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Evaluation of a cluster of projects responding to the Beirut port explosion

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Editorial

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Following the devastating explosion at the port of Beirut on August 4, 2020, France's response was immediate and strong. The *Agence française de développement* (AFD) played a significant role in this, providing an unprecedented operational response in terms of scale and speed (11 grants in 5 months). In line with the commitments of the French President, the goal was to demonstrate France's solidarity with the Lebanese people. This response also confirmed AFD's commitment alongside its partners during crises, giving them the means for a resolute response. The cross-cutting evaluation of these projects provides valuable lessons for the Agency's work in crisis situations, which is one of the four pillars of France's development policy.

In Lebanon, a resolute AFD action in response to crises

If the evaluation concludes that the overall response of the AFD was effective, it is primarily because the AFD had already integrated the importance of working on the resilience to the crises into its strategy and project portfolio in Lebanon over the past several years, giving it the leverage for a reactive response. Since 2018, thanks to the Minka Peace and Resilience instrument, the AFD has focused its funding in Lebanon on crisis preparedness, resilience, and response (over €250 million granted to Lebanon). As a result, more than 1.7 million people (including 59 % women, and 51 % host communities and 49 % refugees) benefited from projects aimed at improving living conditions, resilience to crises and conflicts, and social cohesion.

The evaluation highlighted two essential dimensions for AFD's work in crisis context. The first is the nature of the projects: in areas vulnerable to crises and conflicts, AFD's role, as a long-term partner, is to fund local actors' projects that aim to mitigate the factors of crises or conflicts and prepare and support institutions and populations to address these crises.

The second dimension relates to the adaptation of the implementing arrangements and modalities. To support the resilience of the populations and its partners to these shocks, it is crucial for the AFD to foresee more flexible operations that allow it to adapt to the volatility of the context and reallocate funds to respond to the new demands and needs.

The evaluation also refined AFD's added value in these contexts, as part of a coordinated French response, in complementarity with the emergency funding from the Crisis and Support Center (CDCS) of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE). This added value lies in AFD's ability to provide solutions both on the short and long term, as well as technical support to local actors.

The many levers of action of AFD to respond to crises, within its development mandate

Although the role of the AFD is distinct from that of the CDCS, the Agency still contributes to the resilience of populations and institutions by intervening before, during, and after crises. The evaluation highlighted all the levers available to the AFD in crisis contexts, enabling it to stay aligned with its development donor mandate.

The first lever on which the AFD must rely in its crisis response is its portfolio of ongoing projects. In these specific contexts, the AFD must be able to count on implementing partners capable of adapting to meet new needs that emerge during a crisis, and who work on crises and conflicts preparedness and resilience. The evaluation emphasized the importance for the AFD to prioritize the adaptation of the ongoing portfolio to meet the demands and needs of its partners and populations within the time constraints.

Regarding new financing, the evaluation also allowed the AFD to refine the relevance and limits of the various strategies available to it, in order to find a balance between diversifying partners and focusing the response on fewer projects with larger amounts. In this regard, it is important to highlight that the added value of a development donor like the AFD during crises is to maintain the long-term development trajectory while ensuring that projects can respond to new emerging needs, if necessary, relying on the quality of its partners. It is also about ensuring continuity in the partnership, particularly with local actors and public institutions.

An evolution of AFD's ways of working to strengthen the relevance of its action in crisis contexts

This evaluation is part of AFD's ongoing efforts to improve the relevance of its work in crisis and conflict contexts. The publication of this Ex Post report comes at a time of significant volatility in the Middle East. The operational lessons learned since the Beirut port explosion have enabled the AFD to better size its response to the conflict that affected the country at the end of 2024. The AFD demonstrated operational flexibility in its financing, enabling it to effectively respond to the demands of its partners. The Agency observed the good capacity of its portfolio to adapt to the volatility of the context, allowing for the reallocation of nearly €3.5 million to finance new activities through most of the ongoing projects. For example, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Rafic Hariri Hospital developed an emergency preparedness plan, enabling the institution to become the reference hospital for treating the wounded during the conflict. In the framework of the primary healthcare and mental health projects funded by the AFD, partners were able to adapt their activities (mobile clinics, rehabilitation, psychosocial support) temporarily, in response to the needs of the many internally displaced persons.

This issue is all the more important given France's engagement in various crises, reaffirmed within the framework of the Presidential Council for International Partnerships (CPPI).

While France's commitment to peace in various conflicts (Middle East, Ukraine, etc.) is central to its diplomacy, the President reaffirmed in April 2025 that solidarity in the contexts of crisis is one of the main priorities of France's international partnership policy. The role of the AFD in crisis and conflict preparedness and response is thus reaffirmed alongside emergency actors.

Executive summary

As part of its support in Lebanon, the AFD financed a multisectoral ambitious response in the immediate aftermath of the Beirut port explosion to support the city's recovery. This included 11 projects with activities in health, food security, education and vocational training, economic resilience and rehabilitation of neighbourhoods. This cluster of projects was subject to an evaluation aiming at:

- providing an assessment of the relevance, coherence and efficiency of the AFD's response and its added value;
- developing strategic and operational recommendations for future crisis response; and,
- understanding the perception and visibility of the AFD and of France as a donor.

Findings from the evaluation of this cluster of 11 projects show that the **AFD's response aligned with existing strategies and needs**. Through an accelerated process for selection and disbursement, the AFD was able to fund a rapid response in line with its existing frameworks. Ultimately, activities were in the continuity of existing projects and therefore aligned with the AFD's general strategy and added value. The majority of projects were either top-ups or reallocations of existing projects (8 out of 11 projects).

Several **projects suffered delays in their implementation** related to external factors (Covid-19 pandemic, economic crisis and shortages, and political instability), as well as internal ones (insufficient needs and risk assessments, multiplication of activities in a single project, and demanding AFD compliance rules at the time). Yet, most project operators demonstrated adaptability and flexibility in the face of these challenges in order to ensure activities could be delivered as timely as possible. The implementation highlighted key factors where the AFD demonstrated added value including:

- the technical involvement of the AFD to accompany implementing partners beyond emergency towards development objectives;

- the efficiency of financing top-ups of existing projects to facilitate the quick start of activities and their alignment with development objectives;
- the relevance of progressive interventions including a recovery component followed by a longer-term component aiming at development outcomes.

The AFD intervention, which was fundamental to the overall French response, was aligned with the rest of Team France response. In light of the relevance of progressive approaches, the evaluation shows that it would be beneficial to explore potential for coordinated processes between actors able to act immediately in an emergency (i.e. with the CDCS) and the AFD in order to allow for a continuum between emergency and recovery from the outset of a crisis.^[1]

Objectives were achieved with varying sustainability. In the health sector, projects targeted both structural rehabilitation and system strengthening, ultimately achieving sustainable results in terms of access and quality of care. In the education and vocational training, projects focused on addressing short-term challenges and thus did not have long term effects on the critical schools' situations. Results of economic resilience projects highlighted the relevance of long-term support to companies. Finally, projects focusing on an emergency response to population affected by the blast and longer-term rehabilitation of neighbourhoods highlighted the relevance of partnering with operators able to start activities immediately and the importance of participatory approaches with local actors to achieve sustainable results.

Project achievements sustained the visibility of the AFD and of France as a donor in some sectors, in particular health. Overall,

[1] Please note that the report distinguishes between three categories of aid:

- Humanitarian aid, providing immediate relief during emergencies,
- Recovery aid, supporting stabilisation and rebuilding efforts post-crisis,
- Development aid, focusing on long-term improvements in economic, social, and political conditions.

the positioning between emergency and development is at the heart of perceptions on the legitimacy of AFD-funded interventions.

The AFD's response to the blast was most impactful, and therefore visible, when acting within its areas of added value rather than focusing solely on emergency relief.

In future crisis response, learning from the response to the blast, the evaluation suggests that the AFD should move away from the short-term and immediate political response to focus on building responses that link emergency to early recovery and development in order to increase its visibility among beneficiary population.

Based on the evaluation's findings, two types of recommendations are presented in this report (see page 26):

- Recommendations to the AFD at critical stages of a crisis response: in anticipation of a crisis, during partner and project selection, as well as during and after implementation;
- Recommendations to project operations at the following stages: during project selection, when starting the project, as well as during and after implementation.

Study synthesis

The AFD Group is a key stakeholder in the Lebanese landscape through the historical relationship between France and Lebanon. Over the years, the AFD has established itself as a recognised partner for Lebanon's institutional actors and civil society as well as international donors. Its action aims to reduce vulnerabilities and assist the country towards a more balanced and sustainable development path in a context of regional crisis.

The country has faced multiple shocks and still does. In addition to the socioeconomic and financial crisis, whose first effects were felt back in 2019, the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis and of the explosion in the Port of Beirut on August 4th 2020 are still palpable against a backdrop of political deadlock and tensions. This context requires an approach integrating short-term emergency issues while planning for the future.

As part of its support, the AFD financed a multisectoral ambitious response in the immediate aftermath of the port Blast to support the city's recovery. A total of 11 projects were financed including activities in various sectors: health, food security, education and vocational training, economic resilience and rehabilitation of neighbourhoods. One year after the blast, it was estimated that close to 36,000 individuals were supported with these different projects.^[2]

This report summarises the findings from the **Evaluation of a cluster of projects responding to the Beirut port explosion**, conducted by ITAR Consultants for the AFD. Through the individual evaluation of six projects, a documentary analysis of five additional projects, and an in-depth cross-sectional analysis of these eleven projects, this study aimed to:

- Evaluate the response to the blast according to evaluation criteria of the Organisation for

Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Assistance Committee (DAC);

- Develop strategic and operational recommendations to inform crisis response strategies, both in the Lebanese context and in general;
- Understand the perception and visibility of the AFD and of France as a donor in this context.

The sample of six projects evaluated included:^[3]

- A 1.3 million Euros top-up on an existing Health project, **Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing of People living in Lebanon**, operated by Médecins du Monde (MdM) in partnership with local organisations AMEL and SKOUN, and in collaboration with local organisations ABAAD, Embrace and International Humanity and Inclusion (HI);
- A 2 million Euros new Health project, **Rehabilitation of damages to Karantina Hospital caused by Beirut Port explosion**, operated by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF);
- A 1.5 million Euros top-up on an existing project, **Employability training for vulnerable people**, operated by European Institute for Cooperation and Development (IECD) with its local partner *Semeurs d'Avenir*;
- A 1 million Euros new Economic recovery project, **Beirut rapid Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) Response**, operated by Mercy Corp;
- A top-up of 2 million Euros on an existing Education project, **Supporting the rehabilitation of schools affected by the Beirut Port explosion**, operated by Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC);
- A 1.5 million Euros new Housing rehabilitation project, **Emergency Response to Beirut Port Explosion**, operated by NRC.

