DEMAC
DIASPORA EMERGENCY ACTION & COORDINATION

DRC DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

DIASPORA HUMANITARIAN ENGAGEMENT IN LEBANON REAL-TIME REVIEW

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This Real-Time Review was conducted between September 2024 and February 2025 by a team from ITAR Consultants, including Charles Teffo, Fanny Tittel, Joelle Saliba, and Victoria Jordan.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
ACL	Associació Catalunya-Líban
ALCC	American Lebanese Cultural Center
ALMA	American Lebanese Medical Association
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DEMAC	Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GDP	Growth Domestic Product
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LCF	Lebanese Canadian Foundation
LHDF	Lebanon Humanitarian and Development NGO Forum
LIFE Lebanon	Lebanese International Finance Executives
LNA	Local and National actor
MEAL	Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NAAMA	National Arab American Medical Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PUI	Première Urgence International
RTR	Real-Time Review
ToR	Terms of Reference
USA	United States of America
WFP	World Food Program

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

Displacement and destruction following the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah has left Lebanon with increasing humanitarian and reconstruction needs.

Hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah escalated on September 23rd 2024. Israeli airstrikes in densely populated areas across Lebanon and military incursions in the south resulted in at least 4,047 deaths, 16,638 injuries, and the displacement of 1.5 million people.[1] These attacks also caused extensive damage to critical infrastructure, livelihoods, and significant disruptions to essential services such as healthcare, water supply, and education across the country.

A ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hezbollah took effect on November 27th 2024. Yet, humanitarian needs remain high, and the situation on the ground continues to evolve. Since the ceasefire's implementation, at least 786,443 people displaced within Lebanon have left collective shelters or other temporary refuges to return to their home communities, only to be confronted by widespread destruction, including damaged or destroyed homes and limited access to basic services.[2] Many families are still unable to return due to extensive property damage and access restrictions. Those who do attempt to go back face numerous hazards, including unexploded ordnance, unsafe conditions in damaged buildings, pervasive psychosocial trauma, and the ongoing presence of armed groups and military forces in certain areas.

The Lebanese diaspora, estimated by the Lebanese government at 15.4 million, is one of the largest globally. It plays a vital role in Lebanon's economy, contributing 54% of the country's Growth Domestic Product (GDP) in 2021. Research by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and ITAR underscores the critical role of the diaspora in supporting those affected by Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis, which began in 2019.[3] The diaspora has also provided aid during major crises, including the Beirut port explosion, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2021 fuel crisis. This support over time has been diverse. As further detailed in this report, the Lebanese diaspora engages in financial support, advocacy in their country of residence as well as direct involvement in designing and implementing humanitarian and development projects.

[1] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – OCHA (2024), Lebanon: Flash Update #49

[2] International Organisation for Migration – IOM (2024), Displacement Tracking Matrix Mobility Snapshot – Round 66.

[3] DRC (2023), Mapping and Analysis of Diaspora Business Engagement Models in five villages of Lebanon. Research Of Diaspora Engagement In Economic Recovery And Job Creation.

1.2 Study's approach and objectives

The purpose of this study is to provide a Real-Time Review (RTR) of the Lebanese diaspora's humanitarian and recovery efforts following the increase in intensity of the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in September 2024. It covers the period from September 2024 to February 2025.

The study comprised of two distinct steps:

Step 1: map existing initiatives (both humanitarian and recovery projects) through a systematic online review of online publications globally. This comprehensive mapping resulted in a database of more than 140 initiatives from organisations, along with several hundreds of individual fundraising initiatives online.

Step 2: complement the mapping through an in-depth review of selected initiatives. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with more than 20 organisations to explore diaspora engagement modalities and understand diaspora's role in responding to the humanitarian crisis in Lebanon.

The analysis of insights from interviews conducted forms the basis of this report. They targeted:

Lebanese Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), exploring how do they interact with diaspora organisations; and

Lebanese diaspora organisations, focusing on the potential for coordination, including between (1) actors from different areas of Lebanon, (2) diaspora from different generations, and (3) non-traditional diaspora actors beyond associations such as foundations and companies among others.


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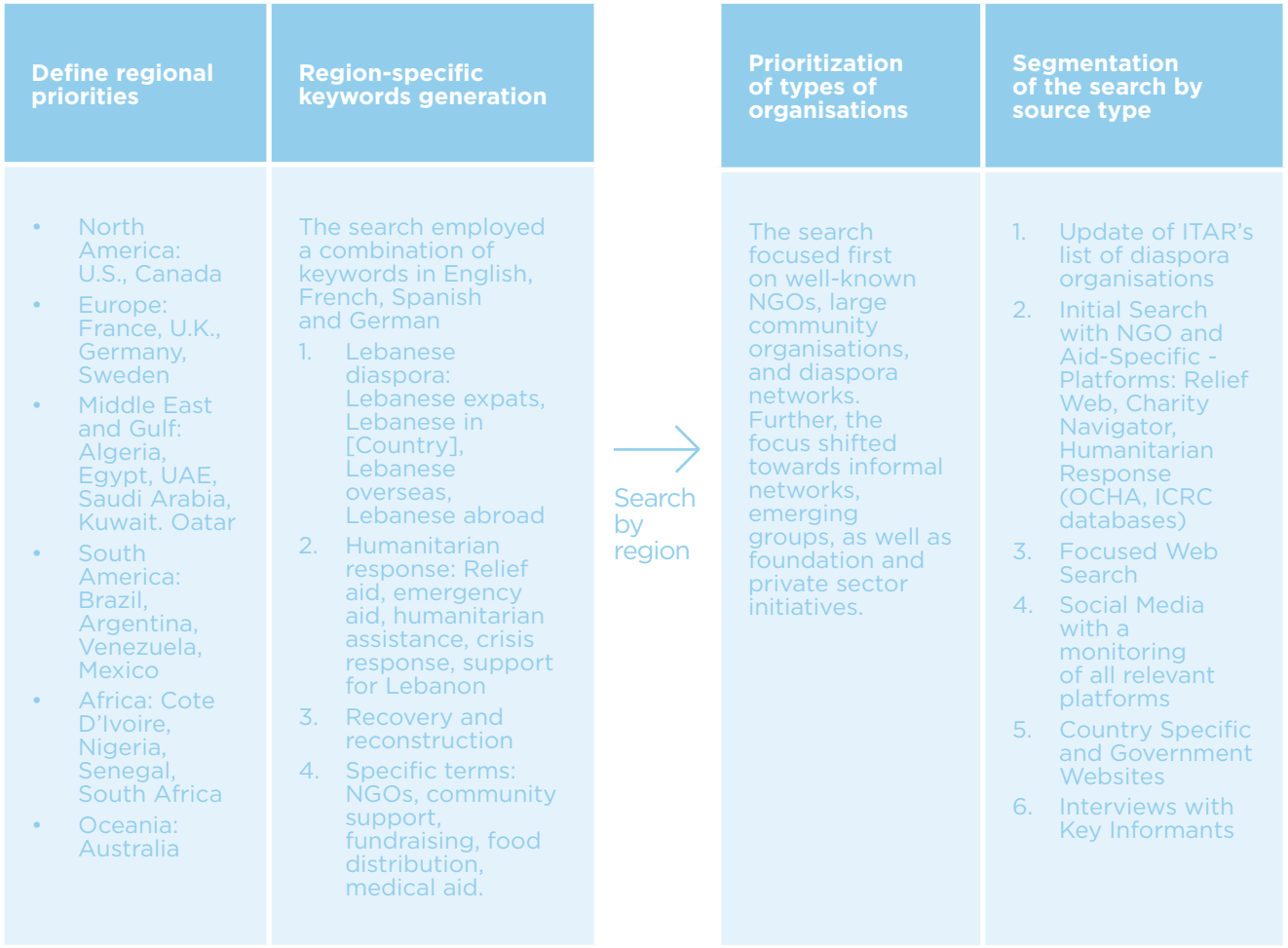
2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

