

In 2015, all United Nations Member States adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), composed of 17 goals for all countries to achieve by 2030 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.). This report will focus mainly on SDG 3 and the barriers to achieving SDG 3 that Lebanon is currently facing. Lebanon is located in the Middle East, bordering the Mediterranean Sea and in-between Israel and Syria. The capital of Lebanon is Beirut, and the official language of Lebanon is Arabic, but other languages, French, English, and Armenian, are also spoken (The World Factbook: Lebanon, n.d.). SDG 3 is the goal focused on good health and well-being and aims to ensure that individuals live healthy lives and promote well-being for individuals of all ages (United Nations, n.d.). In order to achieve SDG 3: good health and well-being by 2030, Lebanon should focus on improving the state of the economy, the health of the country, and the educational system.

According to the World Bank Organization, Lebanon has been experiencing one of the world's top three worst crises since the mid-19th century. Over three-quarters of Lebanon's population is driven into poverty, with a rapid decline in economic conditions and political instability. In March of 2021, the Lebanese pound hit an all-time low, and throughout the summer, the currency continued to lose its value, the central bank scaled back subsidies, and there were widespread power blackouts. There has also been a sharp increase in mob violence which disputes over fuel shortages have mainly driven. Additionally, there have been more riots where shoppers have obtained necessities such as food since the prices have registered an annual increase of more than 350% (Mehvar, 2022). Additionally, from 2017 to 2023, Lebanon's minimum wage remained at 675,000 Lebanese pounds per month despite the rapidly rising inflation beginning around 2019 (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Fortunately, in March 2023, the Caretaker Minister of Labor stated that it was agreed to increase the minimum wage in the

private sector to 9 million Lebanese pounds and to approve the value of daily transport allowance to 250,000 Lebanese pounds per day (LBC International, 2023). Improving Lebanon's economic state would require various interventions, including improving the political instability and committing to the claims to increase the minimum wage as inflation increases. To begin with, improving political instability in Lebanon would require examining the root of the issue and controlling the rapid inflation. The reports of violence in Lebanon have stemmed from the rapid inflation, which caused many citizens to be unable to afford basic necessities, including food. The government needs to take action to protect the well-being of the Lebanese citizens by controlling the rapid inflation and providing basic necessities, such as food, at a reduced cost to improve the health and quality of life of the Lebanese people. Moreover, the Lebanese government should adhere to its commitment to increasing the minimum wage in Lebanon to combat the rapid inflation, which, in turn, can improve the health and well-being of the Lebanese citizens by improving their ability to purchase essential necessities, including food.

The economic crisis, coupled with political instability, significantly impacted healthcare and those who work in healthcare in Lebanon. The economic crisis, political instability, and economic mismanagement in Lebanon have resulted in a plummeting currency, high inflation, and shortages of necessities, including medicine. As a result, the healthcare system faces critical shortages of supplies, equipment, and personnel, particularly affecting public hospitals. Lebanon has a hybrid healthcare model where public funds cover most healthcare costs in private institutions, including their diagnostic procedures, hospitalizations, and more, rather than using those funds to strengthen the public hospitals. Consequently, private hospitals flourished while public hospitals faced budgetary constraints, staff shortages, and neglect (Ismail, 2023). Additionally, the recent coronavirus pandemic further highlighted the concerns of acquiring

medication and proper medical equipment and has become an imminent threat to hospitals in Lebanon. The rapid devaluation of the Lebanese pound has increased the price for hospitals to import these items. Furthermore, Lebanon's lack of fuel and electricity has created problems with distributing and storing essential medications such as antibiotics, chemotherapy, and more. The pandemic is causing more strain on the healthcare system due to overcrowding and increased resource demand (Bou Sanayeh & El Chamieh, 2023). Lebanon also faces a medication shortage, and many drugs have become scarce, which causes the suppliers to hoard large amounts to sell the drugs at high prices. As a result, the wealthy can afford these medications, while the general Lebanese population can no longer afford to purchase these medications. Before the crisis, the Lebanese healthcare system emphasized tertiary care and considered primary care the "medicine of the poor"; therefore, primary care was overlooked. However, during the crisis, many middle-class Lebanese families are now going to primary healthcare centers to receive medical services due to the high medication and hospitalization costs (Ismail, 2023). Furthermore, even with the shift towards public medical institutions, in 2021, the number of households deprived of healthcare increased to 33%, and there has also been an increase in the number of households that are unable to obtain medicines has risen to more than half (United Nations, 2021). Hospitals in Lebanon have been struggling to pay their bills and meet their financial obligations, such as wages, and cannot generate enough revenue to cover their costs. As a result, some hospitals reduced the number of staff and services offered, and some were forced to shut down, which is especially prevalent in underprivileged areas where there has already been limited medical care. Hospitals are also facing the difficult task of recruiting and retaining qualified staff. As a result of the plummeting salaries in Lebanon, many healthcare workers are leaving the country to pursue better job opportunities. Additionally, the