A complete report was submitted to the AFD along with six individual project reports summarising the individual project evaluations. This synthesis summarises key findings and recommendations outlined in the full report. Annexes to this synthesis include: a

[2] "Explosion du port de Beyrouth, La réponse de l'AFD en chiffres" : <https://www.afd.fr/fr/actualites/explosions-beyrouth-un-an-apres-soutien-afd>

[3] Annex 1 presents further detail on the six projects individually evaluated and on the five other projects subject to a documentary review.

list of projects reviewed (Annex 1), a summary of the methodology adopted (Annex 2), and an overview of how these projects fit into the strategy of the Minka Fund, the main funding window for the AFD in Lebanon (Annex 3).

The methodology for this evaluation was based on the following activities:

- A preliminary review of the documentation shared by the AFD teams and project operators;
- 13 scoping interviews with AFD's teams, both at headquarters in Paris and at AFD Beirut office;
- Data collection in Lebanon; for each project data collection included a mixed approach of quantitative and qualitative data collection involving:
 - **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**: with beneficiaries, sector coordinators from the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan and ministry points of contact, as well as project staff;
 - **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with beneficiaries**: mobilising generally six to nine beneficiaries to jointly discuss observed outcomes of the project and their sustainability;
 - **Large-scale surveys with beneficiaries**: aiming for a confidence level of 95 % and a margin of error of 5 % in answers. Two surveys were conducted with companies supported by Mercy Corps and households provided with accommodations rehabilitation by NRC;
 - **Smaller-scale perception survey**: non representative quick surveys with beneficiaries, including with staff of the Karantina hospital (renovated by UNICEF) and pupils from schools which benefitted from rehabilitation work by NRC;
 - **Field visits**: to assess rehabilitations in schools and existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in the Karantina hospital.
- Additionally, up to 24 KIIs with the main actors in charge of coordination and AFD's main partners were targeted, including Ministries, Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) and the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF), municipalities, members of Team France, other donors and local actors active in the coordination of the blast response.

1. A response aligned with existing strategies and needs with lessons for future crises

1.1 Context and nature of the AFD response to the blast

On August 4th 2020, Beirut experienced a devastating double explosion at its main port, caused by poorly stored ammonium nitrate. This resulted in over 200 deaths, over 6,000 injured, and extensive destruction across entire districts, leaving thousands homeless.

The Beirut Port Explosion resulted in an emergency situation where the French response was immediately driven by the French president himself who visited Beirut within 48 hours of the explosion and pledged funds to support recovery. The AFD quickly stepped up to respond to this crisis and proposed a response plan on the day following the explosion. The plan aimed to contribute to the reconstruction or rehabilitation of damaged homes, businesses and institutions and to provide support to vulnerable people to help them overcome the economic, humanitarian and psychosocial consequences of the disaster.

11 projects^[4] were assigned **within four to five months following the blast**, including activities related to health, food security, education and vocational training, economic resilience and rehabilitation of neighbourhoods. This was a drastic achievement for AFD's Beirut office given (1) the scope of projects including a nexus of development, recovery, and sometimes emergency activities, and (2) processes for project appraisal typically taking between

seven to eleven months. Among awarded projects, eight were top-ups of existing projects or project reallocations, and three were new projects designed specifically for the blast response. They engaged major international NGOs, United Nations Agencies, as well as local organisations active on the ground since the day of the explosion.

1.2 The accelerated selection process allowed for a fast response in line with existing AFD frameworks

In order to offer a rapid response and respond to political demands, the initial selection of projects was carried out within 48 hours of the explosion. This was done by prioritising projects that were already operational or about to be awarded and partnering with operators who could engage operations on the ground quickly and had sectoral expertise. Selected partners were mostly usual AFD partners with expertise in both development and emergency response issues.

The accelerated selection process allowed for responsiveness in the AFD response with a rapid disbursement in comparison to AFD standards. This does not mean that it systematically led to the implementation of emergency projects proposing humanitarian aid, which do not fall under the original mandate of the AFD.^[5] In fact, most projects took place after the emergency, with an accelerated selection process compared to usual AFD timelines. In most contexts, an emergency response focuses on covering lifesaving and most urgent needs on the first days after the shock, lasting up to three months after. While two projects of the cluster effectively delivered emergency activities within this timeframe, most projects proposed

[5] The report distinguishes between three categories of aid:

- Humanitarian aid, focusing on immediate relief during emergencies (e.g. food, water, shelter, and medical assistance to save lives and alleviate suffering).
- Recovery aid, supporting stabilisation and rebuilding efforts post-crisis to help communities regain self-sufficiency and normalcy (e.g. restoring infrastructure, healthcare, education, and housing).
- Development aid, focusing on long-term improvements in economic, social, and political conditions through investments in infrastructure, capacity building, and institutional reforms.

[4] Project details can be found in Annex 1.

a rapid response later in time, mostly oriented towards the recovery and reconstruction of affected communities.

Ultimately, activities were in the continuity of existing projects and therefore aligned with the AFD's general strategy and added value, as an international donor with development objectives. The majority of projects were either top-ups or reallocations of existing projects (8 out of 11 projects). Only three projects were new projects specifically designed in response to the blast. In most cases, the activities already implemented before the explosion met the needs identified to respond to the blast. For instance, health activities were often identical to those of the initial project but resized in order to meet needs resulting from the explosion. All projects within the blast response cluster were actually aligned with the strategy of the Minka Fund, which already used to fund a majority of the projects.^[6]

[6] The Minka Fund is the AFD's funding instruments dedicated to peace building and violent conflict prevention in the Middle East. See the Minka Middle East platform (2024), accessible at: <https://minka-moyen-orient.afd.fr>
Also note that an overview of how each project fits within the Minka theory of change is available in annex 3 of this synthesis.

Points of attention resulting from this accelerated process

- Focusing on long-term approaches.** In the emergency situation resulting from the blast, partners often proposed a mix of emergency, recovery and development activities. As a result, the concept notes often showed a mismatch between short-term activities and long-term objectives. Yet, implementing partners all agreed that setting longer-term objectives in top-ups would have added to the relevance of projects. Considering the AFD's usual mandate as a development actor, funding both early recovery and longer-term interventions (rather than emergency) is logical and relevant. This could be part of a more clearly defined positioning in a future crisis to steer the nature of activities proposed by partners towards longer term approaches.
- Attention to efficiency loss and workload resulting from the multiplication of projects.** To facilitate the rapid disbursement of funds to partners able to start activities relatively fast, the majority of projects funded through the blast response have budgets between one and two million Euros. This is relatively low for the AFD and resulted from a conscious choice to diversify projects and associated implementation risks in an emergency context. However, it is important to carefully assess the resources

Table 1 – Summary of interventions aligned with original interventions and subject to a resizing of their budget.

Project	Activities in line with the original project	New set of activities	Change of locations	Resize
01_CLB1098_MDM_MHPSS (top-up)				
02_CLB1141_UNICEF_Hospital Karantina				
03_CLB1079_IECD_Vocational training (top-up)				
04_CLB1133_Mercy Corps_Livelihoods				
05_CLB1135_NRC_Education (top-up)				
06_CLB1134_NRC_Rehabilitation				
07_CLB1094_Expertise France_Livelihoods (top-up)				
08_CLB1117_Solidarités International_Rehabilitation (top-up)				
09_CZZ2321_AEC_Recycling (top-up)				
10_CLB1122_PUI_PHCCS (top-up)				
11_CLB1104_CICR_Hospital Rafik Hariri (top-up)				
Total	8	4	4	8

to be mobilized to monitor these projects (resources that are proportionally greater than for operations with higher amounts) in order to size the AFD's interventions with full knowledge of the facts.

The following three considerations were identified to guide AFD teams in case of future crisis response.

1.2.1 – How to achieve a balance between diversification of partners and focus on fewer and larger projects?

Conclusions of this evaluation highlight that in future crisis situations, specific attention should be paid to limiting the number of low-budget projects, which are relatively to their size more resource-intensive in terms of internal project management. The management of larger project could prove more efficient and aligned with the AFD's objectives. The AFD could, for example, prioritise a unique project *per* sector, while keeping some flexibility to promote integrated and multisectoral approaches. Indeed, lessons learnt from AFD's response to the blast show that:

- Low-budget projects can be interesting tools to ensure the adaptation of existing projects in case of crisis, but less to answer new objectives or outcomes.
- In the case of a new project (or a new component with different activities), budgets should remain substantial to (1) allow for longer term and more comprehensive support; and (2) maximise the efficiency of those projects.
- Larger projects can be funded specifically if the implementing partner has the capacity to manage a substantial budget, starting with smaller pilot amounts during the recovery phase and followed by larger disbursements for developmental initiatives in the long term.

1.2.2 – Should existing projects be systematically favoured over new partners?

New projects financed within the cluster are quite illustrative of the benefits and risks linked to financing new projects. On the one hand, involving a new partner may be relevant when their approach answers a gap in needs, which is not addressed by ongoing projects (e.g. Mercy Corps' IMO TPME project – CLB1133). Favouring new projects offering long-term approaches aligns with the added value of the AFD as a development actor.

On the other hand, this is less valid for approaches focusing on an emergency or early recovery response over a single year. Given the process necessary for launching a new project and usual monitoring of the AFD during the implementation, one can question the added value of the AFD financing a new short-term project from scratch. In comparison, other institutions of Team France such as the CDCS, whose role is to ensure a short-term response aligned with France's political objectives may be better equipped with very flexible selection processes.

1.2.3 – Should there be more considerations for needs assessments in emergency projects?

In situations of emergency, responding organisations usually rely on light assessments to ensure a rapid response addressing immediate critical needs. Needs assessments in the sample of projects studied for this report appeared to be a key success factor for the implementation of activities. Development-oriented partners without prior experience in emergency and recovery appeared as successful as seasoned international NGOs in implementing their projects when conducting comprehensive assessments (e.g., IECD for project CLB1079). On the contrary, organisations which hastened this step (e.g. UNICEF for project CLB1141, or *Arc-En-Ciel* (AEC) for project CZZ2321) usually faced more challenges during implementation regardless of their prior experience in emergency. Looking back, this majority of projects would have had the time to conduct complementary diagnoses internally.

