

The Impact of the Recent Conflict in Lebanon on Sustainable Development (War 2024)

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Abstract

This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of the recent conflict in Lebanon on the country's sustainable development trajectory. Drawing upon findings from World Bank's reports and relevant scientific research, the analysis will delve into the conflict's multifaceted economic, social, and environmental repercussions, quantify the immediate damage and losses, and forecast potential long-term effects. Furthermore, the article will identify the key challenges and obstacles that Lebanon faces in its recovery and propose strategic considerations and recommendations for fostering a sustainable and resilient future. Subsequent sections will elaborate on the economic repercussions, pressures on social cohesion, the extent of environmental degradation, the intersecting crises hindering recovery, and pathways to achieving sustainable development in the conflict's aftermath.

Key Words: Lebanon Conflict, Sustainable Development, Post-Conflict Recovery, Environmental Impact, Economic Disruption.

Résumé

Cette étude vise à fournir une analyse exhaustive de l'impact du récent conflit au Liban sur la voie du développement durable dans le pays, en s'appuyant sur les résultats des rapports de la Banque mondiale et des recherches scientifiques pertinentes. L'étude examine les multiples répercussions économiques, sociales et environnementales du conflit, en identifiant les dommages immédiats et les pertes et en anticipant les impacts potentiels à long terme. L'étude met également en lumière les principaux défis et obstacles auxquels le Liban est confronté dans sa quête de redressement, et propose des stratégies et recommandations pour promouvoir un avenir durable et résilient. Les sections suivantes détailleront les répercussions économiques, les pressions sur la cohésion sociale, l'ampleur de la dégradation de l'environnement et des crises qui se croisent et entravent le rétablissement, ainsi que les moyens d'atteindre un développement durable à la suite d'un conflit.

Mots-clés: conflit au Liban, développement durable, reprise de l'après-guerre, impact environnemental, troubles économiques.

اثر النزاع الاخير في لبنان على التنمية المستدامة (حرب 2024)

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المُلخَص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقديم تحليل شامل لتأثير النزاع الأخير في لبنان على مسار التنمية المستدامة في البلاد، إستنادًا إلى نتائج تقارير البنك الدولي والأبحاث العلمية ذات الصلة. تتناول الدراسة التداعيات الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والبيئية المتعددة للنزاع، مع تحديد الأضرار والخسائر الفورية، وتوقع الآثار المحتملة على المدى الطويل. كما تسلط الدراسة الضوء على التحديات والعقبات الرئيسية التي تواجه لبنان في سعيه إلى التعافي، وتقدم إستراتيجيات وتوصيات لتعزيز مستقبل مستدام وقادر على الصمود. ستتناول الأقسام اللاحقة بالتفصيل التداعيات الاقتصادية، والضغوط على التماسك الاجتماعي، ومدى التدهور البيئي، والأزمات المتقاطعة التي تُعيق الانتعاش، إضافةً إلى مسارات تحقيق التنمية المستدامة في أعقاب النزاع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النزاع في لبنان، التنمية المستدامة، التعافي بعد الحرب، الأثر البيئي، الاضطراب الاقتصادي.

INTRODUCTION

Lebanon was already mired in a profound and protracted economic and financial crisis predating the recent conflict, a crisis the World Bank characterized as one of the most severe globally since the mid-nineteenth century. This pre-existing crisis significantly weakened the nation's resilience and amplified the impact of the subsequent hostilities. Since 2019, the country has experienced a dramatic decline in its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and per capita income, leading to its reclassification by the World Bank from an upper-middle-income to a lower-middle-income country by July 2022. Nominal GDP plummeted from approximately US\$52 billion in 2019 to an estimated US\$23.1 billion in 2021, indicating a substantial erosion of economic output. Compounding this economic catastrophe was the collapse of essential public services, driven by a severe depletion of foreign exchange reserves. This scarcity of foreign currency led to critical shortages of vital goods, including fuel, which in turn hindered access to essential services such as healthcare and clean water. The national electric grid experienced prolonged blackouts, with public electricity supply averaging a mere one to two hours daily due to fuel shortages. Furthermore, the country was still grappling with the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the catastrophic Beirut Port explosion of August 2020, which had already inflicted significant damage estimated between US\$3.8 to US\$4.6 billion, further straining the nation's already limited resources and coping mechanisms.⁽¹⁾

Additionally, the recent conflict in Lebanon witnessed a significant escalation in late 2024, adding another layer of devastation to a country already reeling from multiple crises. According to the World Bank's Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) 2025 report, the governorates of Nabatiyeh and South Lebanon, along with Mount Lebanon (including the southern suburbs of Beirut), were the primary areas affected by the intense hostilities. The conflict was characterized by widespread and intense airstrikes, coupled with ground operations, which resulted in extensive damage to critical infrastructure, including housing, transportation networks, and public utilities, and led to the mass displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Reports from the Times of Israel highlighted the significant destruction caused by Israeli airstrikes across various parts of Lebanon, underscoring the

(1) World Bank. (n.d.). *Lebanon Overview*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview>

intensity of the military engagement.⁽¹⁾

I- The Importance of Study

1. Provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of the recent conflict in Lebanon on the path of sustainable development.
2. Address the multiple economic, social, and environmental consequences of the conflict.
3. Identify the immediate damages and losses caused by the conflict.
4. Anticipate the potential long-term effects of the conflict.
5. Highlight the key challenges and obstacles facing Lebanon in its pursuit of recovery.
6. Propose strategies and recommendations for promoting a sustainable and resilient future.
7. The deep and prolonged economic and financial crisis that preceded the conflict and exacerbated its impact.

