Human Settlements Program, and United Nations Development Program, 2021).

Moving forward, continued national ownership and recovery leadership are essential and must be amplified by the international community actors committed to and participating in relief and recovery efforts. Flexibility is critical in a context of uncertainty, complexity, and insecurity. Likewise, transparency and accountability are cornerstones for resilient and sustainable recovery (Matsunaga, 2019). Ongoing focus on people-centered recovery and community-focused approaches, reforms, and inclusion will strengthen trust in the states and institutions and move away from fragility.

These highlights do not intend to downplay the pervasiveness of elite capture or the shortcomings of international donors or lenders in responding to the leakage of resources intended for the public good. More substantial and comprehensive assessments of international aid and loans offer critical insight into the gaps in the responsibility of international lenders and donors, the serious challenge of losing relief resources to corruption or mismanagement, and the complex challenges undermining public institutions in Iraq (Looney, 2008; Matsunaga, 2019; Mansour and Khatib, 2021).

Power dynamics in Iraq are largely influenced by armed groups, political parties, and elites, who engage in various forms of cooperation and rivalry, resulting in political turbulence and insecurity. These actors draw on economic means, varied ideologies, and political and communal violence to assert their dominance over public institutions and society. (Mansour and Khatib, 2021). Drawing parallels with Lebanon, the consequent capture of key public institutions and dysfunctional status quo is also publicly challenged by protests and social uprisings (Mansour and Khatib, 2021). Still, the developments highlighted above do present lessons learned, particularly regarding how incorporating communal and public engagement and participation in relief efforts can work to mitigate against leakages and the loss of vital public resources and need to be strengthened and consistently applied.

Haiti: Reforming weak state institutions and avoiding NGOization of the state

In Haiti, people-centered recovery translates into the need to create a balance between reforming weak state institutions to fulfill their role and preventing the NGOization of the state. The cross-cutting nature of the challenges facing Haiti makes this a strenuous task. These challenges range from COVID-19 to the overlapping economic crisis, the August 2021 earthquake and its aftermath, President Moïse's assassination in 2021, and the accompanying political turmoil, all occurring in an already fragile and unstable context where gang violence is widespread.

Going back to 2010, the earthquake that struck Port au Prince and the response to assist Haiti in recovery and reconstruction efforts created more vulnerability. To elaborate, the state's inability to respond to the wide-scale displacement, structural damage, and the needs of impacted communities and individuals led NGOs to intervene and play a key role in filling the gap. Nevertheless, this created a bigger problem characterized by the overdependence

on NGOs and the lack of transparency and accountability (Kristoff and Panarelli, 2010). In a context of fragility and crisis, it is imperative to ensure that the state's integrity and the legitimacy of public institutions are not eroded and that NGOization does not occur. It is equally important to guarantee an inclusive, people-centered recovery and reconstruction that accounts for the varying needs of those impacted by the crisis, particularly disproportionately vulnerable individuals.

Historical vulnerability, fragility, and the mishandling of the 2010 earthquake's aftermath and recovery process have bred increased vulnerability and further decayed trust in the government and public institutions (Kristoff and Panarelli, 2010). They have likewise increased violence and gender-based violence in Haiti, including attacks against journalists, individuals working in the human rights field, and judges. Risks of floods, deforestation, and related soil erosion further threaten human safety and basic human rights such as access to food, water, and sanitation. Illiteracy, difficulty accessing education, discrimination, and marginalization are additional challenges (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

Many Haitians continue to look to external actors, particularly foreign officials and international organizations, for help to overcome harsh circumstances instead of relying on the government and public institutions. Without taking away from the particular struggles experienced in Haiti, this dynamic parallels Haiti and Lebanon. In both countries, mismanagement, lack of transparency and accountability, and lack of people-centered interventions have reproduced instability and generated additional political and economic crises. Throughout the years, efforts to rebuild Haiti's port failed (Kushner, 2019). For over a decade now, reconstruction efforts in Haiti have been led by foreign countries, international organizations, and INGOs due to the perceived corruption of the Haitian government. The Haitian parliament and government have had little to no say in reconstruction endeavors. The lack of complete transparency in delivering aid fostered more uncertainty and perceptions of corruption.