For future responses and for early recovery projects, systematising inception phases allowing for complementary diagnosis (led by the implementing partner) and preparation could reduce risks during implementation. The timing of disbursements should make it possible to anticipate additional needs and risk analyses that have not always been carried out for this specific response. Existing systems among trusted partners still allowed for relevant beneficiary selection processes.

Two points of attention can be highlighted: (1) favour targeting of beneficiaries later in the recovery process to maximise value-added by proposing activities focusing on development and sustainability rather than emergency (and based on assessments); and (2) optimise needs assessments by encouraging joint assessment and participative approaches with local institutions (e.g. schools, hospitals, municipalities) to maximise visible outcomes, satisfaction and sustainable impact.

Operational checklist for projects and partners' selection:

- Accelerated and lighter selection and fund disbursement processes can enable more rapid and agile projects, aiming for early recovery outcomes, maybe through selection of fewer projects. The allocation of fund should prioritise projects of scale to enable for stronger relevance and impact, limiting smaller grants to an adaptation of on-going projects. Within one sector, funds could for example be concentrated on a unique partner or consortia.
- Existing projects' modifications constitute an effective tool to ensure rapid adaption of projects to a changing environment and preserve initial objectives. They can also be used to integrate emergency and/or early recovery actions when the initial project is implemented in the same area and in sectors relevant to priority needs (e.g., health, food security, protection, mental health, etc.).
- The selection of partners with a demonstrated operational capacity in the area (existing team, premises, operations and partners), or sectoral expertise in the sector should be prioritised.
- Projects including multisectoral components should demonstrate a relevant integrated approach, with demonstrated links between sectors, to avoid loss of efficiency.
- Projects should target long-term outcomes in priority, while integrating early recovery actions to link emergency relief and development phases, promoting agile and flexible projects.
- Partners should ensure that necessary preliminary diagnoses (needs assessment, stakeholder analysis, risk analysis) are undertaken or planned in inception phases – in particular for projects targeting longer term objectives.
- Such diagnoses should involve and empower local institutions benefitting from the projects when relevant and feasible.

2. In a complex environment, most projects were successfully implemented thanks to effective coordination and coherence with the AFD mandate

2.1 Several projects suffered delays in their implementation

Almost all projects showed delays compared to the original schedules, which affected their potential for effective implementation and achieving results. Delays

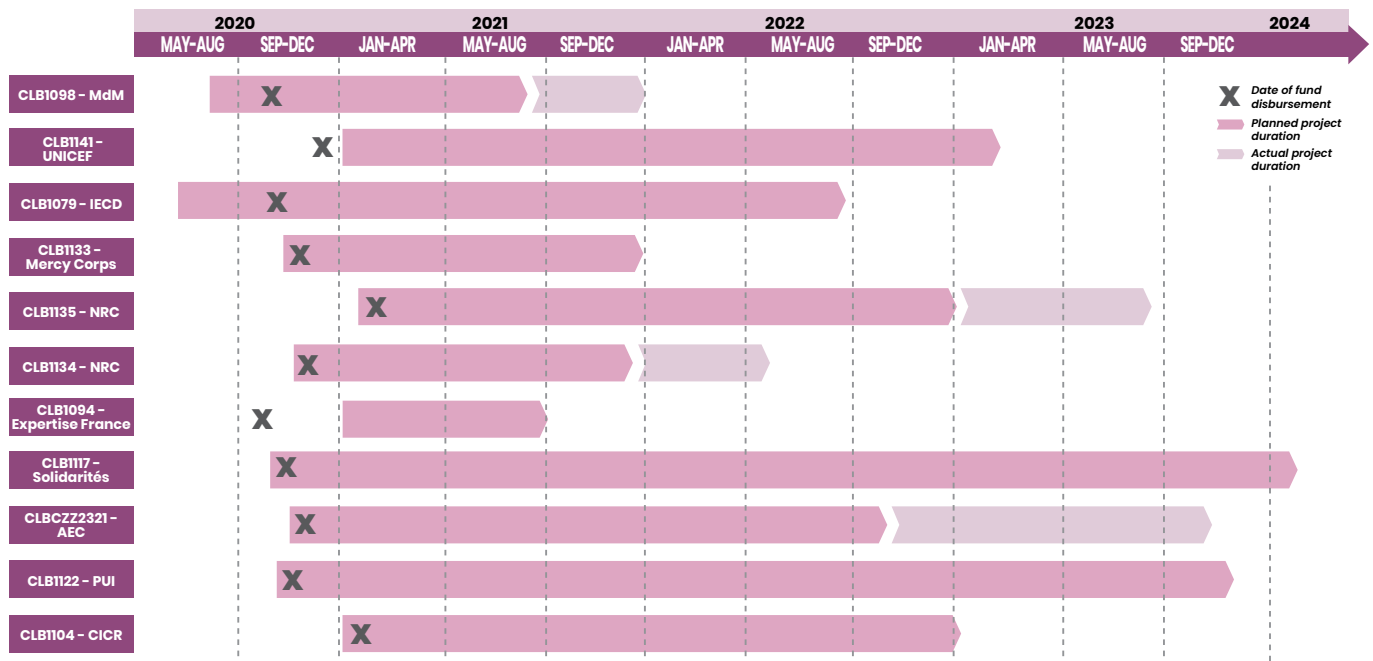
were observed both at the start of projects, where immediate response activities to the explosion were often proposed too late in 2021, therefore no longer meeting emergency needs of beneficiaries, and during implementation of longer-term activities that no longer respond to an emergency logic.

These delays were related to external factors and their consequences (Covid-19 pandemic, economic crisis and shortages, and political instability) including on operators' day-to-day functioning (e.g. exchange rate fluctuations affecting procurement, or high levels of staff turnover).

Internal factors also affected the delivery of activities, namely insufficient needs and risk assessments, multiplication of activities within a single project, and strong AFD compliance rules that were not adapted to emergency settings (now replaced with more efficient operating processes).

Yet, in total, only four projects effectively had to rely on extensions.

Illustration 1 – Reconstructed project timelines



Overall and despite these delays, projects were generally successfully implemented. As in the individual projects reports, most operators demonstrated adaptability and flexibility in the face of these challenges in order to ensure activities could be delivered as timely as possible. This was feasible thanks to:

- their ability to adjust activities according to changing needs – for instance, IECD piloted accelerated and work-based trainings to adapt to the volatile context (project CLB1079), and NRC replaced a planned market study on building materials with an assessment of the Lebanese rental housing sector to answer beneficiaries and partners' evolving needs (CLB1134);
- agile implementation methods during lockdowns (mobile services, online activities) – for instance HI provided mental health awareness-raising and counselling online during the lockdown before moving to door-to-door (project CLB1098 – MdM);
- the ability to propose activities adapted to the expectations of beneficiaries even if they were not usual practices for the AFD – for instance, Mercy Corps' use of unconditional transfers to support companies affected by the explosion (CLB1133).

2.2 Aligning projects with the added value of the AFD was a success factor

The implementation highlighted key factors where the AFD demonstrated added value including:

- the technical involvement of the AFD to accompany implementing partners beyond emergency towards development objectives;
- the efficiency of top-ups to facilitate the quick start of activities and their alignment with development objectives;
- the relevance of progressive interventions developed under the Minka Fund, including a recovery component followed by a longer-term component aiming at development outcomes.

Some projects of the cluster present interesting practices for progressive interventions, notably the Shabake project (CLB1094 – Expertise France) or the Mercy

Corps project (CLB1133) through its second phase (not funded through the blast cluster). Successful progressive interventions include two distinct steps: (1) in a first phase of early recovery, a focus on a limited number of activities for a fast response, with, in parallel, a research component and further needs assessments; (2) in a second phase, a more diverse set of activities based on findings from the first phase's research activities (integrated approaches), and a focus on long-term outcomes.

Implementing partners highlighted several arguments in favour of progressive interventions:

- time needed to define a variety of complementary activities and to be able to implement them;
- time needed to define relevant development objectives (moving from infrastructure projects to projects contributing to systems strengthening);
- rapidly changing needs in times of crisis;
- harmonisation of approaches thanks to joint needs assessments (e.g. amounts distributed to companies). This also contributes to the “do no harm” approach;
- impact on the visibility of France as a donor as long-term projects ensure more visibility for the donor.

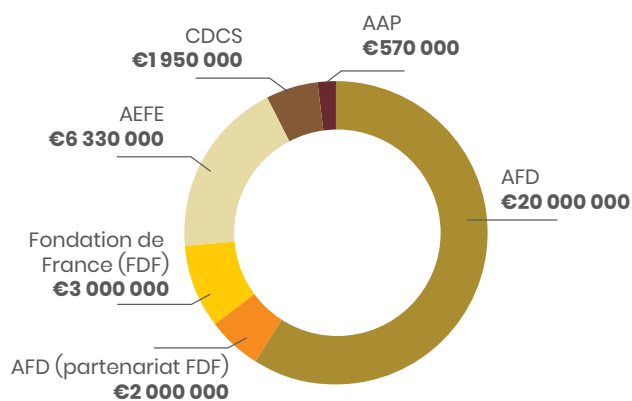
The analysis also highlighted how contingency budgets can provide further flexibility. Allowing implementing partners to adjust their activities based on the local context's evolution also plays a key role in the success of projects' implementation. Contingency budgets in that instance can represent effective tools. Having high contingency budgets is mentioned as particularly relevant in two cases:

- Case #1: In the event of a crisis, the previously existing project maintains its activities in the region but needs to increase the number of beneficiaries (e.g. Mental Health activities).
- Case #2: In a crisis response project, activities that were not initially identified are likely to emerge as new needs arise (for example, a hospital renovation where capacity building needs arise).

2.3 The AFD intervention aligned with the rest of Team France response through effective coordination

The AFD's response was praised as fundamental to the overall French response to the crisis. Indeed, the value of projects financed by the AFD represents a substantial share of France's response. With the studied cluster of projects amounting to 20 million Euros, the AFD was the main funding source for France's response, representing 59 % of the 33.82 million Euros engaged after the blast:

Illustration 2 – Breakdown of French contributions to the blast response



+17.7 million Euros
estimated value of in-kind donations

Decisions on the blast response were taken in a coordinated manner thanks to the different teams' engagement on coordination, involving the Embassy, the Mission Interministérielle de Coordination pour le Liban (MICOL), as well as AFD and CDCS teams in Beirut and in Paris. The AFD team's reactivity and engagement with a relatively fast selection of projects allowed to complement initial support with concrete long-term projects aligned with the priorities of the Embassy. These included: focusing on the healthcare system, targeting all vulnerable profiles (moving from a support dedicated to

Syrian refugees), and ensuring interventions by different members of Team France aligned in their temporality.

