

# URBAN PROFILE

## LEBANON URBAN PROFILE

A Desk Review Report October 2011



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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAS	Central Administration of Statistics
CDR	Council for Development and Reconstruction
COM	Council of Ministers
DGC	Directorate General of Cooperatives
DGU	Directorate General of Urbanism
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EDL	Electricite du Liban
HCUP	Higher Council of Urban Planning
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GOL	Government of Lebanon
IMF	Independent Municipal Fund
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOE	Ministry of Environment
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOIM	Ministry of Interior and Municipalities
MOPH	Ministry of Public Health
MOPWT	Ministry of Public Work and Transport
MOSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NERP	National Emergency Reconstruction Plan
NIH	National Institute of Housing
NPMP LT	National Physical Master Plan for the Lebanese Territory
OMSAR	Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform and Development
PM	Prime Minister
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization



## INTRODUCTION

Lebanon is a small country with a total population of 4,223,553 (World Bank, 2010). Recent figures show that 87% of this population currently live in urban areas with the majority - estimated at 64% - residing in large agglomerations mostly in the metropolitan areas of Beirut and Tripoli (UN-HABITAT, 2008). The growth of cities in Lebanon has paralleled the urbanization process that is taking place globally. The conditions generated out of urbanization have a number of universal commonalities. Urbanization brings an array of opportunities: economic, social and cultural. Cities are engines of economic growth and create livelihood opportunities; they are also sites of diverse religious and sub-cultural groups and communities making life in cities culturally inspiring and socially richer. Challenges, on the other hand are numerous; they range from the intricacy of providing equitable economic opportunities and access to social services to all, to securing safe places and making the urban environment healthy and sustainable.

Cities in Lebanon reflect these dynamics as well, encompassing most of the economic prospects, livelihood opportunities and services and accommodating for a diverse population that reflects the different religious and sectarian belongings, socio-economic brackets, cultures and also nationalities in the country. While this has contributed to enriching the cultural diversity in Lebanon, it has also led to the creation of urban divides and the rising of conflicts especially during and after the Lebanese civil war (1975 – 1990). The evidence is clear today on the urban geography of cities and major urban centres in Lebanon, which have become spatially divided along these religious/sectarian lines, with pockets formed to accommodate for the less advantaged groups (the poor, the internally displaced, refugees, migrant workers) mainly as informal areas developed around major cities<sup>1</sup>.

While the universality of challenges and opportunities brought by the urban conditions are acknowledged, there has not been a systematic outlook at the specific and contextualized challenges and opportunities in Lebanon's cities and urban areas. This paper aims at filling such gap by profiling the urban condition of Lebanon. It is by no means a comprehensive study of Lebanese cities but it aims at instigating debate and dialogue on these challenges and future policy directions through presenting an overview of Lebanon's urban condition.

This paper has been prepared to serve as a background paper for the first report on the State of the Arab Cities to be published by the UN-HABITAT, the Arab League and the Arab Town Organization. It is based on a desk review of existing and published studies, papers and reports. The paper follows a template prepared for the State of Arab Cities and is divided into six sections: section one looks at the population and urban growth, section two profiles the urban economy, section three addresses the challenges to urban development, section four looks at the environmental challenges in urban areas, section five tackles urban governance and section six concludes with the emerging urban issues with focus on Lebanon's urban divides.

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<sup>1</sup>See among others Beyhum (2001), Fawaz (2002), Tabet (2001).





## Box 1:

### Definition of Urbanization

Urbanization is defined by the UN as the movement of people from rural to urban areas with population growth equating to urban migration. Urbanization occurs naturally from individual and corporate efforts to reduce time and expense in commuting and transportation while improving opportunities for jobs, education, housing, and transportation. Urbanization is measured by the percentage change in a city's population from year to year.

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