ongoing crisis has impacted healthcare workers' mental health as the significant instability seen in every part of their life has caused tremendous stress, burnout, and anxiety (Bou Sanayeh & El Chamieh, 2023). To improve the healthcare system and access to affordable healthcare services, there needs to be an improvement at the private and public healthcare system levels. At the private level, hospital administration should create cost-cutting measures, such as reducing staff, reducing non-essential services, and researching other funding sources (Bou Sanayeh & El Chamieh, 2023). Through these measures, the cost of accessing private healthcare can be reduced, thus decreasing the financial burden on those who need these essential services. In addition, this can also increase the salaries of healthcare workers, which can help to prevent the exodus of healthcare workers out of Lebanon. At the public level, the Ministry of Public Health should invest in a long-term plan to improve the healthcare system. It should focus on investing in infrastructure, increasing funding for public hospitals, and creating a budget for importing, transporting, and storing medical supplies and medications (Bou Sanayeh & El Chamieh, 2023). It is of the utmost importance to investigate these potential solutions to ensure that all citizens have equal access to quality healthcare and to increase the retention of healthcare workers in Lebanon. Furthermore, it is essential to look at the root causes of stress and burnout within the healthcare sector to increase worker retention and improve their quality of life at work and in their day-to-day lives.

There are significant barriers in education that affect the educational attainment of children in Lebanon. Currently, the school life expectancy for both males and females from primary to tertiary education is approximately 11 years. Females tend to obtain around 11 years of schooling while males tend to obtain around 12 years of schooling (The World Factbook: Lebanon, n.d.). There are no gender gaps in primary education; however, boys in secondary school tend to drop

out more than girls (Moussa, L. S., 2021). Furthermore, the quality of education in Lebanon has significantly decreased since the civil war in 1975. Approximately two-thirds of Lebanese children attend an expensive private schools. Public school in Lebanon is seen as a last resort since the quality of private school education is significantly better. Therefore, the result is the increasing gaps between economically advantaged and disadvantaged peers. Additionally, many public schools have infrastructure problems, including broken glass, leaking roofs, and more. In addition, there is a need for more qualified teachers who speak English and French to teach math and science in Lebanon (US Agency for International Development, 2022). The current socioeconomic crisis has affected education at all levels of the educational ladder, where the highest and the lowest ends have similar poverty rates (United Nations, 2021). In addition, there are children at risk of never returning to school for various reasons. Approximately 15% of families stopped their children's education, 1 in 10 children are sent to work, and there has been an increase in child marriage, especially among Syrian refugees. There have been a few reasons which explain this trend, including the rising price of fuel as it has hindered many families' ability to bring children to school and the educator strikes. Educators are striking due to inadequate health care coverage, significant reduction in pay, and needing a transport allowance as a result of the high price of fuel. There has been a dramatic depreciation of the local currency, resulting in the educators being paid \$1600 USD per month to now being valued at \$90 USD per month. Therefore, it is important to improve and strengthen the public education system to improve the health of Lebanon. This can be achieved by increasing transportation for children to be able to go to school, improving educator salary and benefits, and improving resources for students at school to combat the effects of poverty on education and educational attainment. A barrier to education is transportation as a result of the fuel crisis occurring in Lebanon and to

combat this issue, Lebanon should implement a school bus system. Through the school bus system, it can allow children to have reliable transportation to school and would not have to depend on their parents' ability to afford fuel in order to go to school. Furthermore, it is vital to improve the salary of educators as well as improve their benefits in order to improve the quality of education as well as their quality of life. Through the strikes, there has been inconsistent access to education for the children of Lebanon which ultimately impacts their development as it has been reported that the lack education in the short term can lead to learning loss, mental distress, exposure to violence and reduced development of social skills (Lopez-Tomas, 2022). Finally, Lebanon should improve resources for students to combat the effects of poverty on educational attainment. The rising price of food in the country has an impact on the development of a child, especially in regards to their educational attainment. Lebanon should add more resources for the students to combat the effects of hunger by providing free and reduced lunches to students who may need them. When a student is hungry, it has an impact on their educational attainment and understanding of the information taught at schools therefore through the implementation of free and reduced lunches, it can help mitigate this barrier to education.

Through further examination of SDG 3, Lebanon should improve the state of its economy, the health of the country, and the educational system in order to make progress toward achieving this SDG. Improving the economy of Lebanon can have a trickle-down effect and impact other issues arising from financial burdens. In addition, the health of the country can be enhanced by improving the healthcare system and increasing access to affordable healthcare services. Finally, improving the educational system is vital to improving the health of the children through more resources and improving the quality of life for all. Lebanon can achieve SDG 3 if the country works together to tackle these issues.

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