Is there room to improve the emergency/recovery nexus between the AFD and other actors of Team France?

The CDCS is the funding window with the most potential for synergies with the AFD response as it supports emergency projects implemented by similar actors. There is currently no formalised processes to discuss joint programming where emergency funding windows such as the CDCS would start an emergency project that would be further financed by the AFD in its recovery phase.

An internal joint note CDCS/AFD was published in early 2024 to formalise and reinforce collaboration and coordination in emergency contexts. Discussions are currently taking place on tools to better coordinate Ministry, CDCS and AFD.

Key lessons for improving coordination within Team France in event of a crisis

Based on the experience of the response to the blast, several options could be anticipated for future crises:

- Proactively reach out to the CDCS in the aftermath of a crisis to present existing projects already implemented by the AFD which are susceptible to (1) have the experience and teams on the ground for an immediate response; (2) be considered for a top-up to answer the crisis. It would make sense for the CDCS to finance implementing partners about to receive a top-up from the AFD to support their emergency response before then. This would contribute to a more relevant nexus response.
- Create programmes already including joint funding of the CDCS for emergency components and the AFD for longer-term grants. In that case, the Shabake Program from Expertise France is a case study of successful programming following the blast.

And beyond Team France, an opportunity to engage with “non-usual” stakeholders?

The spontaneous engagement of numerous civil society actors naturally made them key stakeholders of the response. Implementing partners demonstrated their ability to engage with non-traditional actors, which could be further encouraged when relevant.

By their initial design and approaches, most projects contributed to the objective of **aid localisation**^[7] which greatly contributed to the relevance of the response and to inclusion of local actors. This is particularly valid in the case of local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) which are empowered in several projects funded within the blast response to implement activities, such as Shabake, managed by Expertise France (CLB1094) or the rehabilitation project managed by NRC (CLB1134), which supported local organisations in neighbourhoods affected by the blast.

In some instances, diaspora organisations or individuals were also involved on *ad hoc* basis, with some innovative practices. This includes the renovation of the Karantina Hospital (CLB1141) where UNICEF benefits from *ad hoc* funding from the American diaspora, and Shabake (CLB1094) where one of the actions implemented jointly by AEC, Live Love Beirut and Development for People and Nature Association (DPNA) is based on a diaspora donation platform. Other crisis set-ups highlight the potential catalyser effect of diaspora engagement for both emergency and development project. However, this would require anticipated and long-term strategies of implementing partners, either by: (a) implementing partners proposing approaches to donors including diaspora engagement components; or (b) encouraging approaches including diaspora engagement in AFD calls for proposal.

In the specific case of Lebanon, it is essential to ensure that such organisations do not contribute to sectarian-political divide. On the contrary, such initiatives (whether it is individual diaspora engagement, or through associations) can contribute to go beyond existing sectarian divides.

[7] Aid localisation refers to efforts for empowering local actors to lead and deliver aid. This strategy relies on making funding directly available to local actors and increasing their agency and decision-making in project design and delivery through capacity-building.

3. Objectives were achieved with varying sustainability

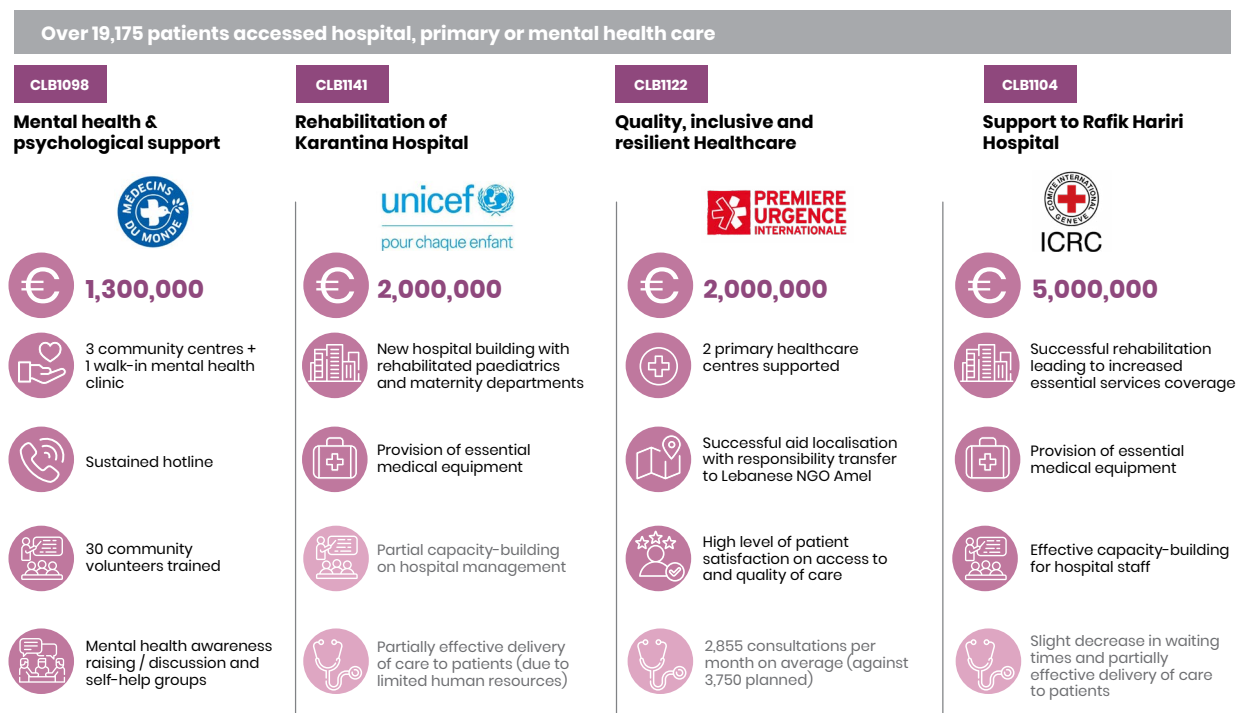
3.1 In the health sector: going beyond infrastructure renovations towards system strengthening

One of the main challenges for projects in the health sector was to overcome a set of crisis-related external factors contributing to the deterioration of health services: team turnover, financial difficulties, shortages of medicines and fuel.

Despite this challenging context, it appears that most projects were able to achieve their intended objectives with sustainable results. A line of similarity between these projects was the ability of implementing partners to propose infrastructure renovations as well as activities directly contributing to strengthening the healthcare system. The chosen approach of the AFD to rely on top-ups of existing projects played a key role in ensuring that projects target both structural rehabilitation and system strengthening. This ultimately contributed to achieving more sustainable results in terms of access and quality of care.

Funding limitations in late phases of the projects sometimes hampered the sustainability of some initiatives and led to some shortfalls suggesting there may have been room for financing fewer and larger projects.

Illustration 3 – Key project achievements in the health sector



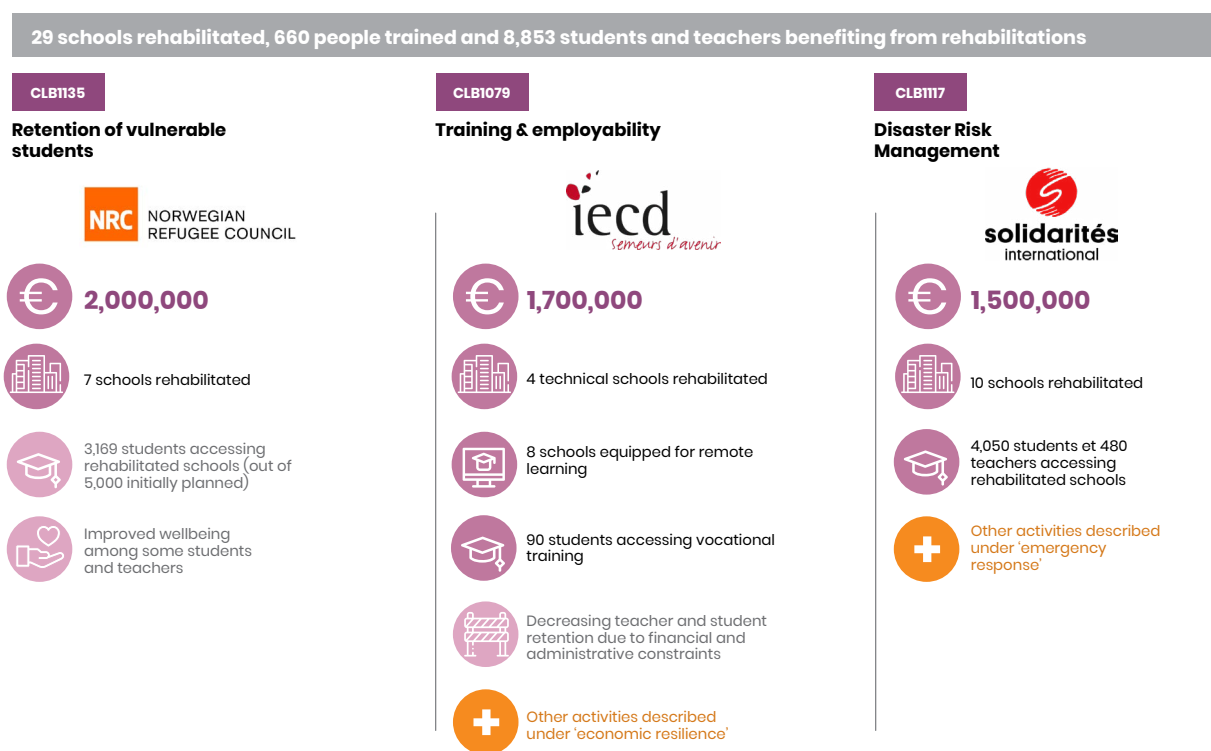
*The total number of patients does not include beneficiaries of the project led by UNICEF // For top-ups, budget information only refers to blast-specific components

3.2 Education and vocational training: system strengthening did not mitigate the impact of the Lebanese crisis

Outcomes were partially achieved in both education projects. Regarding the sustainability of results overtime, these projects focused on addressing short-term challenges and thus did not have long term effects on the critical schools' situations. Limitations to expected outcomes emphasise:

- the need for system-strengthening activities beyond infrastructure renovations;
- the critical role of timing in ensuring activity relevance;
- the significant impact of the Lebanese crisis on project sustainability (shortage of teachers, limited financial resources among both students and teachers, and limited resources from public institutions).