2.1 Phase I: Online mapping

This initial phase focused on a comprehensive identification and inclusion of diaspora initiatives in the study. The search for existing initiatives followed a systematic approach, comprising the following steps:

- **Step 1:** define regional priorities. Given the diverse countries of residence for the Lebanese diaspora, the first step involved identifying the primary countries of emigration across various geographical regions. In North America, this included both Canada and the United States. In Latin America, countries with significant diaspora populations included Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela, and Argentina. In Europe, this included France and the United Kingdom, for their large diaspora communities dating back to the civil war, along with Germany and Sweden, more recent destinations for emigration. Most Gulf countries were also included due to continuous emigration for work purposes. Additionally, several West African countries and Australia were part of the research scope.
- **Step 2:** generate region-specific keywords. For each identified country, specific search strings were developed to facilitate online research of initiatives. They included keywords tailored to each country and formulated in French, English, German, or Spanish, depending on the predominant language(s) spoken.
- **Step 3:** prioritise structured organisations. Within each country, the search initially focused on large NGOs and well-established diaspora networks using the predefined keywords. Once these organisations were identified, the search was expanded to include informal networks and emerging volunteer groups.
- **Step 4:** systematic review of sources. For each category of initiatives, a systematic exploration of online sources was conducted. This included NGO and aid-specific platforms, social media applications, country-specific websites, and government portals. The online search was supplemented by ITAR's existing list of diaspora organisations and insights gathered from Key Informant Interviews.

Figure 1: Approach for mapping existing initiatives online



The approach's reliance on online search strings, complemented with KIIs with diaspora members, could present a selection bias in its design, to take into consideration when interpreting findings. In particular, Lebanese communities in West Africa and in the Gulf may have been engaged in more initiatives than those identified through the mapping. Some of them were mentioned during KIIs but are not visible online as organisations communicate outside of usual online communication channels. Those mentioned to the study team were included in the study, but others may not have been included in the findings.

2.2 Phase II: in-depth review

Sampling

Relying on the mapping to identify relevant actors, interviews covered a total of 21 organisations, including:

- 10 KIIs among the diaspora, representing 13 different diaspora organisations;[4] and
- 8 Lebanese CSOs operating in Lebanon and collaborating with diaspora organisations.

Figure 2: Total number of organisations interviewed for the in-depth review by categories.

The detailed list of interviewees is available in Annex 7.1, "List of interviewed actors"

[4] Within the key informants, several INDIVIDUALS interviewed were engaged on different initiatives. It is common that active diaspora members start their engagement within an association and from there develop other initiatives with other members they meet in this ecosystem.

Sample size and interpretation of results

This study is qualitative in nature, drawing insights from a selected group of individuals. While the Phase I mapping was as comprehensive as possible, the Phase II review was not intended to cover a representative set of diaspora organisations. Therefore, findings do not statistically represent all categories of actors consulted nor should they be interpreted as representative of the Lebanese diaspora support system as a whole. Instead, the perceptions and cases presented in the report serve to illustrate the broad range of organisations encountered.

It should also be noted that only a selection of identified diaspora organisations participated in data collection. All actors identified during the online mapping were contacted up to four times to participate in the study. Only 15% of the contacted organisations agreed to an interview. There may therefore be a self-selection bias with interviews focusing on the most active diaspora groups. As a mitigation strategy, the study team aimed at ensuring a diversity of profiles, including a balance between:

- different countries of residence;
- formal diaspora organisations registered in their countries of residence, loose networks of volunteers and organisations related to corporate entities, including company foundations, and associations of professionals from specific sectors;
- the age of organisations; and
- sectors of intervention.

Dimensions covered in interviews

KIIs followed a similar structure for both Lebanese CSOs and diaspora organisations including:

- history of the organisation and its level of structuration;
- activities implemented in the last five years (since 2019), with a focus on potential initiatives since the intensification of the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah (i.e., exploring sectors, types of activities, amounts of funding allocated);
- activities planned for the coming two years (i.e., recovery, reconstruction, and development projects planned in Lebanon);
- types of collaboration between local CSOs and diaspora organisations, including types of support (i.e., financial support, volunteering, mobilisation of experts, in-kind) and modalities of interaction (i.e., needs assessments, reasons for collaboration, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) plans, communication, responsibility sharing; and formality levels of agreements); and
- success stories as well as key opportunities for improvement in existing collaborations.

Detailed KIIs guidelines are available in Annex 7.2, “Interview guidelines”.

3. RESULTS OF THE MAPPING

3.1 Mapping overview in key numbers

A concentration of European and North American initiatives through recent and mostly informal structures

A total of 126 organisations were identified during the first mapping in 2024.[5] Out of the 126 organisations originally identified, 71% of them were actively communicating online on their contribution to the emergency response.[6]

These organisations are mostly located in Europe and North America (Figure 3). This represents a certain imbalance given the large diaspora residing in other parts of the world, notably Latin America, Gulf countries, as well as West Africa.

Regardless of their country of operation, most are loose networks of volunteers (Figure 4), sometimes not formally registered and raising funds through individual "Go Fund Me" fundraising campaigns. This highlights the fact that most of these initiatives are recent and were launched during recent crises such as the Beirut port explosion or the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah.

The question of capacity development was raised during in depth interviews, especially with recent diaspora organisations, considering scaling up their operations and shifting towards reconstruction objectives.

The "Other" category includes all countries with two identified initiatives or less.

[5] These results were later updated in 2025 with new initiatives. A total of 14 new projects were identified, which do not alter the trends previously identified. New initiatives focused mostly on fundraising and did not include recovery or reconstruction components.

[6] Other organisations are organisations visible online through publications related to previous initiatives and/or were previously identified BY ITAR during past research.

