



Statement of Solidarity and Call to Support Young Children and Their Families in Beirut

The massive explosion in Beirut, Lebanon on August 4, 2020 devastated lives and livelihoods, with 220 people killed, including three children; more than 6,000 injured, including 1,000 children; and more than 300,000 people, including 100,000 children, whose homes were damaged or destroyed.¹ It has left many families in need of emergency assistance and long term support as they rebuild and recover from this shock.

The recent explosion has exacerbated an already fragile situation in a country struggling for decades with recovery from civil war, economic crisis, an influx of refugees, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the devastation, more than 50 percent of Lebanon's population was living below the poverty line; 40 percent were unemployed; the Lebanese currency had lost more than 80 percent of its value; and prices for essential food items had increased by 169 percent.

According to Save the Children, "over half a million children in greater Beirut were already struggling to survive or were going hungry."² A World Food Programme survey on the combined impact of Lebanon's economic and COVID-19 crises indicates that 50 percent of respondents reported not having enough food to eat before the explosion.³ A majority of the people now face imminent hunger and malnutrition due to the loss of grain stores and disruptions in imports as a result of the explosion. Women and young children face disproportionate risks during times of food insecurity.

We extend our condolences to the families who have lost loved ones, wish a speedy recovery to the injured, and express our gratitude to the dedicated frontline health and humanitarian workers delivering relief to the injured and displaced, and helping to rebuild Beirut.

We are concerned about the short and long-term impacts of this catastrophic event on the well-being and development of young children and their parents/caregivers, and the longer-term risks of disruption to nurturing care, which was already limited for many.

1 UNICEF: <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/beirut-port-explosions>

2 Save the Children: <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/more-half-million-children-beirut-are-struggling-survive>

3 World Food Programme: <https://insight.wfp.org/world-food-programme-to-scale-up-in-lebanon-as-blast-destroys-beiruts-port-7270471d1f87>

We urge the international community (individuals and organizations) to offer emergency support. Well-managed humanitarian efforts have shown that supporting young children and their families during crises can provide a buffer against these risks leading to greater survival rates and better development outcomes, which in turn contribute to economic recovery, improved social cohesion, and peace-building efforts.

As a global movement, the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN), together with other networks and partners, stands in solidarity with our partners at the Arab Network for Early Childhood Development (ANECD). ANECD is a network of governmental institutions, civil society bodies, academics and specialists from different Arab countries, and regional and international networks and institutions in the field of early childhood care and development. It seeks to ensure that all children in Arab countries and societies enjoy their rights, happiness and well-being in an enriching environment of freedom, social justice and equity. ANECD is based in Beirut and has been providing ongoing support to the most vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugee children.

In the aftermath of the blast, ANECD conducted a rapid assessment of the urgent and long-term needs of the communities they work with and developed a 12-month action plan to provide direct humanitarian relief (health and nutrition kits, mental health direct services and referrals) and long-term early childhood development interventions (early learning digital resources, online support and mentoring for parents and caregivers, training and capacity building).

As partners and the international community make their own assessments, we stand in support of ANECD as they expand and adapt existing platforms and launch new programs and strengthen referral/support services to prevent long-term harm to young children's development. In the spirit of global solidarity, we count on partners and the international community to support coordinated efforts for children and their families affected by this tragedy.

International partners have launched a campaign to raise funds for supporting ANECD's relief efforts in Beirut, working with the most affected Lebanese and refugee young children and their families. We urge you to contribute at [GoFundMe](#) for ANECD⁴.

For more information, please contact Dr. Ghassan Issa, General Coordinator, ANECD at arcgi@mawared.org.

4 ECPC Beirut Solidarity Statement: <https://ecdpeace.org/work-content/ecpc-beirut-solidarity-statement>

This Statement of Solidarity was developed collaboratively by the following ECDAN partners:

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Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN)
Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood Development (ARNEC)
ChildFund International
Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC)
International Step by Step Association (ISSA)
NYU Global TIES for Children Open Society Foundations (OSF)
Save the Children

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