



Remarks

by

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at the

**UNDP Event: “The nexus of
urbanization, violence and conflict:
Linking SDG 11 and SDG 16”**

**Humanitarian-development nexus:
Building Resilience in Urban Settings**

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Check against Delivery

1) **Impact of the Civil War:**

- Severe damage to public and private infrastructure as a result of internal civil conflict, Israeli bombardment during the 1982 invasion, and minimal government spending on maintenance and upgrade (Transportation, Education, Health and Electricity sectors).
- Multiple waves of internal displacement from different regions in the country towards Beirut, and within Beirut itself as a result of forced sectarian homogenization. Security reasons were the major driver of displacement, in addition to economic and social motives. Chaotic building sprawled on private and government owned lands in the suburbs of Beirut where many of the displaced or migrant families were accommodated. That was exacerbated by the weak enforcement of planning permits on legal private construction projects.

2) **Reconstruction and Development after the Civil War phase:**

- In 1993 the government embarked on a nationwide Ten-Year Reconstruction Programme with an estimated cost worth around 11 billion dollars at the time. It consisted of three phases: Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Development, and it was financed by treasury bonds in local currency (up to 34% interest at one point) and foreign loans and grants, particularly from regional development banks, like the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, and the Arab Fund and Islamic Development bank. Implementation was carried out primarily by the Lebanese Council of Development and Reconstruction, and by other relevant ministries and public institutions. The goal was to rehabilitate the downtrodden infrastructure, revive the economic image of the country as a financial and touristic hub in the region, rehabilitate and expand the country's transportation, water supply and sanitation networks, expand the reach of the public education sector to the country's underdeveloped regions, and lay the grounds for re-attracting external private investment, particularly from the Arab region and from the largely affluent Lebanese Diaspora in Africa, and the Gulf region.
- The government reconstruction activity was paralleled by a sharp increase in private investment directed towards the building sector and trade, particularly in and around the Beirut area.

- The Government faced multiple urban and planning challenges after 1992, particularly in Beirut Central District, where the severity of the destruction had left the District almost vacant of any of its original residents and commercial activity. Other challenges had to be dealt with such as the entangled property rights after a 17 year protracted conflict, and the different residential statuses of the previous residents and commercial entities (owners, tenants or long term investors).

3) Current Challenges:

- Underdevelopment in the North and East (Bekaa) districts of the country, particularly Akkar and Hermel, compared to Beirut and Mount Lebanon, or even South Lebanon (a previously underdeveloped and occupied region) which benefited from better government spending and private investment after the end of the civil war and after its liberation in 2000 from Israeli occupation). There are also areas within the Greater Beirut area that suffer from underdevelopment and minimal government and municipal spending for different reasons, particularly the fact that a significant proportion of the housing and commercial buildings in those areas have been built illegally on private and government property or without planning permits; not to mention the severely underdeveloped Palestinian refugee camps as a result of the continuously decreasing budget for UNRWA.
- The mass influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon (About 1.1 million registered refugees according to UNHCR's latest figures) has compounded and multiplied the challenges facing the country as a whole, and its underdeveloped regions, especially the North and Bekaa that bore the biggest brunt of the refugee impact overstressing their originally limited resources and their education, health, energy, water and sanitation infrastructure, undermining their security, increasing their unemployment levels, and seriously affecting the economic activity and investment climate in both regions. The refugee influx also increased the demographic pressure on the poorer neighborhoods of Greater Beirut and Palestinian camps, where most of the refugees are currently residing due to their relatively lower rental rates.
- Needless to say, there is an urgent need to provide those areas with increased development assistance, in addition to the humanitarian assistance delivered to refugees, to alleviate some of the negative developmental impact they have suffered from, and to strengthen their resilience.