Figure 3: Number of initiatives identified online per country

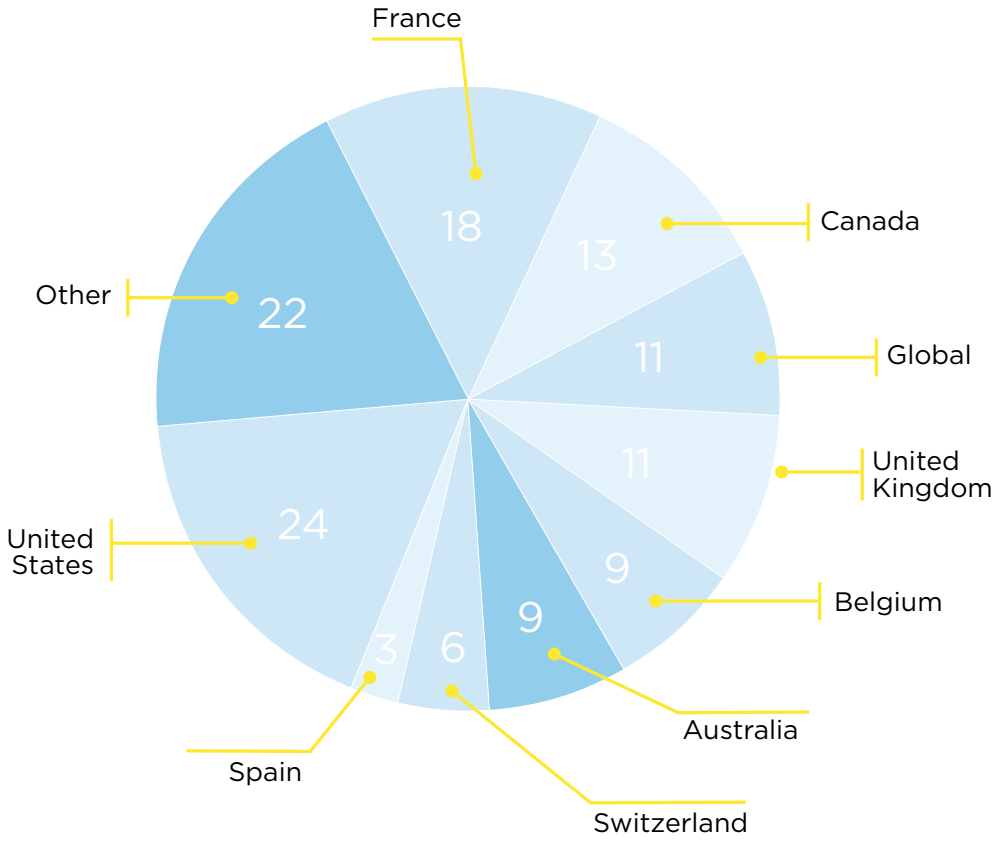


Figure 4: Diaspora organisations' degree of formalisation per country

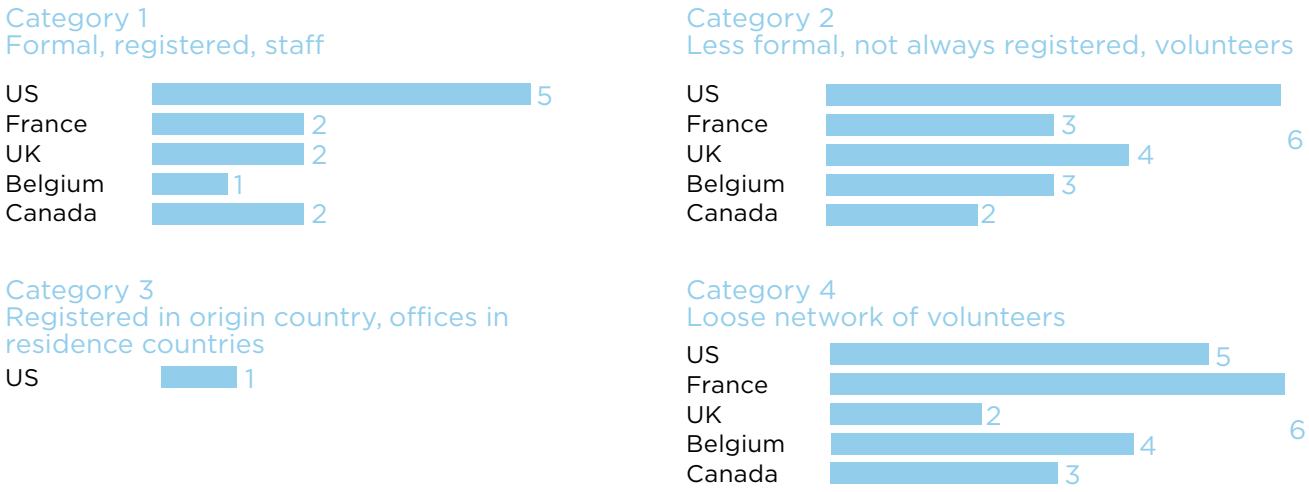


Figure 5: Top three sectors of intervention

Figure 6: Modalities of implementation in Lebanon

Few sectors, similar modalities of interventions

As the research targeted current responses to the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, most initiatives identified focused on delivering emergency relief through fundraising and in-kind donations. These included mostly essentials like food, shelter, and medical supplies (Figure 5). These efforts were largely carried out in partnership with local CSOs operating on the ground (Figure 6).

Key objectives of the in-depth interviews were therefore to identify potential initiatives aimed at recovery objectives beyond emergency response, and to explore successes and barriers of collaboration between local CSOs and the diaspora.

Beyond categories outlined above, only a handful of organisations were identified as performing other initiatives such as advocacy in their country of residence. Besides, 13 organisations (9%) had interventions in both Occupied Palestinian Territory and Lebanon.

Limits identified during first quantitative online mapping

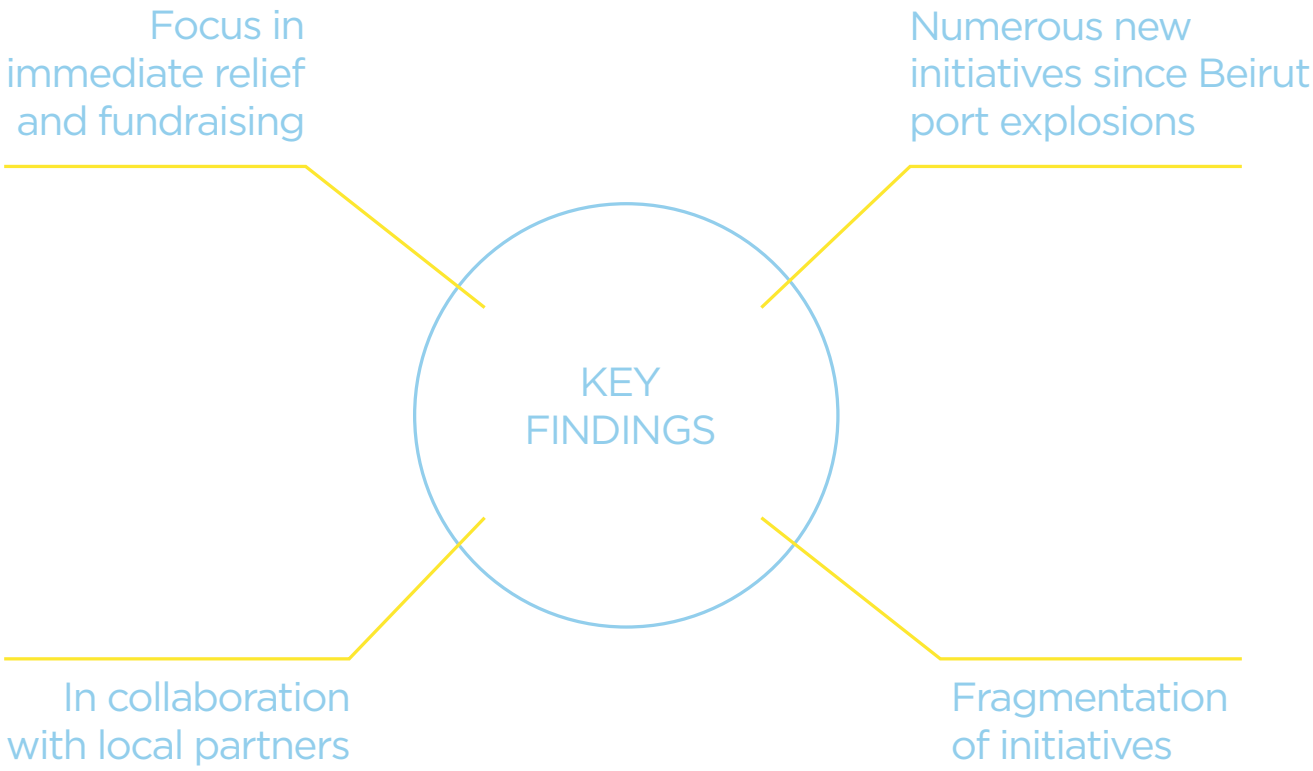
The initial mapping allowed the identification of key challenges, further explored in the KIIs with Lebanese CSOs and diaspora organisations. These included:

- The high level of fragmentation among diaspora organisations: responding to the emergency. Many Lebanese diaspora members naturally mobilised online, generally to gather funds. Beyond identified organisations, a total of 400 individuals launched calls for funding on the website “Go Fund Me”.
- A gap in the diaspora between Lebanese migrants who left Lebanon in recent years and individuals who left Lebanon during previous migration waves (i.e., before 2010). Each generation acts in an uncoordinated manner among their networks, therefore reinforcing the need for coordination.

One of the questions to be examined is the lack of will and capacity of the Lebanese diaspora to properly coordinate in response activities.

The mapping identified generational, political and communal divides, which could partially explain this lack of coordination.[7] However, beyond these fragmentation factors, the lack of coordination between initiatives is also due to the limited awareness of other diaspora actors, and limited time available for engagement. Many are one-off initiatives by diaspora individuals in times of crisis, engaging their close circles of relatives on a specific event.

[7] Further detailed below in sections 4 and 5 of the report based on KIIs testimonies.