II- Study Objectives

1. Assess the damage to key environmental resources and infrastructure resulting from the recent conflict.
2. Analyze the disruption of economic activities and livelihoods and their implications for long-term sustainable growth.
3. Evaluate the impact of the conflict on social cohesion, displacement, and access to essential services.
4. Examine the challenges and opportunities for integrating sustainable development principles into post-conflict recovery and reconstruction efforts.
5. Identify the role of international aid and cooperation in supporting a sustainable and resilient recovery in Lebanon.

III- Study Problem

The recent conflict in Lebanon has cast a long shadow over its path to sustainable development, causing widespread damage to its ecological, social and economic fabric. Understanding the true extent and nature of these impacts is crucial to formulating effective recovery strategies. This study focuses on the effectiveness of the multifaceted

(1) United Nations News. (2025, April 15). *UN calls for enhanced international cooperation to address global challenges*. <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2025/04/1140716>

consequences of conflict, moving beyond immediate humanitarian concerns to analyze its profound implications for Lebanon's long-term sustainability goals. By examining these complex dynamics, we can better guide policies and formulate strategies with the aim of promoting a truly resilient and sustainable future for the nation. Thus, the study's problem has several questions:

1. How has the recent conflict in Lebanon affected the path of sustainable development?
2. What are the economic, social, and environmental consequences of the conflict?
3. What are the immediate and potential long-term damages and losses?
4. What are the main challenges and obstacles facing Lebanon in recovery and achieving a sustainable future after the conflict?
5. How have the pre-existing crises been exacerbated by the conflict?

IV- Suggested Hypotheses

1. **First Main Hypothesis:** The recent conflict in Lebanon negatively and significantly impacts various dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social, and environmental).
2. **Second Main Hypothesis:** The pre-existing crises in Lebanon (economic, financial, and political) exacerbate the effects of the conflict on sustainable development and hinder recovery efforts.
3. **Third Main Hypothesis:** Achieving sustainable recovery in Lebanon after the conflict requires a comprehensive approach that includes economic stability, enhanced governance, support for social cohesion, environmental protection, and coordinated international assistance.

V. Study Methodology

In this research, we adopt the descriptive analytical approach to describe the phenomena and influencing factors related to the impact of the recent conflict in Lebanon on sustainable development. This includes analyzing available data and information from reliable reports, such as World Bank reports and relevant scientific research, with the aim of analyzing the economic, social, and environmental consequences of the conflict and identifying the resulting damages and losses, in addition to highlighting the challenges facing the path of sustainable development in Lebanon.

I. Economic Repercussions: Quantifying the Damage and Forecasting Long-Term Effects

a. Immediate Economic Costs: Damage and Losses Assessment

The World Bank's initial assessment of the recent conflict's economic cost in Lebanon reached a staggering US\$14 billion, underscoring the immense financial burden imposed on the nation, which was already fragile. This comprehensive figure encompasses both the direct damage to physical assets and the broader economic losses stemming from the disruption of economic activities. Specifically, the report delineated US\$6.8 billion in damage to physical structures across various sectors and US\$7 billion in economic losses resulting from reduced productivity, lost revenues, and increased operating costs.

The housing sector was the most severely affected, incurring an estimated US\$4.6 billion, reflecting the widespread destruction of residential properties. Following closely, the commerce, industry, and tourism sectors collectively experienced losses amounting to US\$3.4 billion, highlighting the significant impact on business operations and revenue generation. Geographically, the southern governorates of Nabatiyeh and South Lebanon bore the brunt of the conflict's economic impact, experiencing the most extensive damage and losses. It is important to note that an earlier assessment, the Interim Damage and Loss Assessment (DaLA) report, estimated total damages and losses at US\$8.5 billion as of November 2024. The subsequent upward revision to US\$14 billion in the RDNA report, released in March 2025, within a relatively short timeframe, indicates the escalating scale of the conflict's impact and suggests that the final economic costs could potentially be even higher as the full extent of the devastation is revealed.⁽¹⁾

b. Macroeconomic Impact: GDP Contraction and Inflationary Pressures

The economic repercussions of the conflict are evident in the significant contraction of Lebanon's real GDP, estimated at 7.1% in 2024. This represents a substantial setback compared to the pre-conflict growth projection of 0.9%, effectively erasing anticipated economic progress. By the end of 2024, Lebanon's cumulative GDP decline since the onset of its multi-faceted economic crisis in 2019 had reached nearly 40%, under-

(1) World Bank. (2025, March 7). *Lebanon's recovery and reconstruction needs estimated at US\$11 billion*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2025/03/07/lebanon-s-recovery-and-reconstruction-needs-estimated-at-us-11-billion>

scoring how the recent conflict has exacerbated the already dire economic situation.⁽¹⁾ Furthermore, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) warned of the potential for the Lebanese economy to shrink by as much as 9.2% by the end of 2024 if the hostilities persisted, with projections indicating further contractions of 2.3% in 2025 and 2.4% in 2026 even if the conflict were to cease. This suggests that the long-term economic consequences will be profound and will extend beyond the immediate period of active conflict. The World Bank also highlighted the fragility of the exchange rate stability observed since August 2023, noting that increased government spending necessary for sustaining public services and supporting recovery efforts could lead to increased currency circulation or further depletion of remaining liquid foreign reserves, potentially fueling inflationary pressures. Disruptions to supply chains caused by the conflict are also likely to contribute to inflationary pressures, further straining the purchasing power of the Lebanese population.⁽²⁾

c. Sectoral Impacts: Detailed Analysis of Key Industries

The recent conflict has inflicted significant damage and losses across various key sectors of the Lebanese economy, hindering their ability to contribute to sustainable development.