People-centered recovery, reforms, and reconstruction anchored in inclusion are essential to overcoming violence and overlapping crises and dispelling fragility. Striking a balance between having NGOs assist in the recovery and reconstruction process and preserving the integrity and role of the state and its public institutions is also very important. In the case of Haiti, restoring trust in the state and public institutions is of utmost importance, as well as improving coordination between NGOs and the state. Lastly, the national

unity dialogues in 2019 serve as an example of the creativity and innovation required in the reform process (Fauriol, 2021).

Jordan: On gender and persons with disabilities

Throughout the years, Jordan has made strides in advancing the rights of girls and women, youth, persons with disabilities, and refugees, and in meeting their needs. It has done this through the ideation and implementation of cross-cutting, inter-sectoral, cooperative, and multileveled projects emphasizing local, inter-ministerial, national, and international cooperation. This collaborative, people-centered recovery has amplified innovation and integration.

During the past two decades, and particularly the pandemic years, the government and civil society organizations in Jordan have focused their people-centered recovery efforts on guaranteeing and protecting the rights of girls, women, and persons living with disabilities. They have also supported 'more than 760,000 registered refugees' in Jordan, particularly those forced to endure additional vulnerability because of their gender and disability (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023).

Since its inception in 2007, the Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities, later renamed the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (HCD), has been endeavoring to transform societal approaches to disability and to ensure that persons with disabilities lead a decent life rooted in equity and sustainability. To achieve this vision, the HCD has been supporting activities emphasizing participation, accountability, governance, and transparency tied to persons with disabilities. This has translated into multileveled policymaking efforts and monitoring of the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and of the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in coordination with key governmental institutions having mandates around inclusive education, accessibility and universal design, independent living, accreditation, policies and institutions, monitoring and coordination, laws, equal opportunities, media and communication, and more (Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2023).

In recent years, the European Union, UN Women, and Generations for Peace in Jordan have been investing in young women, persons with disabilities, and youth to increase societal peace, inclusion, and cohesiveness, and to empower them to counter violent extremism (UN Women Jordan, 2022). Key areas of focus have included increasing youth and women's representation in decision-making

spaces, improving their ability to face gender-based discrimination, and bolstering the capacities of women who have a disability and transforming them into peacemakers with a focus on community integration and overcoming discrimination and marginalization. Social media has also been used to reach youths, women, and persons with disabilities (UN Women Jordan, 2022).

In September 2022, Jordan was praised by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Gerard Quinn, for its regional leadership on disability rights and its disability laws protecting persons with disabilities, particularly the '2017 national disability legislation' (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2022). Nevertheless, Quinn also encouraged more efforts to be focused on countering societal bias and stigma to include persons with disabilities in their homes, schools, workplaces, and communities, notably through a media campaign to raise the general public's awareness regarding disability and the adoption of a human rights approach which views disability as being part of human diversity.

Another recommendation was the creation of an 'independent monitoring mechanism' to assess implementation gaps tied to ensuring disability rights in Jordan (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2022). This would also enable a targeted approach to fostering disability rights and countering disparities in their application across different Jordanian regions. Other persisting challenges include a lack of access to transportation and the need to foster inclusive education by equipping teachers with the required tools and training to cater to students who have disabilities. More humanitarian support to Jordan is likewise needed as it continues to host a significant number of refugees, particularly those who may suffer from physical, mental, and other forms of disabilities (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2022).

Between 2021 and 2022, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation - AICS Amman funded an integrated project across the Jordanian regions of Amman, Irbid, and Zarqa focused on 'disability, sexual and gender-based violence and COVID emergency' (AIDOS, 2021). This project targeted persons with disabilities, particularly refugees and sexual and gender-based violence survivors. It increased their access to integrated services to prevent sexual and gender-based violence from occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic. The project also included a community component centered on increasing awareness of linkages between disability, the COVID-19 pandemic, and sexual and gender-based violence.

In 2021, the World Bank's Mashreq Regional Director, Saroj Kumar Jha, stressed the need for Jordan to prioritize improving its public transportation system to make it more affordable and accessible, particularly to women, youth, and persons with disabilities. Jha urged the kingdom to engage in additional consultations with civil society and the private sector to accelerate the shift from private to public transportation, increase transparency in the process, and further empower all Jordanians, particularly those most vulnerable (The World Bank Group, 2021a).