Focus in immediate relief and fundraising
Numerous new initiatives since Beirut port explosions
KEY FINDINGS
In collaboration with local partners
Fragmentation of initiatives

3.2 In-depth review: characteristics of organisations

The 21 organisations consulted through KIIs (including 13 diaspora organisations and 8 Lebanese CSOs operating in Lebanon) are diverse, in terms of nature of activities, and countries of residence. A key line of distinction between them is how long they have been operating. Whether organisations have longstanding experience or were recently created impacts their capacities, the types of activities they decide to implement and the challenges they face.

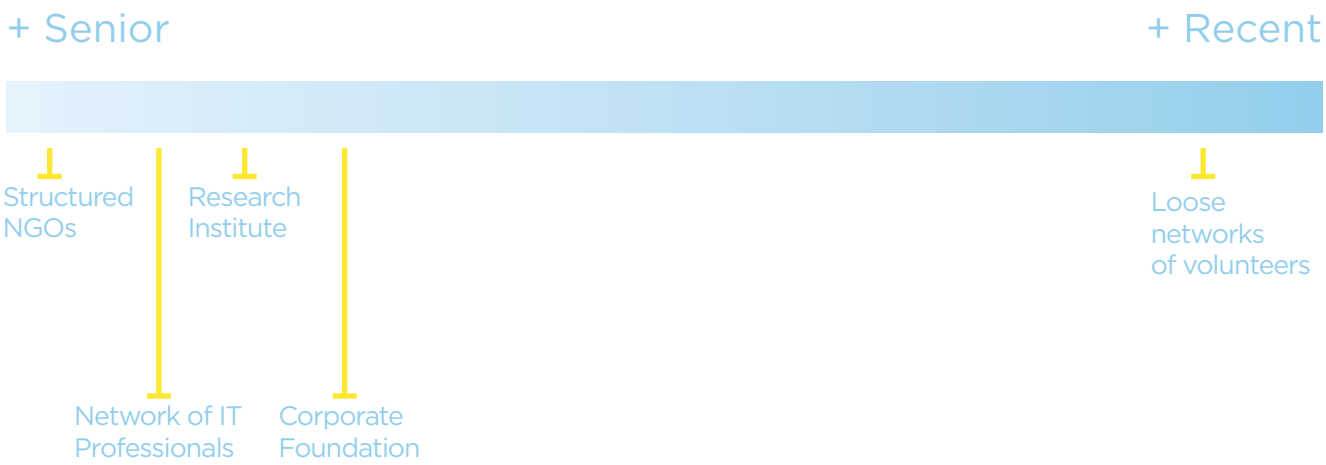
Diaspora organisations: from recent loose networks of volunteers to older structured NGOs stemming from past emergencies

Two categories of diaspora organisations can be distinguished among the 13 interviewed:

Recent diaspora organisations: created as a result of the multiple crises recently faced by Lebanon, whether it is the economic crisis of 2019, the Beirut port explosion of 2020, or more recently the conflict with Israel. These organisations often present similar characteristics: they are loose networks of volunteers, sometimes with recently created legal structures in their countries of residence. Their internal systems are not yet set and have evolved over recent months based on their first experiences.

Senior diaspora organisations: generally created 15 to 30 years ago by diaspora members from former emigration waves, often dating from the civil war (between 1970 and 1990). These organisations are more structured, sometimes operate as formal NGOs or as donors. They also include other forms of organisations such as networks of professionals from the IT sector both in the US and France, a corporate foundation, and a research institute. Some Lebanese NGOs have also established their own networks of volunteers or registered NGOs abroad in order to raise funds themselves among the diaspora, either individuals or Lebanese owned companies.

Figure 7: Difference of structures between recent and senior diaspora organisations



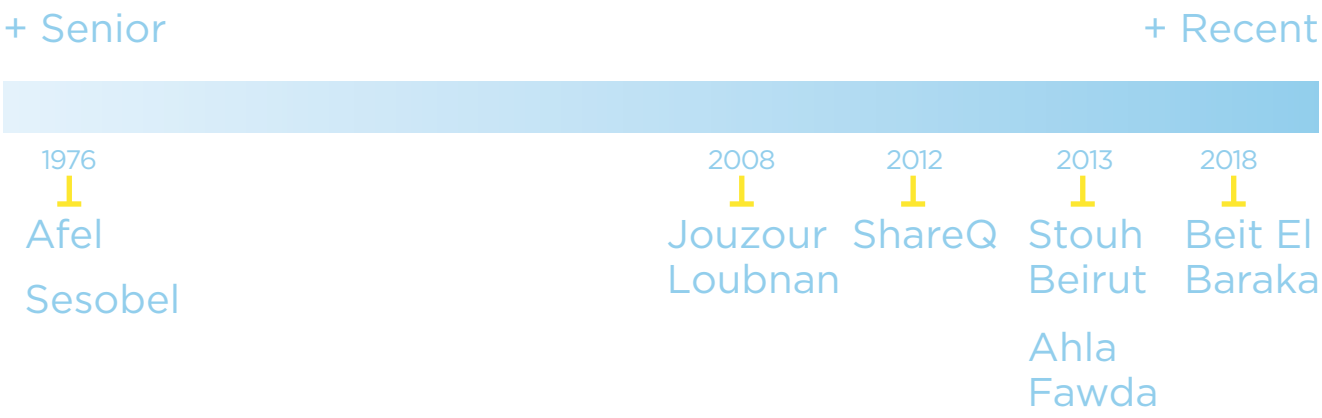
Local Lebanese NGOs follow the same distinction between newer and older structures

Eight representatives from local Lebanese NGOs and CSOs were interviewed. These organisations were specifically identified as having ties with the diaspora, from one-off fundraising support to long-term partnerships involving other forms of support such as skills volunteering. They can be disaggregated following a similar breakdown between:

Recent organisations: created in the aftermath of the 2007 war with Israel or more recently to address the economic crisis and the Beirut port explosion. These organisations are usually well structured, integrated in the coordination system for the response to the Lebanese crises (i.e., the Lebanon Response Plan – LRP), and experienced with grants and donor management. However, these organisations are reorganising to adapt to the funding gap and recent adjustments in the donor landscape.

Senior organisations: created during the 1970s and the civil war, they are well known in Lebanese society and used to have large visibility. They also have long-term partnerships in many countries with Lebanese diaspora. However, as their mandate focuses on the Lebanese population, they have not grown in size over recent years to respond to the refugee crisis in the country. This explains in part their declining visibility and their difficulty in maintaining networks and fundraising among the diaspora.

Figure 8: Lebanese NGOs and CSOs interviewed by creation dates



Almost all of the local Lebanese CSOs have worked in the emergency response with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) for shelter and other basic needs since the increase in intensity of the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. Beyond the crisis response, they cover a wide range of sectors including:

- Reforestation and agroforestry (including in the Bekaa and activities anticipated in the South).
- Support to children and adults with disabilities (country-wide).
- Education support to vulnerable children (in Beirut and Mount Lebanon).
- Circular economy (initially in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, further expanding countrywide, including one with a model of collaboration with municipalities for urban development).
- Support to Small and Medium Entreprises (SMEs), schools and other basic needs (countrywide including planning in the South). One organisation also has a production centre in Jezzine, with the target to export part of its produce.

Regardless of the sector covered, the level of seniority has a clear impact on diaspora engagement models.

The level of seniority is a key distinction factor between organisations. It creates a clear difference:

1. in terms of diaspora engagement models (including what they do and how they interact); and
2. in terms of resulting needs for capacity development and coordination support.

These two points are developed in the below sections “4. Range of initiatives” and “5. Models of engagement”.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4. RANGE OF INITIATIVES

All diaspora organisations consulted reported initiatives to respond to the crisis resulting from the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah since the end of 2023. Yet, more recent organisations did not necessarily provide other types of support. This section explores how senior and recent organisations diverge in their intervention models.

4.1 Senior diaspora organisations cover activities ranging from emergency to recovery and development

Senior organisations often display a structured governance, with large networks of members allowing them to gather funding and cover projects ranging from emergency response to long-term support.