1. Agriculture and Food Security: The agriculture and food security sector incurred damages estimated at US\$79 million, affecting critical infrastructure such as irrigation systems and impacting crop production, particularly olives. The sector also suffered substantial losses in livestock, with approximately 3 million chickens killed, and in fisheries, where 472 boats were damaged. These disruptions led to significant economic losses amounting to US\$742 million due to lost revenues from agricultural products. Consequently, Lebanon faces heightened food insecurity, with nearly a third of its population grappling with acute food shortages at the beginning of 2025.⁽³⁾

(1) World Bank. (2024, November 14). *New World Bank report assesses impact of conflict on Lebanon's economy and key sectors*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/11/14/new-world-bank-report-assesses-impact-of-conflict-on-lebanon-s-economy-and-key-sectors>

(2) World Bank Group and GFDRR. (2024, November). *LEBANON Interim Damage and Loss Assessment (DaLA)*. World Bank Group and GFDRR. p 7.

World Bank. (2024, December 10). *Lebanon's economic contraction deepens, highlighting critical need for reforms and key investments*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/12/10/lebanon-s-economic-contraction-deepens-highlighting-critical-need-for-reforms-and-key-investments>

(3) W B Group and (CNRS). (RDNA).p26

2. Commerce, Industry, and Tourism: The commerce, industry, and tourism sectors sustained considerable damage, estimated at US\$612 million, with at least 2,099 establishments destroyed and 7,094 partially damaged.¹³ The economic losses within these sectors amounted to US\$3.4 billion, with the tourism industry alone accounting for US\$1.3 billion in losses resulting from business closures, employee displacement, shifts in consumption patterns, and supply chain disruptions.⁽¹⁾ Notably, restaurant activity nationwide experienced a significant reduction, , reaching up to 80% on weekdays, indicating a severe downturn in the hospitality sector. Furthermore, the conflict poses a risk of disrupting financial flows and remittances, which are crucial for the Lebanese economy.¹⁵

3. Education: The education sector sustained an estimated US\$151 million in damages, encompassing the destruction of 59 educational facilities and partial damage to 299 others. Total economic losses in this sector reached US\$414 million, including foregone income from private school fees and additional operational costs. The disruption to education significant long-term implications for human capital development, as over 25% of children remained out of school even after the ceasefire, underscoring the challenges in resuming educational activities in conflict-affected regions.⁽²⁾

4. Environment and Debris Management: The environment and debris management sector incurred an estimated US\$512 million in damages, significantly impacting natural resources such as forests, grasslands, rivers, and coastlines, as well as the solid waste management sector. Economic losses in this sector reached US\$790 million, primarily resulting from disruptions to natural resource ecosystem services. Furthermore, the conflict has generated an estimated 16.9 million tons of debris, presenting a significant challenge for safe and sustainable management.⁽³⁾

5. Energy: The energy sector sustained an estimated US\$98 million in damages primarily impacting network infrastructure at the transmission and distribution levels. Economic losses in this sector amounted to US\$209 million, mainly-resulting from delayed billing cycles.⁽⁴⁾

(1) W B Group and (CNRS). (RDNA).p29

(2) W B Group and (CNRS). (RDNA).p32

University of Cambridge. (2024, December 4). *War in Lebanon has turned a decade of education crisis into a catastrophe – report*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/1066571>

(3) W B Group and (CNRS). (RDNA).p36

(4) W B Group and (CNRS). (RDNA).p34

6. **Health:** The health sector incurred damages estimated at US\$208 million, with 298 assets destroyed and 587 partially damaged, primarily dental clinics and pharmacies. The economic losses in this sector reached US\$700 million, resulting from decreased revenue, increased treatment costs, and a reduction in the availability of health personnel.⁽¹⁾

7. **Housing:** The housing sector suffered the most extensive damage, estimated at US\$4.6 billion, impacting approximately 162,900 housing units, representing 10% of the pre-conflict housing stock. The economic losses in this sector amounted to US\$363 million, mainly due to wage losses of domestic workers and foregone rental income.⁽²⁾

8. **Municipal and Public Services:** The municipal and public services sector sustained damages estimated at US\$41 million, affecting municipality-owned buildings and public parks. The economic losses in this sector reached US\$192 million, including revenue losses from property taxes and utility companies.⁽³⁾

9. **Transport:** The transport sector sustained an estimated US\$198 million in damages, resulting in 930 km of roads damaged and impacting six bridges. The economic losses in this sector amounted to US\$173 million due to increased vehicle travel time, operating costs, and losses within the aviation sector. Consequently, accessibility to essential services such as hospitals was significantly reduced.⁽⁴⁾

10. **Water, Wastewater & Irrigation:** The water, wastewater, and irrigation sector incurred an estimated US\$356 million in damages, affecting water supply and sanitation infrastructure, as well as off-farm irrigation systems. The economic losses in this sector reached US\$171 million, primarily driven by increased operating costs for water establishments and greater household reliance on expensive water tankers.⁽⁵⁾

d. Impact on Employment and Poverty

The conflict has had a devastating impact on employment and poverty levels in Lebanon. The World Bank's Interim Damage and Loss Assessment (DaLA) report estimated that approximately 166,000 individuals lost their jobs due to the conflict, corresponding equating

(1) W B Group and (CNRS). (*RDNA*).p39

(2) W B Group and (CNRS). (*RDNA*).p42

(3) W B Group and (CNRS). (*RDNA*).p44

(4) W B Group and (CNRS). (*RDNA*).p46

(5) W B Group and (CNRS). (*RDNA*).p48

to a loss of US\$168 million in earnings.⁽¹⁾ This significant job displacement has further exacerbated Lebanon's already high unemployment rate, which stood at 29.6% in 2022, prior to the recent hostilities.⁽²⁾ Furthermore, the economic crisis, compounded by the conflict, has triggered unprecedented levels of poverty. The World Bank estimated that monetary poverty had more than tripled over the past decade, and the ongoing conflict is expected to push—even more people into poverty. It is likely that more than half of the country's population is now living below the poverty line. This widespread poverty is further aggravated by deepening food insecurity. As of early 2025, approximately 1.65 million people in Lebanon were facing crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity, a significant increase from the 1.26 million people in the same category before the escalation of the conflict. The disruption of agricultural activities and supply chains has significantly contributed to this alarming rise in food insecurity.⁽³⁾