During the same year, the World Bank approved the Performance and Learning Review of the Country Partnership Framework for Jordan, extending the Country Partnership Framework by one year to cover 2023 and including a new pillar centered on 'green, resilient and inclusive recovery.' This pillar encompasses an action plan to further empower women's economic involvement, labeling it a component of recovery efforts (The World Bank Group, 2021b).

There have been other civil society efforts to politically include persons with disabilities in Jordan through Citizen Committee volunteer groups helping educate able-bodied volunteers on how to include persons with disabilities and ideating, creating, and implementing projects fostering inclusive communities (Ware and Miner, 2022). The rehabilitation of the Jerash Care Centre has further increased safety, inclusion, and accessibility to training opportunities and classrooms to support persons with disabilities. The rehabilitation was a joint effort between the European Union, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), and the government of Jordan, particularly the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development. It is an important milestone in assisting the ministry to enhance the infrastructure of around 100 social care centers, ministerial field directorate offices, and accommodation facilities (United Nations Office for Project Services, 2022a).

Last but not least, the United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund has enabled the development of user-centered design projects around Jordan. An example is the project in Ghor Al Safi to help women, youth, and vulnerable groups in the area, which rehabilitated a community center and a park to create job opportunities by encouraging entrepreneurship and increase safety and the right to play for children, especially children with disabilities. These rehabilitations directly benefit the 37,000 residents of the area and the 26,000 residents of neighboring areas (United Nations Office for Project Services, 2022b).

Overall, there are many lessons to be learned from Jordan's people-centered policies and their intersectionality. These include:

- the creation of a body working on advancing disability rights,
- the restructuring of governmental offices to become more conscious about gender needs, sexual and gender-based violence, and the provision of support to persons with disabilities,
- continuous cross-cutting coordination among governmental offices,
- the necessity to innovate and ideate multileveled, integrated, and intersectional projects and programs focused on gender and disability,
- the need for multi-partner collaboration and pooling of funds,
- the enhancement of vulnerable groups' access to public transportation,
- the rehabilitation of spaces to become safer and more inclusive, and
- the integration of persons with disabilities into various spaces and political circles.

Implications and Conclusions

The blast at the Port of Beirut and the simultaneous crises that Lebanon is facing pose a critical challenge for the country and those involved in its recovery, reconstruction, and reform efforts. On the one hand, the compounded crises have left more people vulnerable, exacerbated damages and losses, and increased the public's need for assistance, relief, and reconstruction. On the other hand, the pervasive mismanagement and corruption underlying Lebanon's crises have yet to be effectively addressed. As a result, trust and confidence in public institutions and the state have plummeted, eroding social cohesion and making it unclear who has the authority to determine who should fill the existing gaps in leadership.

In the aftermath of the explosion, the EU, World Bank, and UN, which are behind reconstruction and recovery efforts, proposed a comprehensive framework that would involve both private and public sectors, as well as CSOs, international donors, and government agencies, in a collaborative effort towards recovery, reconstruction, and reform. One of the key objectives of this initiative is to prioritize the needs of the people affected by the disaster. While other publications in this series will focus on reviewing the 3RF process, this study aims to explain this concept further and provide practical lessons that could be applied to Lebanon.

The ongoing crisis in Lebanon has brought to the surface three major challenges that require immediate attention. To begin with, it is imperative

to devise a recovery process centered on prioritizing the needs of those most severely impacted by the explosion or those disproportionately vulnerable amid an existing nationwide crisis. Secondly, it is crucial that any relief, reconstruction, or recovery efforts do not weaken the legitimacy of public institutions and do not lead to delegating critical state responsibilities to non-governmental organizations. Thirdly, it is vital that recovery efforts actively work towards promoting inclusivity in a meaningful manner, ensuring that no one is left behind in the rebuilding process.

The recent implementation of people-centered recovery initiatives in Iraq has brought attention to practical approaches that balance community-centered and people-centered recovery efforts. These approaches aim to strengthen social cohesion and inclusivity and empower affected and vulnerable communities to take ownership of the recovery process. The struggles faced by Haiti and Lebanon in repairing their state institutions serve as a reminder of the difficulties in achieving state integrity through local initiatives. This emphasizes the need to acknowledge the responsibility of both local and international stakeholders in addressing the gaps left by the state. While international organizations and foreign governments can offer significant assistance with financing and organizing recovery efforts, a truly effective recovery should emphasize transparency, accountability, and reforms that prioritize the needs of the people. It is not enough to simply 'recover' from a crisis; we must also reform the systems that make individuals and communities vulnerable in the first place.