Illustration 4 – Key project achievements in the education and vocational training sector



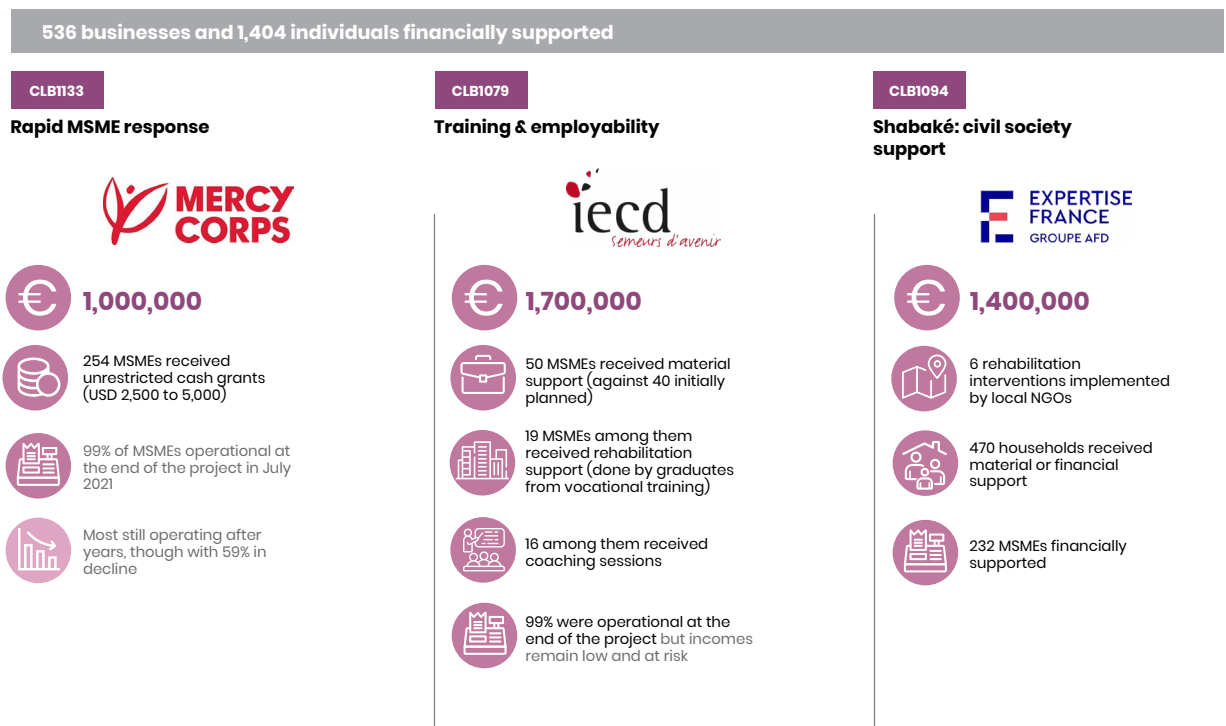
*For top-ups, budget information only refers to blast-specific components

3.3 Economic resilience: the relevance of long-term support to companies

All three economic resilience projects displayed similar results and learning opportunities. Activities effectively contributed to immediate job placement, restoration of activities in companies affected by the blast, and partially maintaining employment.

The economic situation remained a severe threat for these businesses' survival. Positive results observed during project implementation are less visible over time. To try and address this issue, the added value of the AFD could have included a resilience building component, bridging emergency, recovery and development phases of the response. Integrating such longer-term support would have been a prerequisite to ensure positive impact toward sustainable livelihoods.

Illustration 5 – Key project achievements in the economic resilience sector



*For top-ups, budget information only refers to blast-specific components

3.4 Emergency response to population affected by the blast and longer-term rehabilitation of neighbourhoods

Several projects from the sectors detailed above had an emergency response component, focused specifically on emergency response, or were developed as sequential approaches.

The emergency responses detailed in the figure systematically complemented longer-term economic development approaches (in the case of Expertise France); or broader rehabilitations at the neighbourhood level, complemented by capacity building in risk management for local institutions (in the case of Solidarités and NRC detailed in the following section). Activities contributed to supporting vulnerable households with necessary humanitarian services.

One learning for future crises is to ensure that humanitarian support is carried over by organisations able to implement activities before receiving the funds from the AFD. This might be through:

- Financial capacity allowing expense advances (as MdM did); or
- Agreements in place with contractors or partners for payment upon delivery/at a defined date.

Further, results in neighbourhood rehabilitation and risk management also illustrate the added value of existing projects. The impact of NRC and Solidarités was most probably more visible in their longer-term activities, which had been designed prior to the emergency response. In the sector of rehabilitation and risk management, NRC and Solidarités both offered consultative and participatory approaches based on their initial project at the neighbourhood level in order

Illustration 6 – Key project achievements in the emergency response and rehabilitation sector



to co-define rehabilitation objectives. These approaches were complemented by capacity building activities for CSOs and local public institutions to implement risk anticipation and management plans for future crises. The project implemented by AEC is also part of this logic by aiming to institutionalise a glass recycling system. The aim of these projects was to contribute to making local actors more effective and inclusive. The projects aimed to strengthen local governance, and ultimately ensure that communities, CSOs and local governments are better able to respond to crises and their consequences.

This aspect of the response highlights the benefits of leveraging existing projects with detailed methodologies for participation and accountability, which enable effective needs identification with beneficiaries, local communities and institutions. Although time-consuming, these participatory and transparent approaches helped avoid shortcomings seen in other projects by maximising the relevance of activities for beneficiaries; identifying risks and additional necessary activities to ensure project success; and ensuring that activities sustainably reinforce local governance. For instance, the Disaster Risk Management committee established in the municipality of Bourj Hammoud was still active at the time of data collection.

4. Project achievements resulting from developmental approaches sustained the visibility of the AFD and of France as a donor

4.1 Visibility varied across sectors in the response to the blast

Requirements for visibility on the projects themselves are relatively recent at the AFD, leading to limited communication strategies on most projects of the blast response. Requirements in place today involve two levels – and all projects must meet at least level 1 requirements:

1. Level 1: The AFD logo must be displayed together with the French “Marianne” (included in all Team France logos); project photos must be shared with the AFD and the AFD is invited to all events;
2. Level 2: A bespoke communication plan must be developed for the projects.

These requirements reflect a recent evolution in the AFD’s communication in Lebanon, with the objective to streamline communication efforts of all Team France actors on the one hand, along with an effort to increase the AFD’s visibility in general.

Measures proposed in the agreements of projects responding to the blast were often limited and only resulted from operators’ internal communications practices rather than donor requirement. For the response as a whole, this translated into mitigated results regarding the visibility of the AFD or of France as a donor among project beneficiaries and important variations between sectors.

In the health sector, the AFD appears as a key donor among relevant stakeholders.

This is particularly interesting in a sector that received contributions from a wide range of donors. In the health sector, the AFD is also perceived to have played an important role in the response by sector coordinators of the response:

“Off the top of my mind, it would be difficult to replace the AFD: they were in the Top 10 in general, although admittedly during the blast it was difficult to differentiate.”

Transversal KII –
Health WG coordination LRP

In the field of economic recovery and rehabilitation, the visibility of French support differs from one project to the other.

When looking at projects funded in the economic recovery sector, there seems to be little knowledge of the AFD specifically among beneficiaries across all projects. Awareness of France as a donor, however, is present among beneficiaries of the IECD project. This could be linked to IECD being a French organisation, and to some beneficiaries being French-educated or from French-speaking neighbourhoods.

Results are also mitigated in terms of visibility for the AFD and France with regards to household and neighbourhood rehabilitation.

Beneficiaries show little awareness and tend to associate the donor with the nationality of origin of the NGO. However, the AFD’s visibility appears high among representatives of the administration in charge of coordination. This aligns with the AFD’s typical communication strategy to focus on beneficiary institutions and partners rather than end-beneficiaries.

Visibility was limited in education compared to the positioning of France as a key donor in the sector. The AFD contribution to the education sector in response to the blast was perceived as rather limited in light of needs. On this sector, the multiplication of support from different French state agencies may have diluted the visibility of France as a donor.

4.2 The analysis highlighted key learnings linked to the visibility of French support

Looking at projects whose beneficiaries show high awareness of French support, it may be that France's visibility was facilitated by the **systematic and long-lasting presence of communication materials** in health-related projects. On the contrary, some of the projects whose beneficiaries show less awareness may have included fewer communication material towards direct beneficiaries, during or after the projects.

Further, **higher visibility might also correlate with pre-existing partnerships** between operators, coordination actors and the AFD that can be built on over the course of the project. This was the case for health projects and for the IECD project and it also concerns the AFD's relationship with the Bourj Hammoud Municipality.

It should also be noted that **visibility for France or for the AFD appears to correlate with the adoption of a longer-term approach for certain projects**. Indeed, health-related projects and the IECD project all included components of early recovery or system strengthening, with a focus on longer-term support for beneficiaries. Meanwhile, the Mercy Corps project as well as education and rehabilitation projects focused solely on emergency response, albeit with a slightly delayed timeline and therefore more mitigated results. This could partially explain limited visibility of the French support for these sectors.

Finally, **partner capacities and field visits also play a strong role in ensuring visibility**. At the time of the blast, communication was hampered by similar barriers as was implementation in general: high levels of staff turnover and limited technical capacity. Regarding communication objectives specifically, this limits partners' ability to develop, monitor and maintain a long-term awareness and strategy. Further, field visits also help increase the visibility of the AFD and of France as a donor, bringing higher levels of awareness among beneficiaries

along with opportunities to develop further communication materials (e.g. videos, photos, social media post etc.). It is unfortunately not always feasible, particularly during the blast response.

Recommendations for the AFD in the communication sector are therefore the following:

- Encourage field visits from the AFD where possible (e.g. for projects with Level 2 communication requirements);
- Consider sectoral communication on investments made by various State administrations and agencies;
- Include a communication focus in future evaluations of projects implemented by a non-French NGO in order to (1) assess how they communicate about the AFD/France (e.g. does this include field visits, what type of communication material etc.); (2) consult beneficiaries on the communication mode and how it impacts the visibility of France. This could be done for the evaluation of the ongoing NRC project with a neighbouring approach.

4.3 Enhanced visibility when AFD's response builds on its added value and is embedded in the long term

As mentioned above, projects visibility should be considered in light of France's omnipresent political communication around the response to the explosion. The lack of visibility for some of the projects financed by the AFD is contrasted by the presidential communication around France's response to the explosion, which was highly publicised at the time around a political promise.