II. Social Cohesion Under Pressure: Examining the Humanitarian and Societal Costs

a. Displacement and Humanitarian Crisis

The recent conflict in Lebanon has triggered a substantial wave of internal displacement. Initial estimates from November 2024 indicated that over 875,000 people had been forced to flee their homes. However, as the conflict intensified, later reports revealed that the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) exceeded 1 million, reaching approximately 1.3 million by December 2024. This large-scale displacement has created a significant humanitarian crisis, placing immense pressure on the on the country's already strained resources.⁽⁴⁾ The impact of this displacement has disproportionately affected vulnerable groups within

(1) World Bank. (2024, November 14). *New World Bank report assesses impact of conflict on Lebanon's economy and key sectors*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/11/14/new-world-bank-report-assesses-impact-of-conflict-on-lebanon-s-economy-and-key-sectors>

(2) World Bank. (n.d.). *Lebanon: Overview*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview>

(3) World Food Programme. (2025, January 22). *Food insecurity deepens in Lebanon following conflict, new report shows*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.wfp.org/news/food-insecurity-deepens-lebanon-following-conflict-new-report-shows>

(4) World Bank. (2024, November 14). *New World Bank report assesses impact of conflict on Lebanon's economy and key sectors*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/11/14/new-world-bank-report-assesses-impact-of-conflict-on-lebanon-s-economy-and-key-sectors>

the Lebanese population, including women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and refugees who were already facing precarious living conditions. These groups often have specific needs and face heightened risks during times of conflict and displacement. Internally displaced persons face numerous challenges, including a lack of adequate shelter, limited access to basic services such as food, water, sanitation, and healthcare, and concerns regarding their safety and security in unfamiliar and often overcrowded environments. Approximately 48% of IDPs were reported to be residing in host settings, further straining the resources of these communities, while around 26% had managed to rent new houses, often at inflated prices due to increased demand. A significant portion, approximately 23%, were residing in collective shelters, which are often overcrowded and lack adequate facilities to meet the needs of a large number of people.⁽¹⁾

b. Impact on Specific Vulnerable Groups

The conflict has had distinct and severe impacts on various vulnerable groups within Lebanon.

1. **Women:** Women have faced heightened risks of domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and have experienced significant challenges in accessing essential health services, particularly concerning their sexual and reproductive health. UN Women data indicated that women and girls constituted 51% of the internally displaced population, highlighting their significant vulnerability in this crisis.⁽²⁾ Moreover, women have often shouldered disproportionate responsibilities in caring for families and managing households during the conflict, adding to their physical and emotional burden.⁽³⁾

2. **Children:** Children have suffered devastating consequences, including casualties, injuries, and mass displacement. Between mid-September and October 2024 alone, over 1,088 children were injured, and over 400,000 children were displaced by the end of October 2024.⁽⁴⁾ The conflict has also had a profound negative impact on children's mental health,

(1) Blominvest Bank. (2024, October 29). *Humanitarian, economic, and social effects of war on Lebanon* p3

(2) UN Women. (2024, December). *Gender and displacement in Lebanon at the juncture of the ceasefire*. UN Women.p1-5

(3) UN Women. (2024, November 8). *'No time for grief or tears': The conflict in Lebanon through the eyes of four women*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2024/11/no-time-for-grief-or-tears-the-conflict-in-lebanon-through-the-eyes-of-four-women>

(4) Mazinjanin, Z. (2025, March 11). *Lebanon's children in the aftermath of 2024 hostilities*. Humanium. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.humanium.org/en/lebanons-children-in-the-aftermath-of-2024-hos>

nutrition, and education, with many experiencing anxiety, nervousness, and depression. UNICEF reported that 72% of caregivers observed increased anxiety or nervousness in their children during the war. Furthermore, over 25% of children remained out of school even after the ceasefire, highlighting the severe disruption to their education.⁽¹⁾

3. Refugees: The conflict has exacerbated the already precarious situation of refugees in Lebanon, including Syrian and Palestinian refugees. Many refugees have experienced secondary displacement, with over 90,000 refugees reportedly displaced a second time.⁽²⁾ They face increased vulnerability due to limited access to resources and support, and there are concerns about potential restrictions on their movement and the risk of forced returns for Syrian refugees.⁽³⁾ UNHCR reported that even before the recent escalation, 9 out of 10 refugee households in Lebanon were living in extreme poverty, underscoring their dire circumstances.⁽⁴⁾

4. Persons with Disabilities: Persons with disabilities have faced unique and significant challenges during the conflict. They have experienced difficulties in accessing essential services, including healthcare and assistance in evacuation, and have often been left behind during displacement due to a lack of inclusive shelter provisions and support systems.⁽⁵⁾ Some have also faced the loss of caregivers who were either killed or displaced. Recognizing their heightened vulnerability, initiatives have been launched to provide emergency cash assistance to over 27,000 persons with disabilities in Lebanon.⁽⁶⁾

c. Social Cohesion and Inter-Community Relations

tilities/

(1) Ben Romdhane, W. (2024, October 10). *Lebanon's escalating conflict: What are the displacement and migration consequences?* Mixed Migration Centre. <https://mixedmigration.org/lebanons-escalating-conflict-what-are-the-displacement-and-migration-consequences/> (Accessed: May 7, 2025)

(2) Amnesty International. (n.d.). *Human rights in Lebanon*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/lebanon/report-lebanon/>

(3) Ben Romdhane, W. (2024, October 10). *Lebanon's escalating conflict: What are the displacement and migration consequences?* Mixed Migration Centre. <https://mixedmigration.org/lebanons-escalating-conflict-what-are-the-displacement-and-migration-consequences/> (Accessed: May 7, 2025)

(4) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (n.d.). *Lebanon*. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/operations/lebanon> (Accessed: May 7, 2025)

