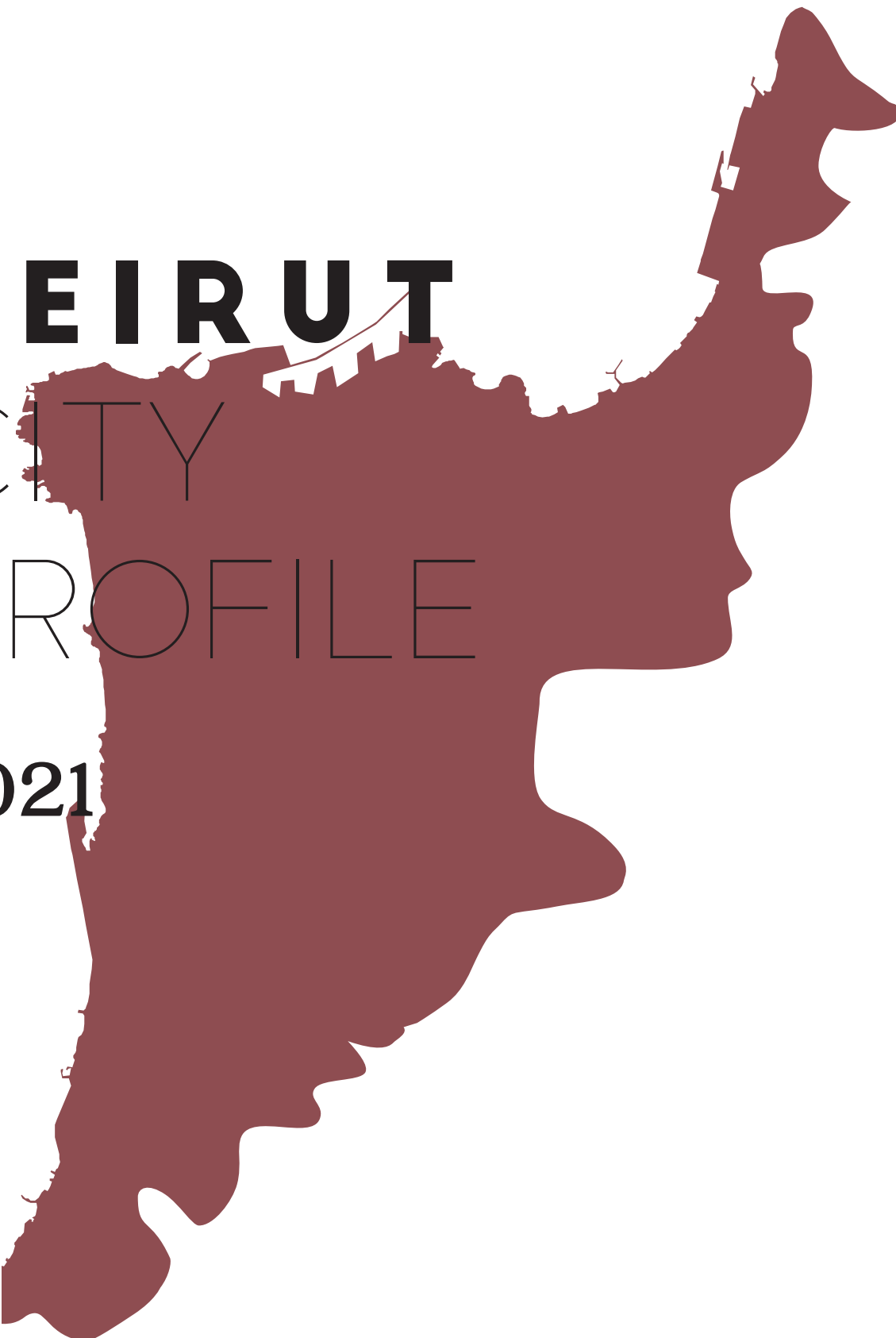




# BEIRUT CITY PROFILE 2021

**UN HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE





**BEIRUT**

CITY

PROFILE

**2021**

## UN-Habitat mandate

UN-Habitat, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities, and adequate housing for all, and is the lead agency within the United Nations system for coordinating activities in the field of human settlements. It is mandated through the Habitat Agenda<sup>1</sup> to take the lead in disaster mitigation and post-crisis rehabilitation capabilities in human settlements.

UN-Habitat's global responsibilities in emergency, humanitarian and post-crisis response are to support national and decentralized governments as well as civil society in strengthening their capacity for managing human-made and natural disasters affecting human settlements. Experience has shown that the potential for development gain is high in the immediate aftermath of a crisis, and this is a key principle underlying UN-Habitat's efforts to deploy at the earliest opportunity following a disaster. UN-Habitat's added value is that it is the United Nations agency specialized in working in cities and human settlements.