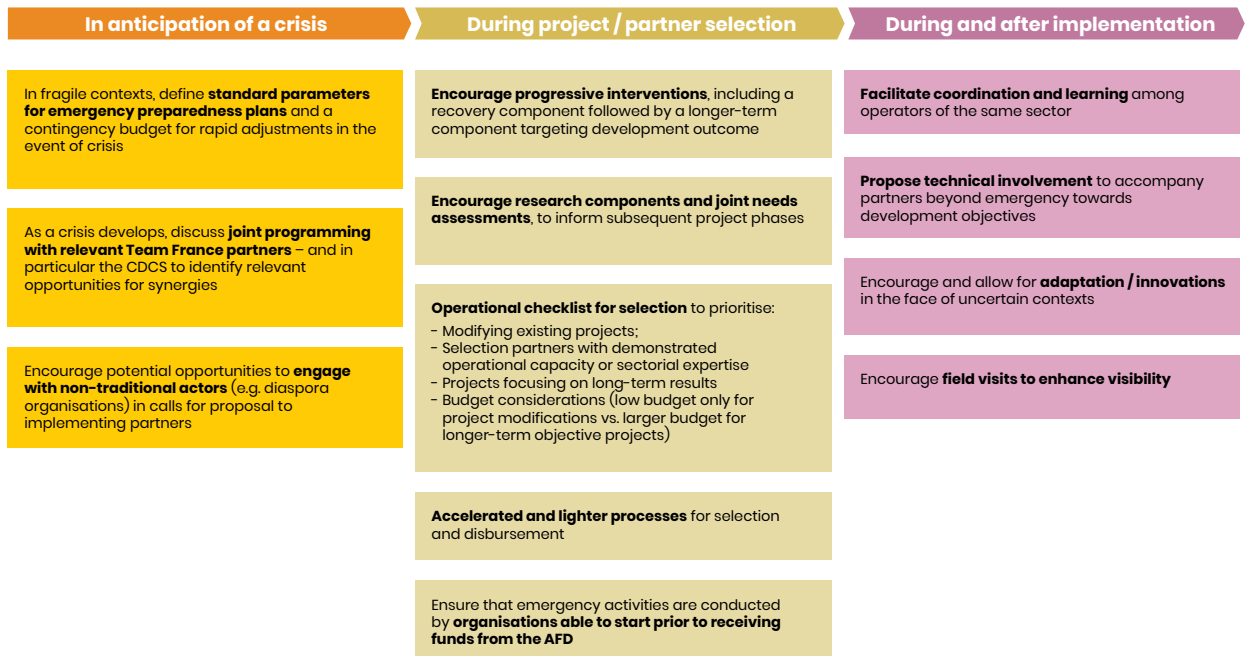
On the one hand, some French actors perceived that the AFD should contribute to the immediate-term visibility of France on the international political stage in a context of crisis by unlocking funds to support the relief effort. On the other hand, analysis of visibility among project beneficiaries suggests that the AFD – and by extension France as a donor – is most positively perceived when acting within its areas of added value, that is: building on pre-existing partnerships and developing progressive developmental approaches.

The AFD's response to the blast was most relevant when acting within its areas of added value rather than focusing solely on emergency relief. When building on its mandate and experience as a development partner, the AFD is able to design progressive approaches with its partners by focusing on early recovery and development. This is not only more feasible for an agency like the AFD, it is the key value of the agency to be able to plan beyond the immediate crisis towards its aftermath. This is reflected in results achieved by projects that integrated such approaches and, ultimately, in the perception of France among their beneficiaries.

There is therefore a key opportunity for the AFD to learn from the response to the blast by moving away from the short-term and immediate political response to focus on building responses that link emergency to early recovery and development.

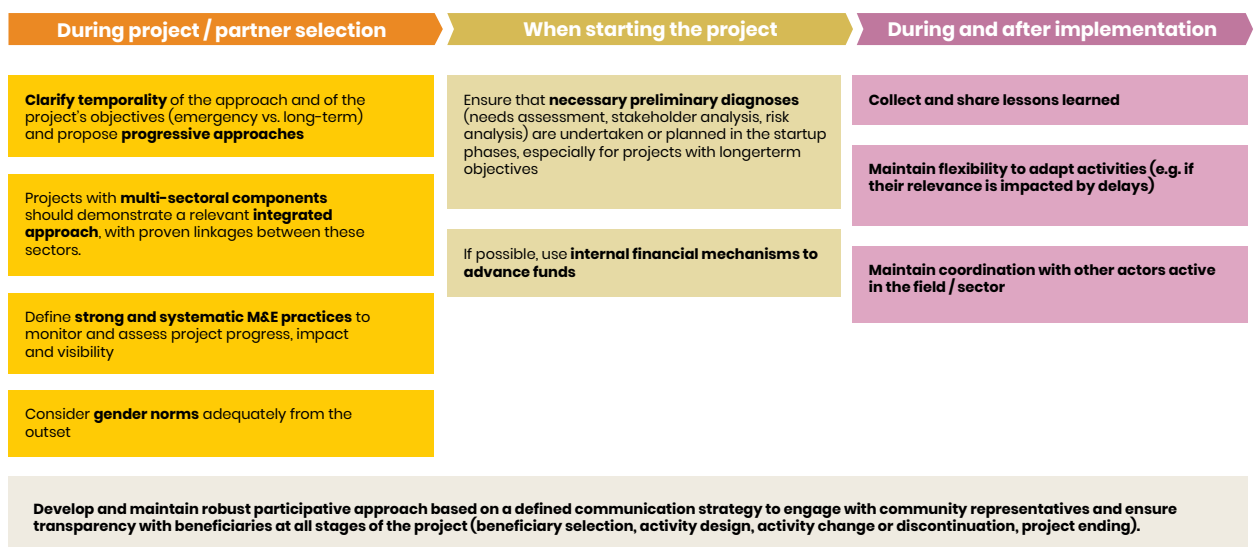
5. Recommendations

5.1 Key recommendations to the AFD



5.2 Key recommendations to operators

Recommendations to current and future operators can serve as a “checklist” for donors when interacting with operators in the context of a future emergency.



Annex 1: Project overview

The AFD financed 11 projects in response to the blast, these are detailed below:

Code	Project name	Sector	Operator	Budget and type
CLB1098	Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing of People living in Lebanon	Health	MdM in partnership with local organisations AMEL and SKOUN, and in collaboration with local organisations ABAAD, Embrace and International Humanity and Inclusion (HI);	1.3 million Euros top-up on an existing project
CLB1141	Rehabilitation of damages to Karantina Hospital caused by Beirut Port explosion	Health	UNICEF	2 million Euros project newly designed in response to the Blast
CLB1079	Employability training for vulnerable people	Economic recovery	IECD with its local partner Semeurs d'Avenir	1.5 million Euros top-up on an existing project
CLB1133	Beirut rapid MSMEs Response	Economic recovery	Mercy Corps	1 million Euros project newly designed in response to the Blast
CLB1135	Supporting the rehabilitation of schools affected by the Beirut Port explosion	Education	NRC	Top-up of 2 million Euros on an existing project
CLB1134	Emergency Response to Beirut Port Explosion	Rehabilitation	NRC	1.5 million Euros project newly designed in response to the Blast

Code	Project name	Sector	Operator	Budget and type
CLB1094	Strengthening resilience of Lebanese civil society in order to improve crisis prevention and management	Civil society	Expertise France in the form of subsidised actions implemented by Lebanese CSOs	Top-up of 1.3 million Euros
CLB1117	Disaster Risk Management in Lebanon ROFAKA2 AL NAHR	Disaster risk management	Solidarités International	Reallocation of 1 million Euros from the initial project and top-up of 1.5 million Euros on an existing project
CZZ2321	Glass recycling, reintegration of affected people, rehabilitation of the Jisr el Wati centre	Rehabilitation	Arc-En-Ciel	Top-up of 810,000 Euros on an existing project
CLB1122	Strengthening access to a quality, inclusive and resilient healthcare system (SAQIRH)	Health	Première Urgence International (PUI)	2 million Euros top-up on an existing project
CLB1104	Rafik Hariri University Hospital Partnership	Health	International Committee of the Red Cross	Top-up of 5 million Euros to an existing project

Annex 2: Methodology Summary

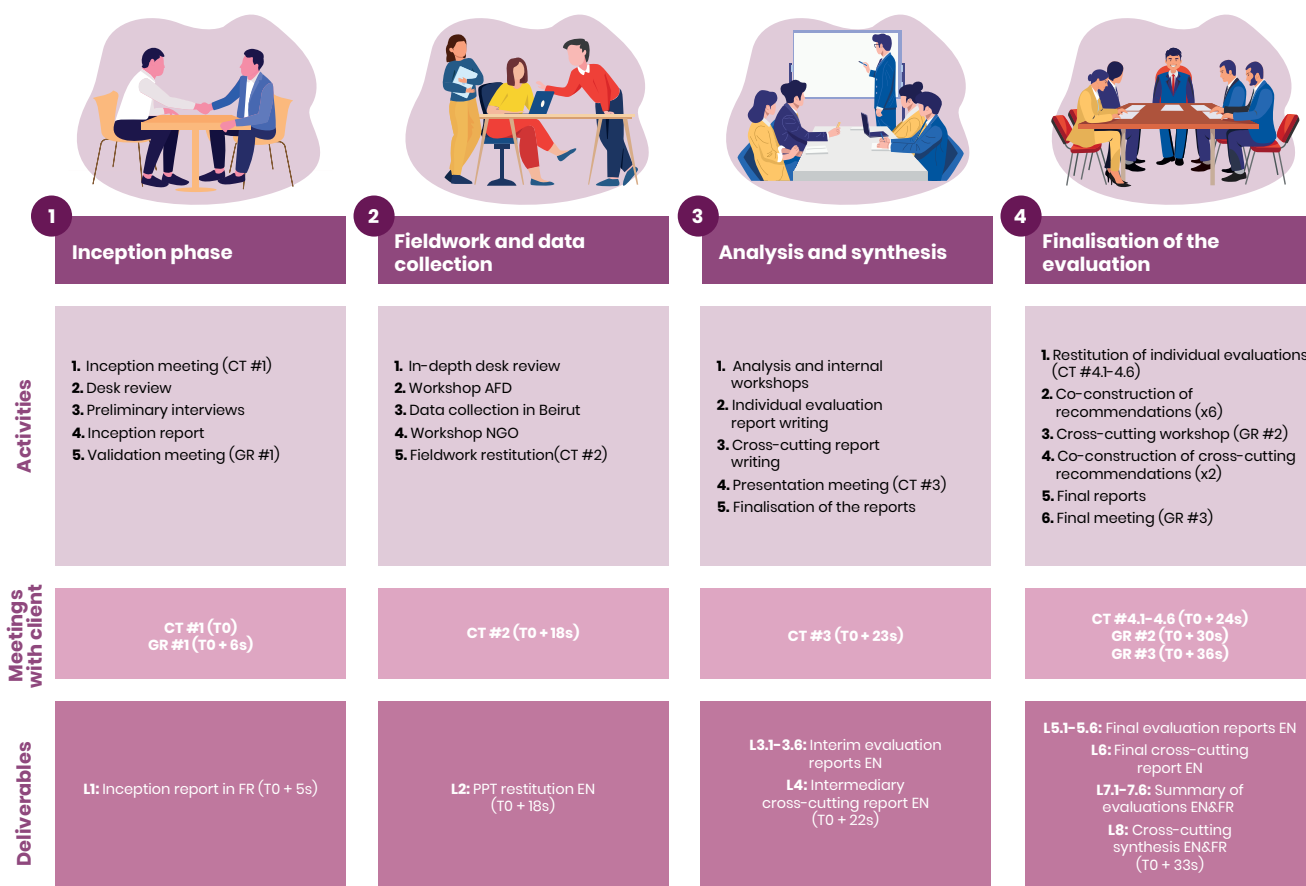
Study approach

The study relied on a progressive approach allowing for an in-depth analysis.