(5) Handicap International & Humanity & Inclusion. (2022, November). *Forgotten and invisible: The impact of Lebanon's crises on persons with disabilities*. Handicap International & Humanity & Inclusion.p2

(6) International Labour Organization. (2024, October 8). *ILO and partners take shock-response measures to support persons with disabilities*. <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/ilo-and-partners-take-shock-response-measures-support-persons-disabilities> (Accessed: May 7, 2025)

The recent conflict has placed significant strain on social cohesion and inter-community relations in Lebanon. The massive displacement of people, coupled with increased competition for already scarce resources, has the potential to exacerbate existing social tensions.⁽¹⁾ Lebanon has a long history of sectarian divisions, and the stress caused by the conflict could further deepen these existing fault lines. The influx of Syrian refugees prior to the recent hostilities had already strained social cohesion in many communities.⁽²⁾ However, the shared experience of crisis and the collective response to the humanitarian emergency have also created opportunities for communities to unite and support one another. Civil society organizations have played a crucial role in providing aid and assistance to those affected by the conflict, potentially fostering a sense of solidarity and contributing to social cohesion during this challenging time. Nevertheless, the potential for heightened tensions remains a significant concern, and recovery efforts will need to actively promote social cohesion and build trust across different communities within Lebanon.⁽³⁾

III. Environmental Degradation: Assessing the Ecological Footprint of the Conflict

a. Direct Environmental Damage from Hostilities

The recent conflict has inflicted significant environmental damage on Lebanon, with initial World Bank estimates placing the cost at US\$221 million due to natural resource degradation and the disruption of solid waste management. The widespread use of white phosphorus and other incendiary weapons has caused extensive landscape fires, scorching over 8 million square meters of agricultural land and impacting natural habitats across the affected regions.⁽⁴⁾ Approximately 65,000 olive trees, a vital component of

(1) United Nations Development Programme. (2024, October 23). *UN Development Programme warns of socio-economic crisis in Lebanon amidst escalation of hostilities*. <https://www.undp.org/arab-states/press-releases/un-development-programme-warns-socio-economic-crisis-lebanon-amidst-escalation-hostilities> (Accessed: May 7, 2025)

(2) World Bank Group, eMBed, and MENA MPTF. (2019, May 18). *Behavioral strategies to support social stability in Lebanon*. World Bank Group.p29

(3) Chatty, D. (2022, September). *Evolution of the stability sector in Lebanon: the role of civil society*. Forced Migration Review, Issue 70. <https://www.fmreview.org/issue70/chatty/> (Accessed: May 7, 2025)

(4) Conflict and Environment Observatory. (2025, January 21). *Scoping conflict-linked environmental harm in southern Lebanon*. ReliefWeb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/scoping-conflict-linked-environmental-harm-southern-lebanon> (Accessed: May 7, 2025)

Lebanon's agricultural heritage and economy, were completely destroyed in these fires.⁽¹⁾ Furthermore, the conflict has led to the contamination of soil and water sources. Phosphorus shelling, confirmed by the National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS), has contaminated crops and water sources, posing threats to livestock and human health.⁽²⁾ Explosive ordnance and potential damage to critical environmental infrastructure, such as petrol stations and wastewater treatment plants, also contribute to this contamination. The full long-term environmental consequences of the conflict, particularly the impact of white phosphorus and other munitions, require further research for comprehensive understanding.⁽³⁾

b. Impact on Natural Resources and Ecosystem Services

The hostilities have inflicted significant damage to Lebanon's natural resources, encompassing forests, grasslands, rivers, and coastlines. The World Bank's RDNA report estimated economic losses of US\$790 million resulting from disruptions to natural resource ecosystem services, with riverine ecosystems experiencing the most substantial losses. The conflict has also negatively impacted protected areas and biodiversity, with reports indicating damage to forests, rangelands, water bodies, and land, as well as a decline in air quality.⁽⁴⁾ The destruction of olive groves, central to the economy and cultural identity of the southern region, represents a significant loss of natural capital and ecosystem services.⁽⁵⁾ The disruption of these services can have far-reaching economic and social consequences, affecting livelihoods dependent on agriculture and fishing, and potentially increasing Lebanon's vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.⁽⁶⁾

(1) BLOMINVEST Bank. (2024, November 29). *The Economic and Environmental Toll on Lebanese Agriculture*. <https://blog.blominvestbank.com/51433/the-economic-and-environmental-toll-on-lebanese-agriculture/> (Accessed: May 7, 2025).

(2) United Nations Development Programme. (2023, December 20). *UNDP Report: Lebanon faces potentially dire socio-economic and environmental impacts from Gaza war*. <https://www.undp.org/arab-states/press-releases/undp-report-lebanon-faces-potentially-dire-socio-economic-and-environmental-impacts-gaza-war> (Accessed: May 7, 2025).

(3) Conflict and Environment Observatory. (2025, January 21). *Scoping conflict-linked environmental harm in southern Lebanon*. ReliefWeb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/scoping-conflict-linked-environmental-harm-southern-lebanon> (Accessed: May 7, 2025).