Thanks to their established networks, senior structured organisations are effective fundraisers in times of crisis. For instance, the Lebanese International Finance Executives (LIFE Lebanon) launched an emergency fund for NGOs after the Beirut port explosion, the "Emergency Relief Fund and the Beirut Emergency Fund for NGOs". This fund raised 9.4 million USD from the diaspora.[8] For comparison, this amounts to 50% of the funding of the French Agency for Development for the same response.

[8] ICMPD (2021), Diaspora Legislation and Engagement Policies in Lebanon, India, Ireland and Italy (November).

As these organisations became established structures, funds increasingly became oriented towards long-term projects, away from one-off fundraising on a specific crisis. For example, the NGO SEAL in the US, created in 1997, now organises two fundraising events a year, one in San Francisco and one in New York City. Amounts raised each year allow the NGO to act as a small donor for selected Lebanese communities across the country, mostly to support agricultural development and adaptation to climate change. The most recent appeal raised 900,000 USD to provide food parcels for IDPs during the conflict.

Beyond their capacity for raising high amounts consistently, experienced diaspora organisations display interesting programmatic models including (1) initiatives involving potential for economic growth in specific sectors and infrastructure investments; as well as (2) services and innovative solutions which could benefit other diaspora organisations and Lebanese CSOs.

- **Initiatives with potential for economic growth:** many of the projects supported by older organisations focus on economic development. For example, networks of IT professionals, such as the organisation LebNet created in 1999 in North America and the organisation AFPI (Association Franco-Libanaise des Professionnels de l'Informatique) created in 1992 in France, both count more than 2,000 members. LebNet focuses on support to individuals, offering opportunities for young Lebanese to travel for education and internships. It also supports universities in Lebanon with classes online and on site for IT students. Each of the LebNet communities across the continent can develop their own initiatives. AFPI in France focuses its support on companies, including support to raise funds, incubation services, and recently the creation of a label in partnership with BerryTech called "Cedars Tech".[9]

  Both networks also have a humanitarian component. LebNet recently made donations through the organisation LIFE previously mentioned. The AFPI has created the "Fond de dotation France-Liban" in partnership with the Franco Lebanese Chamber of Commerce, allowing them to legally conduct humanitarian activities (e.g., distribution of food parcels and pharmaceuticals, support for tuition fees for vulnerable families). Both organisations also anticipate future development projects following the conflict. LebNet is conducting needs assessments for potential investments in infrastructure and AI during the reconstruction. AFPI is considering opportunities with universities to develop incubators for young graduates.

[9] Cedars Tech is a label allowing Lebanese Tech entrepreneurs following a specific set of requirements to network with the Lebanese diaspora and beyond with potential buyers abroad.

- **Services and innovative solutions that could benefit other actors:** some actors have developed innovative services that could directly benefit other diaspora organisations and Lebanese CSOs.
- **The foundation CMA-CGM has developed three relevant services:**

  1. The initiative "Conteneur d'espoir" provides free containers to organisations wishing to send in-kind support during emergencies. For instance, the Lebanese diaspora organisation CIP Belux used these services in November.

     CMA-CGM also has longstanding agreements to ship material regularly for various actors including the World Food Program (WFP), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Action Contre la Faim (ACF), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), and Première Urgence International (PUI).
     Donations of containers, either as they are (e.g., to Ahla Fawda to build a storage building), or

  2. refurbished by CMA-CGM engineers for a specific purpose (e.g., libraries for schools funded by the French Embassy).

  3. CMA-CGM developed a logistics hub for five NGOs in Marseille. The objective is to support the logistics of several NGOs pooling their resources in a context of reduced funding. CMA-CGM is considering developing the same model in Lebanon, provided the conflict does not resume.

- **The Centre for Lebanese Studies**, a research institute created in 1984 in the UK, produces research and needs assessments that can be useful to diaspora organisations and local CSOs alike. Originally started at Oxford University, it is now affiliated with Cambridge University and also registered in Lebanon.

  Their research focuses mainly on education (their primary topic) but also on migration (including refugee education), disability, and social movements. Many recent publications focus on the impact of the conflict on the education sector and priorities for funding.

4.2 Recent organisations focus on fundraising and emergency response

Most recently created diaspora organisations only started initiatives in Lebanon as a response to the current humanitarian crisis, resulting from the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. They display innovative fundraising and engagement strategies, to finance humanitarian activities in Lebanon. Yet lack the capacity to build on these to ensure their sustainability and eventually scale-up.

Recent organisations, created as of 2019, raised between 1,000 USD to 100,000 USD during fundraising events. Average amounts are usually under 10,000 USD, and represent relatively small amounts, when compared with more senior organisations created before 2010, usually gathering higher amounts above 100,000 USD. However, recent organisations are able to support and reach small Lebanese CSOs beyond the radar of usual grants and donors. The three examples below provide illustrations of these efforts and potential for expanding activities:

- **The association NABAD in France** was created by four Lebanese women who wanted to organise events to (1) raise funds; and (2) advocate against war crimes committed by Israel against Lebanese and Palestinian populations. It was registered as an association in 2023. Since then, they have organised seven events, mostly concerts and exhibitions in Paris, including five fundraisers for Lebanese and Palestinian organisations responding to the humanitarian needs in Lebanon and Gaza. Some of these events were organised in partnership with other recently created organisations such as "Urgence Liban". Funds raised at these events ranged from 1,500 EUR to 7,500 EUR, in addition to in-kind donations.
- **The association Pluralités in Germany** was created four years ago in Germany to gather the Lebanese youth in lower Saxony in the aftermath of the Beirut port explosion. They have two main pillars focusing on (1) promoting the Lebanese culture in Germany; and (2) fundraising for humanitarian projects in Lebanon. The most recent fundraising campaign gathered 1,000 EUR for the Lebanese Red Cross in Lebanon.
- **The association Aussies for Lebanon** was created by the Lebanese diaspora in Sydney in response to the Beirut port explosion. They organise events welcoming new Lebanese immigrants to Sydney, with a fundraising element for humanitarian initiatives in Lebanon. It is composed of members already experienced in managing cultural events with the Sydney branch of the World Lebanese Cultural Union.[10] In response to the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, the organisation has organised the design and sale of Lebanon pendants (see picture to the left), which allowed them to raise 100,000 AUD distributed to six humanitarian partners in Lebanon.

[10] A worldwide NGO registered under the UN charter (www.wlculb.org). This is an organisation independent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants. It should be distinguished from the newer WLCU (www.wlcu.world), which appears to be a more recent initiative, potentially created by or in collaboration with the Lebanese government, possibly as part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants' efforts to manage diaspora relations.

Beyond innovative funding strategies to respond to the emergency, informants from recent organisations highlighted their progressive and ongoing professionalisation – with a view to designing more structured projects oriented towards development in the future:

- NABAD was initially an initiative solely based on volunteering, and none of the founding members had previous experience in event management. Yet, they are now considering making the cultural association a fully-fledged professional project.
- Similarly, Pluralités has grown from 20 to 40 members over the last four years. They are now formally registered with a board managing the different events. They report progressively learning to professionalise their systems, notably for online communication and MEAL requirements for their implementing partners in Lebanon. They too highlighted a continuous need for capacity development for their future growth.
- Finally, capitalising on their recent experience, Aussies for Lebanon was planning to implement a development project. Funded by USAID, the project "961.com" aimed to support exports of Lebanese agricultural products to Australia (e.g., powdered houmous, jam and pickles). This would have relied on coaching Lebanese companies and small farmers on how to meet Australian standards through labelling production and processing methods. At the baseline, 75% of potential beneficiaries were not meeting Australian standards. The objective was to build relationships with Lebanese communities in Australia and further distribute products on a wider scale in supermarkets in a second phase. However, USAID funds were cancelled after October 7th 2023. The organisation had to cover costs already incurred and pause the project until new funding is ensured.

Key takeaways

Senior organisations can effectively raise large amounts thanks to their established networks. Meanwhile more recent organisations have displayed innovative solutions to raise funds rapidly and effectively, showcasing potential for scale up.