The objective was to allow for a step-by-step approach, with a tailored methodology at each step. By first reviewing and analysing all existing data regarding the cluster of projects under review for the evaluation of the AFD's blast response, the research team was able to develop a tailored fieldwork approach to collect key missing data for further analysis.

Collected data was then analysed for each project and considered for the response as a whole, building on the team's previous analysis. The completed analysis is detailed in this intermediary report. A final step allowed the team to review the analysis together with the AFD and, crucially, to develop recommendations stemming from the analysis in collaboration with the AFD and partners.

The approach was structured into four distinct steps, three of which have already been conducted. This is illustrated in the image below and further detailed in the following sections.

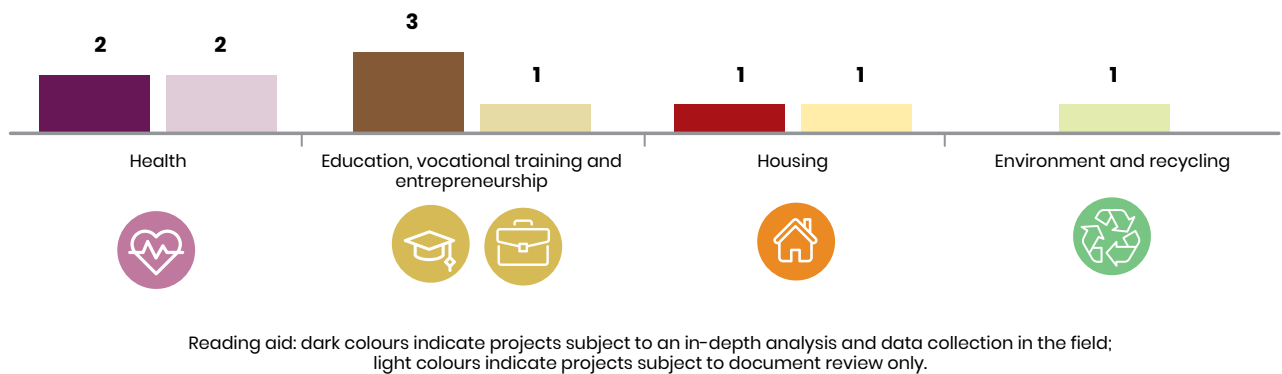


Overview of projects considered in this study

The AFD financed 11 projects in response to the blast. All of them are considered in this study with two approaches:

- six of them were the subject of a full-fledged individual evaluation including data collection in Beirut with implementing partners and beneficiaries of the projects. Projects were subject to an individual evaluation when the AFD had identified specific research questions that were not necessarily fully addressed in contractual reporting;
- five were the subject of an in-depth literature review contributing to the cross-cutting analysis.

The figure below provides an overview of projects by sector and type of review, further detailed in the following table.



Fieldwork achievements

1. Inception phase

The inception phase was based on two activities conducted over the course of five weeks between December 4th, 2023 and January 19th, 2024:

- A preliminary review of the documentation shared by the AFD teams and serving as a basis for the evaluation;
- Scoping interviews with AFD's teams.

The team conducted individual interviews with members of the “*Directions Techniques*” (DTs) and the Orient Department in Paris in charge of the projects evaluated, and members of the Agency in Lebanon in charge of the sectors concerned. The results of these interviews allowed the team to deepen their understanding of the expectations for this study and are reflected in the inception report.

Thirteen people were interviewed between December 14th, 2023 and January 17th, 2024, including five individuals from the Beirut office and eight individuals from AFD's headquarters, currently in function or in function at the time of the explosion. The table below summarises the profiles of interviewees.

Interview at AFD headquarters in Paris	Interviews at AFD Beirut office
Responsable Pays Liban	Chargées de projets Agence x3
Conseiller zone Moyen-Orient, division Fragilités, Crises et Conflits (CCC)	Directrice régionale et directrice d'agence Liban
Responsable d'Équipe Projet (REP) Santé et Protection Sociale (SAN)	Ex-directeur d'agence Liban
Responsable d'Équipe Projet Développement Urbain, Aménagement et Logement (VIL)	
Responsable d'Équipe Projet Gouvernance (GOV)	
Responsable d'Équipe Projet Entreprises Publiques et Financements Structurés (FIN)	
Responsable d'Équipe Projet Education, Formation professionnelle et Emploi (EDU)	

The analysis conducted during this phase extended beyond a mere mapping. Preliminary project fiches provided detailed evaluations of each project using OECD DAC criteria. The inception report included a thorough cross-cutting analysis of all research questions, based on a literature review and interviews within the AFD. This comprehensive inception phase analysis allowed to:

- define evaluation criteria for data collection, ensuring no research gaps;
- narrow down the data collection scope to missing information and unresolved questions;
- determine an efficient sample of individuals to interview, adhering to the “do no harm” principle and mitigating survey fatigue among beneficiaries.

2. Data collection in Lebanon

Sampling approach

A total of thirty days was dedicated to data collection in Lebanon, including an average of five days for each of the six projects covered. Fieldwork also included interviews with key informants beyond the scope of the six projects which contributed to the cross-sectional analysis.

For each project data collection included a mixed approach of quantitative and qualitative data collection involving:

- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):** with beneficiaries, sector coordinators from the LCRP and ministry points of contact, as well as project staff (programme managers, project managers, sector technical coordinators, and Monitoring and Evaluation officers).
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with beneficiaries:** mobilising generally six to nine beneficiaries to jointly discuss observed outcomes of the project and their sustainability.
- **Large-scale surveys with beneficiaries:** aiming for a confidence level of 95 % and a margin of error of 5 % in answers. Two surveys were conducted with companies supported by Mercy Corps and households provided with accommodations rehabilitation by NRC.
- **Smaller-scale perception survey:** non representative quick surveys with beneficiaries, including with staff of the Karantina hospital (renovated by UNICEF) and pupils from schools which benefitted from rehabilitation work by NRC.
- **Field visits:** to assess rehabilitations in schools and existing SOP in the Karantina hospital.

Additionally, up to 24 KIIs with the main actors in charge of coordination and AFD's main partners were targeted including:

- points of contact at the Ministries of Education and Public Health;
- coordination officers of the LCRP and the 3RF sectors at the time of the crisis: economic resilience ("livelihoods"), health, education and emergency shelter;
- the municipality of Bourj Hammoud (as it was not possible to consult with the municipality of Beirut);
- members of Team France: representatives from the Embassy, the CDCS, the *Fondation de France*, the MICOL, and the Diaspora Manager within the technical direction for governance (DT GOV);
- additional cross-cutting interviews on the coordination of the response with: Forward Emergency Room, Lebanese Armed Forces, the Lebanese Red Cross, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and CSOs that worked with the diaspora.

Fieldwork achievements

For project-specific consultations, the data collection approach varied and often integrated multiple quantitative and qualitative methods such as surveys, KIIs, FGDs, and field visits. These consultations typically targeted project team members, beneficiaries, and third parties. Details of the profiles consulted for each project can be found in the individual project fiches. For each project, the team successfully conducted consultations with both beneficiaries and implementers.

Fieldwork to evaluate the six projects included a total of:

- 51 KIIs with beneficiaries and implementing partners' staff;
- 1 FGD with medical staff of the Karantina hospital. Other planned FGDs were adjusted and beneficiaries were interviewed individually during KIIs to account for their lack of availability for FGDs.
- 2 surveys with 154 companies supported by Mercy Corps and 160 households supported by NRC.
- 2 small-scale consultation surveys with (1) 12 staff members from the Karantina Hospital, and (2) 15 pupils from a school rehabilitated by NRC.
- 5 field visits, 1 in the Karantina Hospital with a Medical Doctors to review existing systems and procedures in place, and 4 in schools rehabilitated by NRC.

Additional cross-cutting interviews were conducted with 12 individuals including:

- Ministry of Education and Higher Education point of contact;
- Municipality of Bourj Hammoud;
- Former Ambassador head of the MICOL;
- Former Chancellery staff of the French Embassy in charge of humanitarian affairs;
- Former CDCS staff delegated to the Emergency response in Beirut;
- Expertise France Project Manager of the Shabake project;
- AFD staff in charge of Communication in Beirut;
- AFD project manager in the Civil Society Organisation Support Division;
- UNESCO;
- Former Co-chair of the Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF) and former Country Director of Première Urgence Internationale in Lebanon;
- DRC (Danish Refugee Council) Diaspora Unit;
- Diaspora Emergency Action and Coordination.

Challenges and Limitations

The main difficulties faced during data collection were related to the availability of different stakeholders. As such, it should be noted that the team did not consult some stakeholders for the following projects:

- **Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing of People living in Lebanon (01_CLB1098)**: beneficiaries of capacity development initiatives could not be consulted as it was not possible to reach the organisation that implemented these activities.
- **Beirut Rapid MSMEs Response (04_CLB1133)**: research and M&E managers, as well as the sector coordinator, were not available for interviews.
- **Employability training for vulnerable people (03_CLB1079)**: focal points in partner technical schools due to inaccessibility.
- **Supporting the rehabilitation of schools affected by the Beirut Port explosions (05_CLB1135)**: three out of seven directors of rehabilitated schools could not be consulted due to 1) the departure of one director from the school, 2) the relocation of one school to a new building, and 3) the unavailability of the last director.