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(5) *potentially dire socio-economic and environmental impacts from Gaza war*. United Nations Development Programme. <https://www.undp.org/arab-states/press-releases/undp-report-lebanon-faces-potentially-dire-socio-economic-and-environmental-impacts-gaza-war>

(6) Boumatar, J. (2024, December 5). *The economic and environmental toll on Lebanese agriculture*. BloMinvest Bank Blog. <https://blog.blominvestbank.com/51433/the-economic-and-environmental-toll-on-leb>

c. Challenges of Debris Management and Pollution

The sheer scale of destruction from the recent conflict has generated an enormous volume of debris, estimated to be between 32 million tons by Lebanon's Environment Minister and potentially 50 to 100 million tons according to World Bank estimates.⁽¹⁾ Managing this vast quantity of waste in a safe and sustainable manner presents a significant logistical and environmental challenge. A major concern is the potential presence of hazardous materials within the debris, such as asbestos, which was imported in significant quantities in the past and poses serious health risks if not handled properly.⁽²⁾ Lessons learned from previous conflicts in Lebanon, including the 2006 war, highlight the risks of improper debris disposal, which often led to environmental pollution and long-term ecological damage. To mitigate these risks, a structured approach to debris management is essential, prioritizing recycling and reuse of materials to promote a circular economy and reduce the demand for new resources. The United Nations, through its UN Debris Taskforce, is actively collaborating with the Lebanese government and local partners to develop and implement such a sustainable debris management framework.⁽³⁾

IV. Challenges to Sustainable Trajectory: Intersecting Crises and Obstacles to Recovery

a. Exacerbation of Pre-Existing Economic Vulnerabilities

The recent conflict has significantly compounded Lebanon's pre-existing and severe economic crisis, rendering the path to recovery considerably more arduous. Even before the conflict, Lebanon was grappling with dramatic currency depreciation, with the Lebanese pound having lost over 98% of its value since 2019, hyperinflation that averaged 127% over the past five years, and a crippling collapse of its banking sector, which wiped out

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(1) United Nations Sustainable Development Group. (2025, May 7). *Rebuilding hope: Lebanon's journey toward sustainable recovery through debris management*. United Nations Sustainable Development Group. <https://unsdg.un.org/latest/stories/rebuilding-hope-lebanon%E2%80%99s-journey-toward-sustainable-recovery-through-debris>

(2) Watson, R., & Lindle, J. (2025, January 20). *Scoping conflict-linked environmental harm in southern Lebanon*. The Conflict and Environment Observatory. <https://ceobs.org/conflict-linked-environmental-harm-in-southern-lebanon/>

(3) United Nations Sustainable Development Group. (2025). *Rebuilding hope: Lebanon's journey toward sustainable recovery through debris management*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://unsdg.un.org/latest/stories/rebuilding-hope-lebanon%E2%80%99s-journey-toward-sustainable-recovery-through-debris>

the lifetime savings of a large portion of the population.⁽¹⁾ The World Bank aptly noted that the conflict inflicted yet another major shock upon an economy already in a state of severe crisis.⁽²⁾ This economic collapse had already increased Lebanon's dependence on capital inflows, which soared to nearly 90% of GDP in 2023. The conflict has further disrupted these vital inflows, including tourism revenues and remittances, thereby exacerbating the country's financial woes.⁽³⁾ Lebanon's deep and prolonged economic crisis has severely limited its fiscal space and capacity to independently finance the substantial costs of post-conflict recovery and reconstruction, making it heavily reliant on international financial assistance. However, accessing this crucial aid is often contingent upon the implementation of significant structural reforms within Lebanon to restore donor confidence and unlock much-needed funds.⁽⁴⁾

b. Political Instability and Governance Challenges

Lebanon has been plagued by persistent political instability and governance challenges that predate the recent conflict and have been significantly exacerbated by it. The country has experienced prolonged periods of political paralysis, including the absence of a head of state for two years, creating an institutional vacuum that hinders effective crisis response and long-term planning.⁽⁵⁾ The sectarian political power-sharing system continues to be a major obstacle to sustainable development, often prioritizing factional interests over national priorities and impeding decision-making and the implementation of necessary reforms. Widespread corruption, with Lebanon ranking poorly in global corruption perception indices, further undermines the state's ability to effectively manage resources and implement policies.⁽⁶⁾ Forming a stable and reform-oriented government has proven

(1) The World Bank. (2025). *Lebanon Overview*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview>

(2) The World Bank. (2024, December 10). *Lebanon's economic contraction deepens, highlighting critical need for reforms and key investments*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/12/10/lebanon-s-economic-contraction-deepens-highlighting-critical-need-for-reforms-and-key-investments>

(3) The Policy Initiative. (n.d.). *About us*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.thepolicyinitiative.org/about>

(4) The World Bank. (2025). *Lebanon Overview*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview>

(5) World Bank. (2023, December 21). *Lebanon Economic Monitor, Fall 2023: In the Grip of a New Crisis*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-economic-monitor-fall-2023-grip-new-crisis-enar>

(6) Christophersen, M. (2018, April 3). *Pursuing sustainable development under sectarianism in Lebanon*. International Peace Institute. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.ipinst.org/2018/04/pursuing-sustain->

to be a significant challenge, hindering progress on critical economic and social reforms mandated by international institutions like the IMF. The deeply entrenched political divisions and the lack of a strong, unified government pose a substantial obstacle to effective post-conflict recovery and the pursuit of a sustainable development trajectory.

c. Regional Instability and External Factors

Lebanon's geographical location and its intricate involvement in the volatile regional environment make its recovery highly susceptible to regional instability and external factors. The recent conflict itself is a manifestation of these broader regional tensions, and its continuation or escalation could have significant spillover effects, further destabilizing the country.⁽¹⁾ The influence of various external actors and complex geopolitical dynamics play a significant role in shaping Lebanon's internal situation and its ability to navigate the recovery process.⁽²⁾ Furthermore, remittances from the Lebanese diaspora constitute a crucial source of foreign exchange, representing approximately 30% of GDP.⁽³⁾ Any disruption to these flows, whether due to regional instability or other factors, could severely impact Lebanon's already precarious economic situation. Consequently, the country's long-term recovery and sustainable development are not only contingent on internal factors but also heavily reliant on a stable regional environment and the continued support of the international community.