In the context of the humanitarian crisis resulting from the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, all types of actors consulted effectively engaged in emergency support. This was essentially done by redistributing funds to different actors implementing humanitarian activities in Lebanon.

As younger organisations which emerged as a result of recent crises grow towards more professionalised structures, several hope to engage in longer-term support, similar to senior organisations. Yet, they highlight important capacity-development needs. Some of the engagement models proposed by senior organisations could present avenues for future collaboration among these actors – these are discussed in the following section.

5. MODELS OF ENGAGEMENT

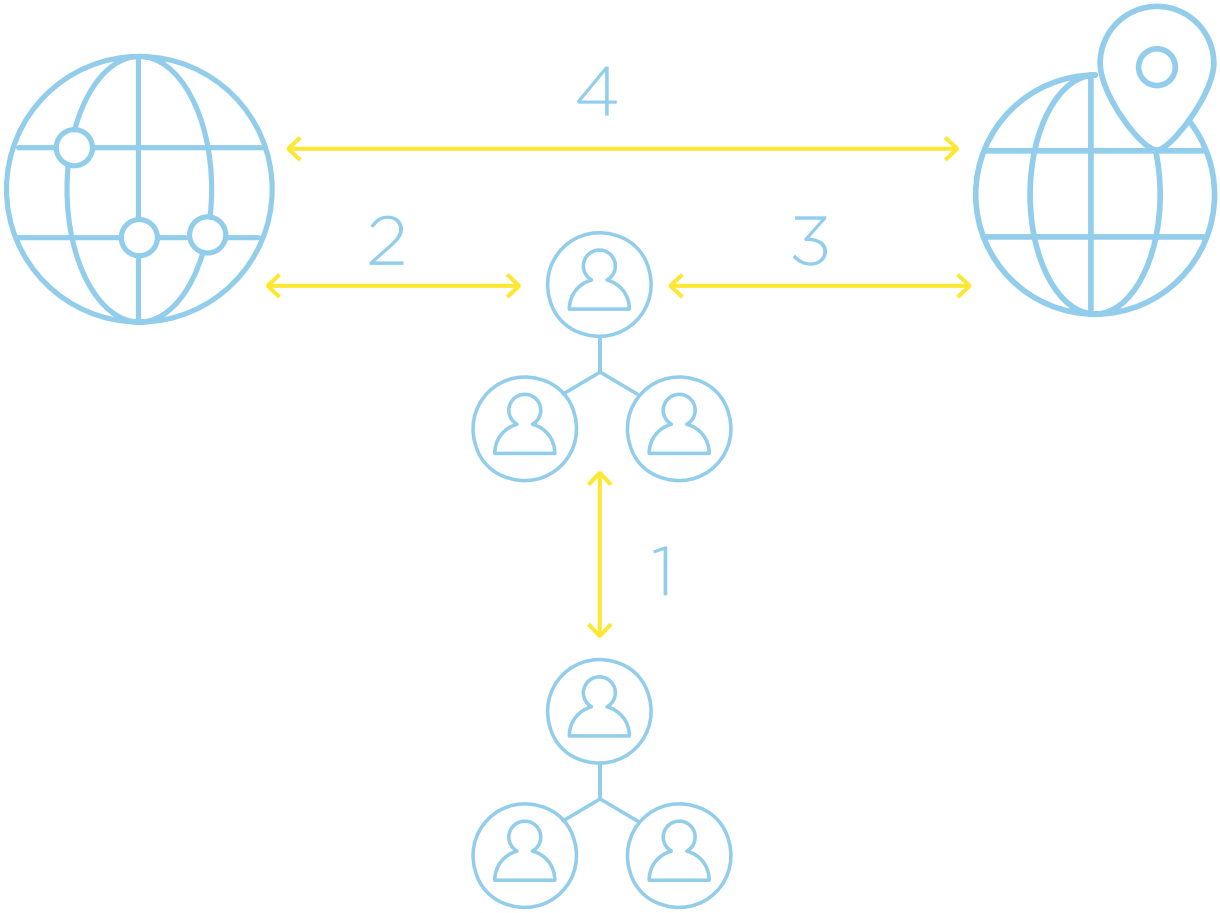
5.1 Considering diaspora engagement in all its dimensions

The cases explored in the present mapping allowed the identification of insights regarding different types of diaspora engagement. Diaspora organisations often collaborate with local Lebanese NGOs or CSOs. However, this is not the only type of interaction. The mapping also helped identify different cases of engagement:

- between diaspora organisations (1);
- between diaspora individuals and diaspora organisations (2);
- between diaspora organisations and local organisations (3); and,
- between diaspora individuals and local organisations (4).

Each of these interactions provide specific opportunities for programming and support further discussed below.

Figure 9: different types of diaspora engagement identified through the case studies



5.2 Between diaspora organisations

Many diaspora organisations reported interacting with other diaspora organisations. These interactions notably focus on (1) extending outreach among the Lebanese diaspora and the wider communities; (2) sharing expertise; or (3) accessing services or providing activities beyond one's mandate:

1 & 2 – Extend outreach to the wider community and share expertise:

NABAD in France collaborates with several organisations to organise events, including Urgence Liban and Colombe Verte. The collaboration with Urgence Liban allowed NABAD to reach a wider network than usual and to raise a higher amount (i.e., 7,500 EUR compared to their average of 2,000 EUR per event). NABAD also relied on Colombe Verte's expertise in engaging with children to organise a family friendly event.

In some instances, this collaboration goes beyond the Lebanese diaspora to the wider Arab community. In Houston, the American Lebanese Cultural Centre (ALCC) partners with a coalition of organisations including the American Lebanese Medical Association (ALMA) and National Arab American Medical Association (NAAMA) to provide relief activities and fundraise in a coordinated manner. In some instances, the Syrian club in Houston is also involved. As such, the ALCC capitalises on the charity tradition of the Arab-American community of Houston to gather funds and to mobilise medical expertise in relief projects (e.g., sending pharmaceuticals) and in development projects (e.g., facilitating scholarships in Houston for Lebanese medical students).

3 – Access to services or activities beyond the mandate of one of the organisations:

A notable limit for some organisations is linked to their status as they are not always registered in their countries of residence as NGOs able to provide humanitarian support. This is the case of the professional network LebNet in North America, which has relied on LIFE in the past to send money abroad for relief activities. The professional network AFPI in France and the Franco Lebanese Chamber of Commerce faced the same issue in the past and decided to jointly create the "Fond de dotation France-Liban" with the same objective of funding humanitarian activities.

5.3 Diaspora organisations to wider diaspora communities

Engaging diaspora individuals is a challenge for diaspora organisations themselves: (1) older structures founded before the 2000s usually struggle to maintain their networks in place. However, (2) even newer organisations tend to struggle to maintain their community's engagement beyond crisis times. (3) To address these challenges, diaspora organisations consulted have developed different engagement strategies (with varying types of events and target populations).

1 – Older structures face difficulties maintaining their networks:

The Associació Catalunya-Líban (ACL) was created in 1982 after the Israeli invasion to provide humanitarian support. Among ACL's eight administrative committee members, the four Lebanese representatives are all first-generation diaspora, meaning they have lived in Lebanon at some point in their lives. This connection to their homeland plays a crucial role in facilitating the association's work, providing cultural and linguistic familiarity, as well as personal insights into Lebanon's needs and challenges. However, the engagement dynamic shifts with the second-generation diaspora. Unlike their parents, they do not join formal organisations, form their own, or align with diaspora networks.

Older Lebanese NGOs consulted (i.e., SESOBEL and AFEL) both have their own diaspora organisations to mobilise funds in key countries under different forms. SESOBEL is an interesting example, as it relies on many forms of community engagement: in the USA, SESOBEL has locally registered as an NGO for fundraising; in Canada, it has a partnership with the Lebanese Canadian Foundation (LCF); in Australia, an informal community group is facilitating sponsorship of children (i.e., to finance their tuition fees); finally in France, an informal group focuses on sending medical supplies due to the geographic proximity and ease of sending materials. However, all of these networks are aging. Most members of these communities called "Les amis de SESOBEL" are passionate volunteers who started their engagement during the civil war. The NGO is struggling to renew its networks.