It should be noted that despite limitations linked to the availability of respondents, most of the stakeholders were consulted with both qualitative and quantitative tools (i.e., KIs and surveys). When the team was unable to consult beneficiaries, additional project team members were interviewed to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the programme.

Annex 3: Linking the blast response to the Minka Fund

The cluster of projects covers five different sectors and a myriad of different activities. To assess their results, the Minka Fund Theory of Change was adapted to the blast response to better represent specific activities conducted under the previously existing projects' top-ups and the new projects (as detailed below).

The Theory of Change and its logical links are globally validated by data collection three years after the response. From support to the health sector to economic recovery interventions, AFD-funded projects demonstrated positive outcomes and, in some cases, long-term impact. However, some limits to the sustainability of interventions were highlighted by respondents during data collection. These helped identify key lessons learned for future emergency responses.

The Theory of Change is presented in graphic form below. It details the logical links between the activities, outputs, outcomes, and longer-term impacts of the different projects.

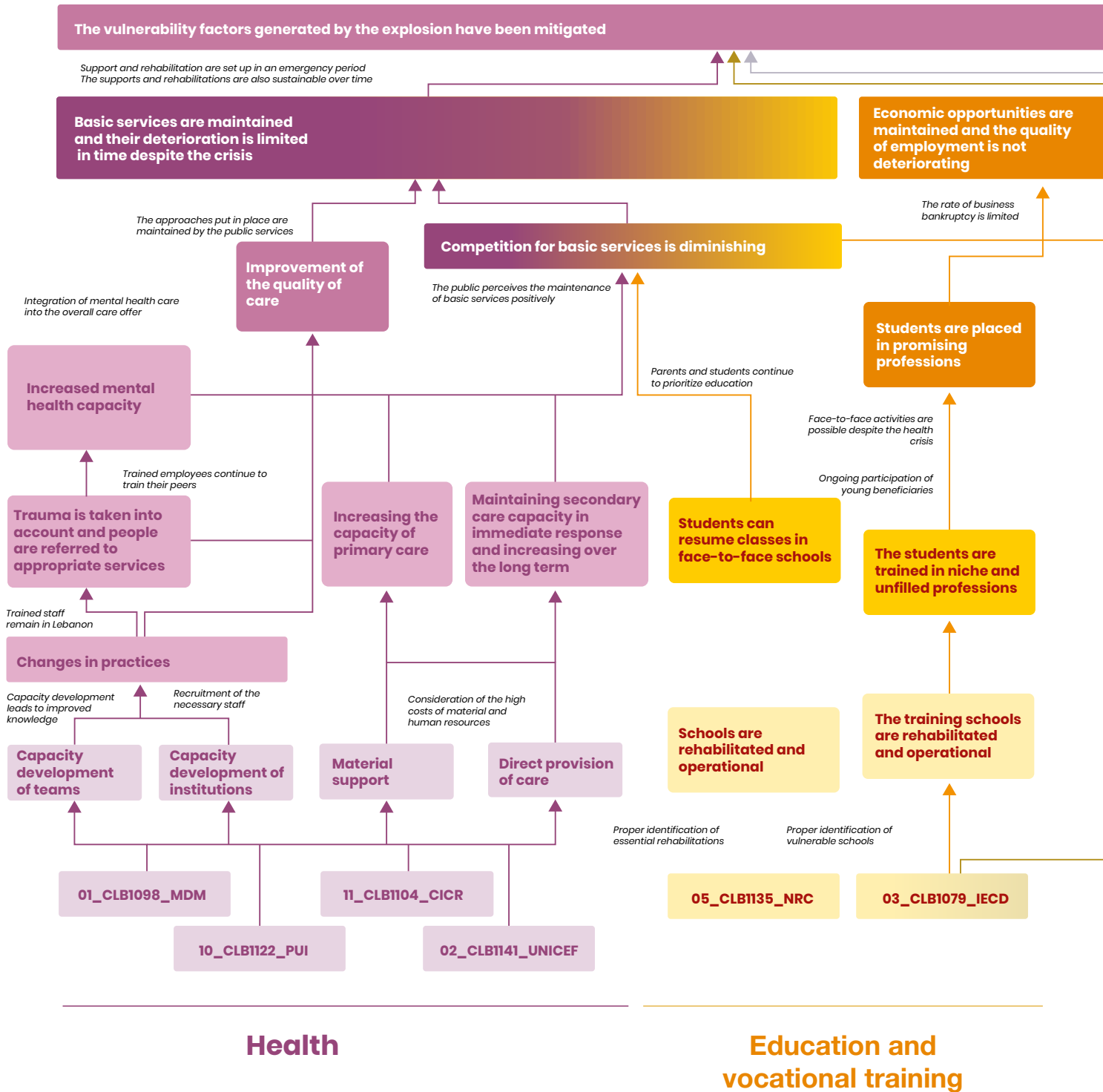
It is structured into sectors, represented by different colours: purple for health; orange for education and vocational training; beige for economic resilience; grey for immediate response and green for rehabilitation and risk management.

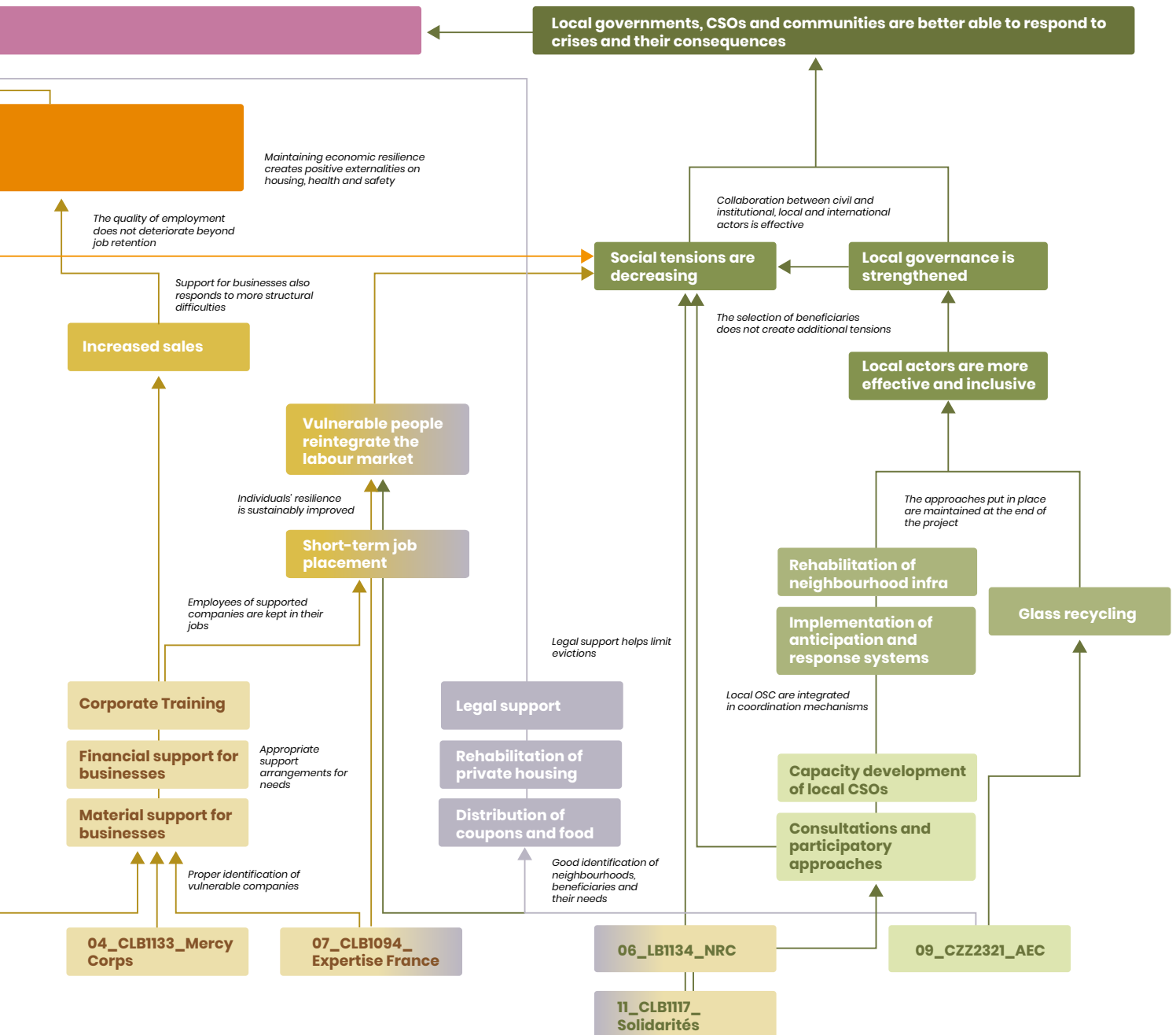
Each sector is subject to a progressive gradient of colour, from the lightest cells referring to the immediate activities to the darkest cells referring to the impacts and sustainability of the project.

The Theory of Change chart below is based on the long-term outcomes and effects as detailed for the Minka Fund (the funding window used to fund the majority of cluster project activities). Thus, the effects expected in the Theory of Change coincide well with the logic of intervention of the fund, while being adjusted to the specificities of the blast response.^[8]

[8] As detailed in the Theory of Change graph «Our Strategy» available on the Minka Fund monitoring platform in the Middle East: <https://minka-moyen-orient.afd.fr>

Logical links between blast responses and expected impacts of the Minka Middle East Fund (Theory of Change)





Economic recovery

Immediate response

Rehabilitation and disaster risk management

List of acronyms

3RF	Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework
AAP	Call for Projects (<i>Appel à projet</i>)
AEC	<i>Arc-En-Ciel</i>
AEFE	<i>Agence pour l'enseignement français à l'étranger</i>
AFD	<i>Agence française de développement</i>
CDCS	Crisis and Support Centre (<i>Centre de Crise et de Soutien</i>)
CPPI	Presidential Council for International Partnerships
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DPNA	Development for People and Nature Association
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
DT GOV	Technical direction for governance (<i>Direction technique gouvernance</i>)
FGP	Focus Group Discussion
HI	Handicap International
IECD	<i>Institut Européen de Coopération et de Développement</i>
KII	Key Informant Interview
LCRP	Lebanese Crisis Response Plan
LHIF	Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum
LRP	Lebanese Response Plan
MdM	<i>Médecins du Monde</i>
MEAE	Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs
MICOL	<i>Mission interministérielle de coordination pour le Liban</i>
MSME	Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PUI	<i>Première Urgence Internationale</i>
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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