V. Pathways to Sustainable Recovery: Recommendations and Strategic Considerations

a. Prioritizing Immediate Humanitarian Assistance and Protection

Addressing the urgent humanitarian needs of the population affected by the conflict must be the immediate priority. Continued and adequately funded international aid is essential

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(1) United Nations Development Programme. (2024, October 23). *UN Development Programme warns of socio-economic crisis in Lebanon amidst escalation of hostilities*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.undp.org/arab-states/press-releases/un-development-programme-warns-socio-economic-crisis-lebanon-amidst-escalation-hostilities>

(2) Abi Khalil, G. (2025, February 14). *Aid without state capacity? Why Lebanon's post-war reconstruction hinges on institutional reform*. Blavatnik School of Government. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/blog/aid-without-state-capacity-why-lebanons-post-war-reconstruction-hinges-institutional-reform>

(3) United Nations Development Programme. (2023, October 23). *UNDP report: Lebanon faces potentially dire socio-economic and environmental impacts of Gaza war*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.undp.org/arab-states/press-releases/undp-report-lebanon-faces-potentially-dire-socio-economic-and-environmental-impacts-gaza-war>

to provide life-saving assistance to the hundreds of thousands of displaced individuals and other vulnerable groups.⁽¹⁾ This includes ensuring access to safe shelter, sufficient food and clean water, essential healthcare services, and critical psychosocial support to address the trauma inflicted by the conflict.⁽²⁾ Special attention must be paid to providing comprehensive protection measures, particularly for women and girls who face increased risks of gender-based violence, for children who have suffered immense physical and emotional distress; and for refugees, who are already in a precarious situation and face the risk of secondary displacement and forced returns.⁽³⁾ The extended Flash Appeal launched by the UN and the Lebanese government for \$371.4 million underscores the continued urgency of humanitarian support.

b. Fostering Economic Stabilization and Reconstruction

A comprehensive and multi-faceted economic stabilization program is crucial for Lebanon's sustainable recovery. This must include implementing long-delayed fiscal reforms to ensure the sustainability of public finances, undertaking a comprehensive restructuring of the unsustainable public debt, and implementing decisive measures to address the deep-seated crisis within the banking sector.⁽⁴⁾ The estimated US\$11 billion required for reconstruction and recovery necessitates a concerted effort to mobilize both public and private financing.³⁽⁵⁾ Targeted investments should be prioritized in key sectors severely impacted by the conflict, such as housing, critical infrastructure (including energy, water, and transportation), agriculture, and tourism, to stimulate economic activity, create much-needed job opportunities, and lay the foundation for long-term growth. Given that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) constitute the backbone of the Lebanese economy, providing them with adequate support, including access to finance and business

(1) United Nations Development Programme. (2024, October 23). *UN Development Programme warns of socio-economic crisis in Lebanon amidst escalation of hostilities*. United Nations Development Programme. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.undp.org/arab-states/press-releases/un-development-programme-warns-socio-economic-crisis-lebanon-amidst-escalation-hostilities>

(2) Atallah, J., & Feghali, N. (2024, October 24). *Lebanon's struggle for survival: The lasting impact of Israel's war on a nation in crisis*. Wilson Center. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/lebanons-struggle-survival-lasting-impact-israels-war-nation-crisis>

(3) United Nations Lebanon. (2025, March 9). *Decline in children's mental health, nutrition, and education after the war in Lebanon*. Retrieved May 9, 2025, from <https://lebanon.un.org/en/290012-decline-children%E2%80%99s-mental-health-nutrition-and-education-after-war-lebanon>

(4) World Bank. (n.d.). *Lebanon overview*. World Bank. Retrieved May 10, 2025, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview>

(5) World Bank. (2025, March 7). *Lebanon's recovery and reconstruction needs estimated at US\$11 billion*. World Bank. Retrieved May 10, 2025, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2025/03/07/lebanon-s-recovery-and-reconstruction-needs-estimated-at-us-11-billion>

development services, will be essential for fostering a broad-based and sustainable economic recovery.⁽¹⁾

c. Promoting Environmental Sustainability in Recovery Efforts

Integrating environmental sustainability into all aspects of the post-conflict recovery strategy is paramount for ensuring Lebanon's long-term well-being and resilience. This necessitates adopting a structured and environmentally responsible approach to managing the substantial volume of debris generated by the conflict, prioritizing material recycling and reuse to minimize environmental impact and foster a circular economy.⁽²⁾ Significant investments are required for the restoration of damaged ecosystems and to address the widespread soil and water contamination resulting from the conflict. Furthermore, it is crucial to integrate climate change considerations into all recovery and reconstruction plans, actively promoting investments in renewable energy sources, such as the US\$250 million project approved by the World Bank, and developing climate-resilient infrastructure to enhance Lebanon's capacity to withstand future environmental shocks and secure a healthy environment for future generations.⁽³⁾

d. Strengthening Governance and Institutional Capacity

Fundamental political reforms aimed at addressing the deeply entrenched issues of sectarianism, corruption, and institutional weaknesses are indispensable for Lebanon's sustainable recovery.⁽⁴⁾ The formation of a reform-oriented government, as anticipated in some reports 68, presents a critical opportunity to initiate these much-needed changes. Strengthening public financial management systems, enhancing transparency and accountability in the use of public resources, and improving the rule of law are essential steps towards building a more effective and trustworthy state. It is also crucial to invest in building the capacity of state institutions at all levels to effectively lead and coordinate the complex recovery efforts and ensure that aid is utilized efficiently and reaches those in need. The

(1) United Nations Development Programme. (2025, March 3). *Lebanon's recovery depends on immediate action to restore stability and rebuild trust*. United Nations Development Programme. Retrieved May 10, 2025, from <https://www.undp.org/arab-states/press-releases/lebanons-recovery-depends-immediate-action-restore-stability-and-rebuild-trust>