2 – Newer organisations struggle to mobilise members beyond one-off crisis engagement:

Several organisations reported a donation fatigue among their members. Even the most active organisations with various communities leading ongoing projects, such as LebNet, shared this challenge during the KII:

"There is a real donation fatigue, we would rather focus on the expertise of our volunteers and synergies with other organisations than plan for another fundraising".

3 – Positive engagement strategies seem to work better than one-off fundraising. These can serve to mobilise beyond the first generation of Lebanese diaspora:

For instance, the ALCC based in Houston organises a large scale cultural festival once a year, promoting Lebanese and Levantine cultures. This replaces one-off fundraising in case of a crisis. The event page is followed by several thousand people online. Each year, it gathers up to 5,000 participants over a weekend. The organisation thus engages the Arab community and the overall Texan community of Houston around a positive event. They can subsequently engage with them again to fundraise for a project. Even in that case, the ALCC recognises that donor fatigue is a challenge. They have recently received support from a wealth manager to create an endowment fund. The objective of this fund is to generate sustainable revenues every year to finance their scholarships programme, relying on returns on interest. With this system, the association will no longer rely only on yearly outreach to regular donors but instead on revenues from placements through the fund.

Similarly, the organisation Aussies for Lebanon found it much easier to raise money with the sales of their pendants. According to the director, selling a unique piece of jewellery was a positive engagement strategy, which meant they could avoid communicating difficult messages about the conflict. With this approach, Aussies for Lebanon aim to engage beyond the first generation of diaspora. Their example highlights the fact that diaspora organisations can mobilise later generations as well.

"First generation diaspora do not engage with our organisation. Oftentimes, they still have a direct connection to the country: a relative to whom they send remittances, a local church to which they donate. Our primary target for engagement here in Australia is more the second and third generations of Lebanese emigrants. Our association is one of the few links they keep with their country of heritage."

Companies are the biggest donors:

In many cases, large donations and large operations are enabled through engagement with companies rather than individuals. Company engagement is usually reported in two ways: (1) matching grants of employee contributions and (2) direct donations. Cases of matching grants were reported in a few instances, where Lebanese employees from these companies mobilise and engage their companies in the process. The examples of Bloomberg and Cisco were mentioned by several key informants. As such, Lebanese employees actively use their companies Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies to increase support for Lebanon. Direct donations from companies owned by Lebanese diaspora were the largest contributions. For instance, donations from Lebanese-owned businesses represents 80% of AFPI's donation fund:

"Of our budget of two to three million Euros each year, a dozen of companies will represent 80% of the fund."

5.4 Diaspora organisations to local organisations

Managing the relationship with local Lebanese organisations is a key concern for many of the interviewed diaspora organisations. (1) When selecting implementing partners, the question of trust to ensure an appropriate and apolitical use of funds is a challenge for diaspora organisations. Most of them still rely on personal connections and recommendations. (2) Beyond partner selection, diaspora organisations also report challenges in grants management and MEAL requirements in their interactions with local partners.

1 – The identification of local partners is a lengthy process based on personal connections and trusted networks:

Diaspora organisations often have clear selection criteria to select partners. However, they struggle to identify organisations they perceive as trustworthy to use the funds. Selection processes are usually long. Aussies for Lebanon notably highlighted this challenge:

> "It took us six months to identify our seven implementing partners."

Besides length, the final selection of an implementing partner often relies on personal connections, which are perceived as a guarantee of trustworthiness. The case of ALCC during the conflict illustrates well the importance of personal connections. ALCC coordinated with NAAMA to identify avenues for medical support. During their coordination meeting, different implementing partners were selected and the organisations eventually operated separately. NAAMA works with an organisation called HOPE, conducting missions to Lebanon every year. They requested medical supplies and knew one individual at the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), who they trusted to receive them. As for ALCC, they had experience with the Lebanese Red Cross, which needed cash to support its operations. Two channels were developed in parallel, one managed by NAAMA to deliver pharmaceuticals, and another with ALCC to send funds to the LRC.

> "We did not have the trust for any other partner. LRC was our way to make sure it was non-political and non-religious."

2 – Grants management and MEAL requirements are also challenging for recently created diaspora organisations:

New diaspora organisations often report their progressive learning of reporting requirements and inexperience in grants management. They reported needs for capacity development to apply for small grants and to develop appropriate MEAL and compliance systems with implementing partners. Below testimonies from Pluralités and AFP illustrate these needs:

"We lack the knowledge to properly apply to grants, including MEAL training, financing plan, business plan."

"During the first projects with our implementing partners, we were not really happy with their reporting. We had to further detail our expectations for the second phase, and we hope the 2025 projects will be more satisfying."

5.5 Diaspora individuals to local organisations

1. Local organisations usually do not have a structured approach to connecting with the diaspora.
2. Consequently, interactions are often limited to personal connections and one-off mobilisation during a specific crisis.
3. Nevertheless, there are examples of engagement strategies that could be supported or replicated.

1 – Interactions between diaspora individuals and local CSOs or NGOs are not structured:

This was confirmed during the KII with the Coordinator of the Lebanon Humanitarian and Development NGO Forum (LHDF), which represents a group of local NGOs working on the LRP:

"There is no such thing as donations to NGOs. In general NGOs rely on project based earmarked funding. Not personal donations. There is a distinction to be done between charity and NGOs following earmarked funding."

This illustrates a lack of awareness around diaspora potential for funding support. In reality, most interviewed Lebanese organisations actually rely on donations from the diaspora. However, they all acknowledge a lack of capacity and know-how to better communicate with the diaspora and increase volumes of donations. This was confirmed by several organisations such as the NGO Shareq:

"As development manager, I have always advocated internally to develop our donation base from the diaspora. However, we have not figured how to do it yet."

The limits to such an engagement are related to financial and human capacities, as illustrated in the case of the NGO Beit El Baraka:

"We would like to develop an outreach program to the diaspora. As of now, we have one intern working on developing a strategy."

2 – As a result, present engagement of individuals of the diaspora to support local NGOs is generally limited to two types:

(1) Personal connections and family links; and (2) specific mobilisation for a crisis like the Beirut port explosion. This has two consequences on diaspora funding: it remains limited in volume, and it is not sustainable, as highlighted again by examples given by Beit El Baraka:

"My nephew did a sale in Canada and sent us 5,000 USD."

"During the war people were reaching out left and right. When we are in trouble people come out. Then when the war is over, people forget about us while most of the money is needed after."

3 – Nevertheless, local organisations do report some good practices which could be supported or capitalised on:

Some NGOs have developed sponsorship systems to mobilise the diaspora. SESOBEL promotes a sponsorship system in Australia to finance the tuition fees of vulnerable children. The NGO Jouzour, specialised in agroforestry and reforestation, has launched the initiative "Adopt a Cedar" to finance its reforestation activities. Specific communications were developed for the diaspora under a strategy called "Your Cedar, Your Identity". An average of 300 to 400 cedars are financed by diaspora individuals each year. Similarly to experiences of diaspora organisations, Lebanese-owned companies are giving more than individual donations with an average of 1,000 trees financed each year by private companies.

In some cases, Lebanese NGOs establish their own structure in key countries to facilitate diaspora engagement. This allows them to engage the Lebanese diaspora and more diverse communities. This is particularly valid in countries where NGOs need to be registered to ensure that individual donors can benefit from tax exemptions. For example, Beit El Baraka, a Lebanese NGO, is registered in the US to facilitate donations and tax exemptions for donors.

Another point mentioned by local CSOs is the importance of positive engagement models. Similarly to diaspora organisations, they report it is easier to mobilise diaspora individuals through positive engagement models. The NGO Shareq is aiming at developing communication material around the independence of people with disabilities rather than calling for charity. Another noteworthy experience is the model of the CSO Ahla Fawda in Beirut.