There is a growing focus in Jordan on advancing disability rights and promoting gender equality. Governmental offices are being restructured to address gender needs better and combat sexual and gender-based violence. Support is also provided to persons with disabilities through continuous cross-cutting coordination among these offices. It is necessary to innovate and ideate multileveled, integrated, and intersectional projects and programs that focus on gender and disability. Multi-partner collaboration and pooling of funds are crucial for these efforts. Additionally, vulnerable groups' access to public transportation needs to be enhanced, and spaces must be rehabilitated to become safer and more inclusive. It is also important to integrate persons with disabilities into various spaces and political circles.

Apart from these three cases, the global experience of a people-focused recovery has taught us a valuable lesson: the significance of implementing user-centered design and people-centered recovery, genuinely incorporating

affected individuals' immediate and long-term desires and needs. To achieve success, this delegation of responsibility and ownership of the recovery process, where trust among stakeholders is low, demands substantial reforms in accountability and transparency to rebuild trust. Clear and effective coordination between stakeholders is also essential to prevent inefficiency and despair and maintain active participation in the decision-making and monitoring process of recovery efforts. The recommendations that follow distill good practices inspired from the three case studies and applicable to the case of Lebanon.

Recommendations

Implementing People-Centered Recovery Focused on the Most Vulnerable

People-centered recovery should continue focusing on those impacted by the Beirut port blast and those whose vulnerabilities have increased due to the concurrent crises or who became vulnerable because of these crises. Notably, emphasis must be placed on assisting women, youth, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities, as well as migrant workers and refugees. This includes implementing user-centered design principles when ideating proposals and projects to ensure their needs are reflected and catered to during the implementation phase.

Preventing the NGOization of the State

Preventing the NGOization of the state is key to avoiding increased insecurity and chaos. In other words, state institutions' legitimacy should not be eroded, and CSOs should not aim to fully substitute the responsibilities of the state. To this end, restoring confidence in public institutions by enhancing accountability and transparency should be a core pillar of people-centered recovery in fragile contexts. This could consist of co-funding specific projects and increasing citizen and resident access to public institutions and participation in recovery efforts.

Empowering Local Actors to Respond to Community Needs

Local leaders and local CSOs must be empowered to respond to their community's needs, particularly in remote areas that are difficult to access by the state and international organizations. They should be trained in humanitarian assistance, do no harm principles, streamlining sustainable development goals, and implementing people-centered recovery and user-centric design, among other elements.

Streamlining Sustainable Development Goals

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Agenda 2030 ensures that no one is left behind. As such, implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals allows for a comprehensive and people-centered recovery, guaranteeing human security and emphasizing dignity. In other words, localizing the 2030 Agenda and monitoring and evaluating its implementation is essential, particularly as it focuses on the needs of the most vulnerable by putting them at the heart of the process and building for inclusion.

Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability should be applied within all sectors and actors, especially public institutions and CSOs, particularly during the recovery process. They must be embedded in monitoring and evaluation practices and should inform the wider public about initiatives, programs, and progress regarding implementation.

Restructuring Governmental Offices and Fostering More Synergy

A lesson learned from the Jordanian experience is the positive value of restructuring governmental offices to foster more interconnectedness, collaboration, synergy, gender equality, and inclusion. This might include implementing necessary legal revisions.

Increasing Access to Public Services and Transportation

Lebanese public institutions and their services must become more accessible, particularly for those who are most vulnerable and individuals with disabilities. This includes digitizing services, which could go hand in hand with promoting a greener economy. Public transportation should also be improved by reducing its inefficiencies, increasing its safety, particularly for women, and making it more inclusive of individuals with disabilities.

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About the Policy Brief

A Policy Brief is a short piece regularly published by LCPS that analyzes key political, economic, and social issues and provides policy recommendations to a wide audience of decision makers and the public at large.

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Founded in 1989, the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies is an independently managed, non-partisan, non-profit, non-governmental think tank whose mission is to produce and advocate for policies that improve governance in Lebanon and the Arab region. LCPS's current research agenda focuses on: enhancing governance, informing the process of economic growth and sustainable development, promoting inclusive and effective social policies, and informing the development of policies for a sustainable environment. Four themes cut across the above areas of focus, including gender, youth, conflict resolution, and technology.

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