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UNDP is actively working with the Lebanese government to enhance national leadership and state capacity in this regard.⁽¹⁾

e. **Fostering Inclusive and Participatory Recovery**

A sustainable and equitable recovery process requires the active engagement and participation of all segments of Lebanese society, including local communities, civil society organizations, and the private sector. Special efforts must be made to ensure the meaningful participation of women and other marginalized groups in all decision-making processes related to recovery and reconstruction, recognizing their unique needs and perspectives. Adopting a human rights-based approach to recovery is essential, ensuring fair wages, safe working conditions, and adequate social protections for all individuals involved in the rebuilding efforts, including those engaged in debris removal and reconstruction activities.⁽²⁾

f. **The Role of International Aid and Cooperation**

Given the magnitude of the economic devastation and Lebanon's pre-existing financial crisis, the country will remain heavily reliant on sustained and coordinated international aid for its recovery and reconstruction.⁽³⁾ This support must encompass not only substantial financial assistance but also technical expertise and capacity-building initiatives. It is crucial that international aid is carefully aligned with Lebanon's national priorities and long-term sustainable development goals, and that mechanisms are in place to ensure full transparency and accountability in its allocation and utilization. The international community must work in close coordination with the Lebanese government and local stakeholders to ensure that aid efforts are effective, efficient, and contribute to building a more resilient and self-reliant future for Lebanon.⁽⁴⁾

(1) United Nations Development Programme. (2025, March 3). *Lebanon's recovery depends on immediate action to restore stability and rebuild trust*. United Nations Development Programme. Retrieved May 10, 2025, from <https://www.undp.org/arab-states/press-releases/lebanons-recovery-depends-immediate-action-restore-stability-and-rebuild-trust>

(2) United Nations Sustainable Development Group. (2025, April 16). *Rebuilding hope: Lebanon's journey toward sustainable recovery through debris*. United Nations Sustainable Development Group. Retrieved May 10, 2025, from <https://unsdg.un.org/latest/stories/rebuilding-hope-lebanon%E2%80%99s-journey-toward-sustainable-recovery-through-debris>

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(3) World Bank. (n.d.). *Lebanon overview*. World Bank. Retrieved May 10, 2025, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview>

(4) Abi Khalil, G. (2025, February 14). *Aid without state capacity? Why Lebanon's post-war reconstruction hinges on institutional reform*. Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford. Retrieved May 10, 2025, from <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/blog/aid-without-state-capacity-why-lebanons-post-war-reconstruction-hinges-institutional-reform>

VI. Conclusion: Towards a Resilient and Development-Oriented Future for Lebanon

a. Summary of Key Findings

The recent conflict in Lebanon has inflicted a devastating blow on a nation already grappling with a severe economic crisis. The economic impact is estimated at US\$14 billion, encompassing widespread damage to physical infrastructure and significant losses across all key sectors. This has resulted in a sharp contraction of GDP, increased unemployment, and a deepening of poverty and food insecurity. Socially, the conflict has caused massive displacement, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups such as women, children, refugees, and persons with disabilities, and placing immense pressure on social cohesion. Environmentally, the hostilities have led to significant degradation of natural resources, widespread pollution, and the generation of millions of tons of debris. The path to recovery is fraught with challenges, including the exacerbation of pre-existing economic vulnerabilities, persistent political instability, and the influence of regional factors.

b. The Path Ahead: A Holistic Approach to Sustainable Development

Lebanon's recovery from this devastating conflict requires a holistic and integrated approach that addresses the interconnected economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Building resilience to future shocks and crises must be a central tenet of all recovery efforts. While the scale of destruction and the depth of the existing crises are immense, there is potential for Lebanon to emerge from this period stronger and more sustainable through concerted efforts at the national level and with sustained support and cooperation from the international community.

c. Final Thoughts and Recommendations

The future prospects for Lebanon's sustainable development in the aftermath of this conflict hinge on the country's ability to overcome the formidable challenges it faces. Prioritizing immediate humanitarian needs, fostering economic stabilization through comprehensive reforms and targeted investments, promoting environmental sustainability in all reconstruction efforts, strengthening governance and institutional capacity, ensuring an inclusive and participatory recovery process, and securing sustained and well-coordinated international aid are all critical steps. Lebanon has the potential to rebuild and create a more resilient and development-oriented future for its people, but this will require unwavering commitment, effective collaboration, and a long-term vision for a stable and prosperous nation.

Key Tables:

1. Table: Sectoral Damage and Losses from the Recent Conflict in Lebanon (based on World Bank RDNA 2025)

Sector	Estimated Damage (USD) million	Estimated Losses (USD) million	Most Affected Governorates/Districts
Agriculture & Food Security	79	742	Nabatiyeh, South
Commerce, Industry & Tourism	612	3400	Marjaayoun, Nabatiyeh, Beirut, Tyre
Education	151	414	Nabatiyeh, Mount Lebanon, South, Bekaa
Environment & Debris Management	512	790	Tyre
Energy	98	209	Nabatiyeh, South
Health	208	700	Nabatiyeh, Baalbek-Hermel, South
Housing	4600	363	Nabatiyeh, South
Municipal & Public Services	41	192	Marjaayoun, Nabatiyeh
Transport	198	173	Nabatiyeh, South
Water, Wastewater & Irrigation	356	171	Marjaayoun, Baalbek, Tyre

2. Table: Key Macroeconomic Indicators - Pre-Conflict vs. Post-Conflict (based on World Bank and UNDP data)

Indicator	Pre-Conflict Estimate (2024)	Post-Conflict Estimate (2024)
Real GDP Growth	0.9%	-7.1%
Cumulative GDP Decline (since 2019)	N/A	40%~
Inflation Rate	N/A	Potentially Increased

3. Table: Humanitarian Impact of the Conflict (based on UN agency reports)

Indicator	Data (as of various dates in 2024/2025)
Estimated Number of Internally Displaced Persons	1,000,000<
Reported Deaths	4,000<
Reported Injuries	16,000<
Percentage of Women and Girls Displaced	51%
Estimated Number of Refugees Secondarily Displaced	90,000<
Children Out of School	(post-ceasefire) 25%<

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