They are promoting in Hamra a model of circular economy, providing food and clothes to vulnerable families with a "give and receive programme," education of children from neighbouring schools, waste management, recycling and repurposing of plastic products, as well as urban development activities (such as the construction of city gardens to regenerate natural space in urban areas). With this positive model of circular economy in an iconic neighbourhood of the city, the diaspora has increasingly reached out to the institution for donations since the creation of the NGO in 2013. This includes donations from groups of individuals by word of mouth, but also from companies such as CISCO, CMA-CGM, Medco; and Alfanar.

"I think we are efficient in terms of organic outreach because our model is specific. It involves the community at all levels: art and culture; environment; urban improvements; schools and workshops. We are not about delivery services but about animating the communities around common positive goals."

6. KEY FINDINGS

With the increase in intensity of the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, the diaspora actively contributed to emergency support. This was done mostly through fundraising and in-kind donations (e.g. food or medical supplies) by mobilising and redistributing funds in their countries of residence to local organisations in Lebanon. They constitute key actors who effectively complement funding from institutional donors, notably through donations to the dense ecosystem of Lebanese CSOs which supported IDPs during the crisis.

A notable shift can be observed between diaspora organisations formed prior to 2019 and those that have been established since. Recent organisations are driven by the need to address unfolding crises such as the 2019 economic crisis, Covid-19, Beirut port explosion, and now the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel. Pre-2019 organisations finance and, sometimes, implement projects ranging from emergency to economic development.

Through established structures and long-term networks of members, they can gather and manage large amounts of funding. On the contrary, post-2019 diaspora organisations often have an initial and primary focus on emergency response, although a significant number are developing more professional capacities with the goal of delivering long-term support.

In this transition, they face significant capacity gaps, including regarding organisational capacity in general as well as specific concerns related to reporting and grants management. They therefore could benefit from international humanitarian actors' support to develop as more structured organisations. They could also capitalise on older organisations' experiences by:

- relying on some services these already offer (e.g., money transfers, logistical support); and
- exploring successful models from more established organisations to mobilise diaspora communities (e.g., yearly events, cultural initiatives, sponsorship models) and to embed sustainable financial strategies.

This evolution towards more structured operations in newer organisations highlights the growing need for enhanced coordination with more established diaspora organisations to avoid duplication and enhance synergies between all actors. Indeed, some initiatives have demonstrated the potential for higher impact when organisations join forces. This includes several organisations creating an NGO together to redistribute funds to local organisations or joining their networks for increasing the reach of cultural and fundraising events. However, collaboration is not systematic, either due to limited interest from organisations to partner with others or to limited awareness of opportunities. It would therefore be relevant to raise awareness on the potential for these organisations to join forces, for instance by showcasing success stories and opportunities for higher impact.

The call for enhanced cooperation among diaspora organisations extends to their vital partnerships with Lebanese CSOs on the ground. While these collaborations often exist, they tend to be confined to personal connections, as diaspora organisations frequently face difficulties in identifying reliable partners abroad. Similarly, many local CSOs in Lebanon demonstrate a limited awareness of the potential for collaboration with diaspora organisations, further highlighting a broader challenge in fostering synergistic partnerships within and beyond the diaspora. A key avenue for support to encourage further engagement and funding from diaspora organisations would therefore be to raise awareness on opportunities and facilitate coordination. The following section provides an overview of key recommendations to this end.


TEAM
ALPHA
23
EVERSINCE

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

To Diaspora Organisations

Replicate positive engagement models: Design initiatives that go beyond fundraising to reinforce identity, belonging, and solidarity with Lebanon. Cultural events, heritage-based campaigns, and Lebanon-focused storytelling have shown strong potential to re-engage communities, especially in periods of donor fatigue.

Expand targets beyond first generation diaspora: Develop programming that connects with second and third generation Lebanese abroad, many of whom feel distant from traditional community structures. Engagement through education, the arts, digital platforms, and innovation can resonate more deeply with younger generations.

Target companies: Focus outreach on Lebanese-owned businesses and companies with significant Lebanese staff. These actors are well positioned to direct corporate social responsibility funds toward diaspora initiatives and can serve as multipliers when individual giving slows.

Strengthen visibility and reporting practices: Standardise the documentation of activities, financial flows, and impact. Clear reporting and communications help build trust with donors, partners, and coordination mechanisms, while also positioning diaspora organisations as credible humanitarian actors.

To Lebanon-based CSOs

Reach out to existing initiatives fostering diaspora engagement: Proactively connect with platforms and networks that facilitate engagement with the Lebanese diaspora. These structures can offer visibility, access to resources, and the trust-based pathways needed to develop sustainable partnerships beyond personal or ad hoc connections.

To International Humanitarian Actors and Donors

Develop specific funding mechanisms involving the diaspora: Establish funding streams that reflect the operational models of Lebanese diaspora organisations. These mechanisms should reduce administrative barriers, offer flexible or core support, and enable equitable collaboration with local actors in Lebanon.

Proactively engage diaspora in coordination platforms: Ensure Lebanese diaspora organisations have a consistent role within national and international coordination structures. Participation should not be limited to crisis moments, but integrated into preparedness, response, and recovery processes.

Actively facilitate long-term partnerships: Support structured, sustained collaboration between diaspora organisations and Lebanese CSOs. This includes co-creation of proposals, formal agreements, and opportunities for mutual learning, especially in sectors where diaspora actors offer technical expertise or external networks.

To Non-Governmental Organizations

Provide capacity development to diaspora organisations: Offer tailored support to help diaspora organisations strengthen their internal systems, particularly around grant management, compliance, financial accountability, and strategic planning. This is critical for organisations aiming to scale or engage with institutional donors.

Support specific networking opportunities between diaspora organisations: Enable peer-to-peer connections between Lebanese diaspora organisations across countries and sectors. Targeted networking support is especially valuable in contexts where organisational ecosystems are still emerging or fragmented.

Supporting diaspora organisations and Lebanese CSOs in their outreach and engagement strategies for funding: Many diaspora and local organisations face challenges in mobilising support beyond immediate personal networks or moments of crisis. Targeted support is needed to design long-term outreach strategies that appeal to individuals and companies across the diaspora. This includes helping organisations develop clear messaging, identify effective engagement models, and build on approaches that have already proven successful.

Develop a trusted label for Lebanese CSOs to engage with the diaspora: Trust remains a significant barrier for diaspora organisations seeking to expand their partnerships with local actors. Introducing a recognised certification system for Lebanese CSOs could help address concerns around transparency, accountability, and neutrality. A label grounded in clear principles and operational standards would serve as a practical tool to facilitate engagement. Building such a system could draw on existing capacity-building efforts and be developed in collaboration with national and international stakeholders already active in the space.


CANADLAN RANCES
NEW YORK
MONOTONE

ANNEX I: INTERVIEWED ACTORS

Lebanese CSOs
Jouzour Loubnan
Association du Foyer de l'Enfant Libanais (AFEL)
Ahla Fawda
ShareQ
SESOBEL
Beit El Baraka
The Lebanon Humanitarian and Development NGOs Forum (LHDF)
Stouh Beirut

Diaspora organisations
The American Lebanese Community Council (ALCC)
Aussies for Lebanon – Key Informant member of two additional diaspora organisations (World Lebanese Cultural Union (WLCU) – Sidney Branch & Lebanese Business Council)
Pluralités
Social and Economic Action for Lebanon (SEAL)
NABAD Fr
The Centre for Lebanese Studies (CLS)
Association Franco-Libanaise des Professionnels de l'Informatique (AFPI) & Cedars Tech
The Compagnie maritime d'affrètement - Compagnie générale maritime (CMA-CGM) Foundation
Associació Catalunya-Líban

DEMAC DIASPORA EMERGENCY ACTION & COORDINATION

DEMAC is a global initiative of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) aiming at enhancing mutual knowledge and coordination, communication and coherence between diaspora humanitarian actors and the institutional humanitarian system.

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H2H Network
Humanitarian
Action Support