Since 2006, the agency has been present in Lebanon, first involved in recovery and reconstruction efforts in South Lebanon, Beirut, and Northern Lebanon (particularly in the Nahr el Bared Camp crisis response in 2007), and in efforts to improve the living conditions in the 43 Palestinian out-of-camp concentrations. Since 2013, UN-Habitat has been involved in responding to the Syrian refugee crisis, and since 4 August 2020 to the Beirut blast.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, "United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II): The Habitat Agenda," 1996.



## Credits and acknowledgments

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With generous contributions from all of UN-Habitat Lebanon and UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States and Headquarters.





## **Foreword by United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon**

As Lebanon continues to face unprecedented and multifaceted crises on different fronts – marked by the ensuing socioeconomic and financial crises, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and further exacerbated by the Beirut Port explosions of 4 August 2020 – the United Nations in Lebanon continues to support the people and Government of Lebanon and commits to defend their rights to dignity, peace and justice.

Despite the unfolding humanitarian crisis and continued development challenges in the country, the importance of laying the foundational elements that facilitate the humanitarian-development-peace nexus remains high and vital. One of these elements is the Beirut City Profile that provides an important opportunity to reflect on and underscore the multidimensional needs of the residents, through a comprehensive, multisectoral and area-based approach to analysing and diagnosing the capital city, both before and after the explosion.

The Beirut City Profile can form an important basis for all stakeholders engaged in supporting the ongoing recovery and reconstruction of the city and beyond, by addressing existing humanitarian and development challenges. The findings and recommendations generating from this profile equally offer the opportunity to move towards an integrated urban recovery approach that requires coordinated and concerted efforts that ensure government engagement to explore the dynamics of a city as influenced by the vulnerability, poverty, inequality and tension that exist. This will help reduce the impact of recurrent shocks and stresses, as well as support the preservation or restoration of stability that is indispensable for sustainable development.

Women's rights are integral to both the immediate response to shocks and to longer-term development outcomes. The Beirut City Profile underscores the relevance of these rights to achieve an inclusive and sustainable recovery and reconstruction process. Similarly, the profile emphasizes the substantial role of local leadership and the need to develop national and local systems that are capable to take full accountability for the provision of essential basic and social services and offer better prospects for appropriate, sustainable and transformative responses to similar crises/shocks.

The expertise offered by UN-Habitat through its extensive profiling work in Lebanon is critical. By adopting an area-based approach to data gathering and synthesis, the United Nations hopes to inform integrated programming for communities, national and local authorities, in ways that benefit all residents and leave no one behind.



Najat Rochdi

United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator

## Foreword by Governor of Beirut

Lebanon historically suffers from a lack of well-developed and evidence-based urban policies, which have contributed, along with other issues, to an unplanned process of local social and economic development. Since the end of the Lebanese Civil War, successive governments have not been able to agree on a clear mechanism that seeks to ensure equitable and sustainable regional and local development.

The absence of a sound urban policy framework has given rise to various issues and challenges, such as internal migration from rural areas to the cities, especially to the capital Beirut and its suburbs, in search of jobs and better standards of living. Internal displacement caused by the civil war further increased economic and social pressures on major cities. Cities have thus expanded outside their official administrative boundaries in an accelerated and often unorganized manner. This expansion has contributed to the creation of informal neighbourhoods and pockets of poverty that suffer from various forms of vulnerability, including social tensions that could lead to a deterioration of the security situation. The Syrian refugee crisis came to further raise the level of challenges for cities, especially marginalized neighbourhoods, where the rise in the population size has increased stresses on the provision of basic and social services as well as the availability of job opportunities.

The repercussions of the Beirut Port explosion have highlighted the weakness of the state's capacity to face disasters and crises. This has been demonstrated in terms of the absence of national plans to respond to the consequences of the explosion, and in terms of the lack of adequate physical and human resources, of updated data, as well as of administrative and legal frameworks and mechanisms that enable local authorities to work collectively - and in coordination with other relevant actors - to lead an effective response and recovery process. The explosion shed light on major challenges related to housing and property issues, in addition to basic municipal services, and the relationship between state institutions at the coordination and operational levels.

We hope that this report, the Beirut City Profile, represents a real opportunity for decision makers, at the national and local levels, to define short- and longer-term development priorities and to join efforts and consolidate resources in order to secure a better future for all residents and ensure their right to an adequate standard of living. We also hope that the findings and recommendations of this report will help to better coordinate and integrate programmes and support provided by donors and international organizations, including the United Nations, which will ensure the implementation of priority projects in an effective and transparent manner.

We urge UN-Habitat to continue the gathering, analysis and updating of urban data, facts and statistics that would provide a clear picture on the challenges facing our cities and place them at the disposal of all stakeholders in order to achieve fair, balanced and sustainable development.



Judge Marwan Abboud

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