

LEBANON

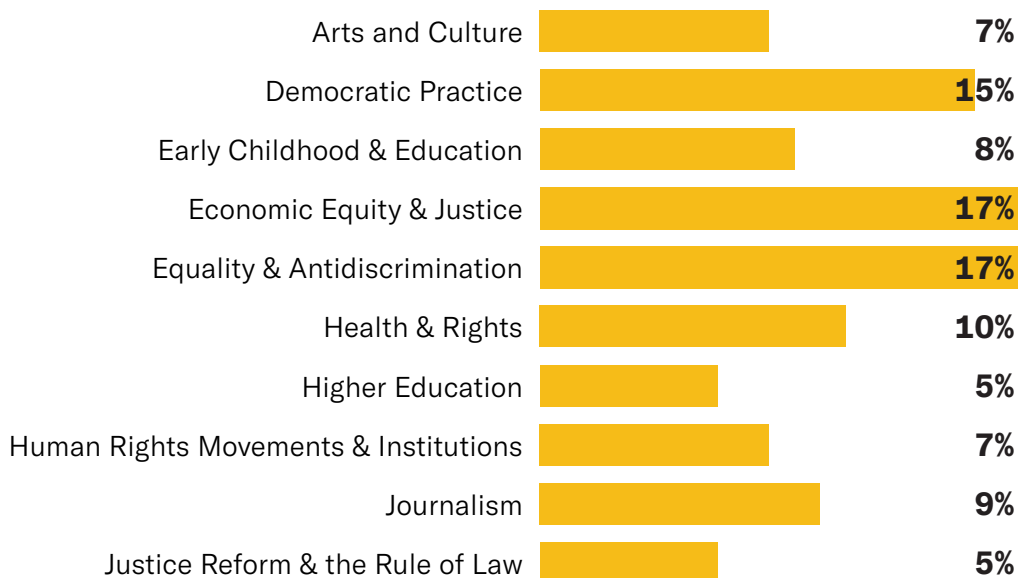
The Open Society Foundations have been working in Lebanon since 2001, when we began supporting independent organizations promoting the rule of law, arts and culture, gender equality, and independent media. Many of the entities we funded at the start of our engagement in Lebanon, and still fund, were regional organizations working across the Arab world but based in Beirut.

As Open Society’s Middle East and North Africa (MENA) program expanded, we began providing support to many more locally focused Lebanese groups as well, working in vital sectors such as education, health, human rights, and refugee assistance.

Lebanon, which suffered through a 15-year civil war, has long been plagued by sectarian divides, corruption, and weak governance. The country has been further strained in recent years by economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2020 explosion that took place at Beirut’s port. In mid-2021, a World Bank report assessed Lebanon’s economic collapse as among the most severe worldwide since the 1850s. We have provided emergency relief assistance to our partners and are supporting organizations working to advance effective socioeconomic policies, public resource management, governance and accountability, civic engagement, and a sustainable path to change.

Despite all it has endured, Lebanon can boast of an open and diverse civic space relative to many of its neighbors. Preserving the ability of a vibrant national and regional civil society to operate in Lebanon is an asset for the country and the wider MENA region.

LEBANON: 2020 EXPENDITURES BY THEME



Total Expenditures for Lebanon in 2020:

\$4.3M

2020 Expenditures for the Middle East and North Africa:

\$35.4M

9 FACTS ABOUT LEBANON AND THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

- 1** We are one of the largest private funders of the Arab world's independent arts and culture groups through our general support to the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, and the Culture Resource. Both organizations are Beirut-based but operate regionally. Our partners ensure that a vibrant arts scene flourishes in the region through their financial and professional support initiatives that are relevant to their missions and address needs on the ground. They also played a key role in launching a multi-donor fund for individuals and organizations in Lebanon's cultural sector disproportionately affected by a currency crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2020 Beirut port explosion.
- 2** We fund local and international entities helping tens of thousands of refugees across Lebanon to receive legal aid, access to services including education, and assistance in creating more inclusive host communities. One of our flagship partners in this field is Basmeh and Zeitooneh, a refugee-led organization founded in Beirut in 2012 by Syrian refugees. Alongside its core work, Basmeh and Zeitooneh raised funds after the 2020 Beirut port blast to assist affected Lebanese and Syrian families through rehabilitation of destroyed homes and businesses, and emergency support.
- 3** We support Legal Agenda, a Beirut-based nonprofit research and advocacy organization that uses a multidisciplinary approach to promote the rule of law across the Arab region. Legal Agenda provides legal analysis and advocacy, informs public debates, and strengthens rights-based social movements. Since its founding, the organization has been working on promoting the independence of the judiciary and strategic litigation.
- 4** We are committed to helping local, regional, and global organizations, based in and/or supporting work in Lebanon, that strengthen gender justice movements, and enhance research and training on gender. These include the Arab Council for the Social Sciences, the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship at the American University of Beirut, and Global Fund for Women.
- 5** We support research centers as core pillars in the dissemination of knowledge, including the Center for Lebanese Studies, an independent academic institution conducting research and organizing conferences that address diverse key issues including disability advocacy.
- 6** To help promote healthy media ecosystems that allow citizens to freely access quality journalism, we support independent and progressive media platforms in Lebanon including Daraj and the Samir Kassir Foundation's SKeys Center for Media and Cultural Freedom.
- 7** We support Lebanese civil society organizations that explore new visions for a more inclusive and effective economy including think tanks that produce independent policy analysis such as the Policy Initiative, and Triangle.
- 8** We support initiatives that seek to educate the public on economic affairs that influence their livelihoods such as the Gherbal Initiative, and Financially Wise, and organizations that engage with international financial institutions for greater transparency, inclusiveness, and effectiveness in their support to Lebanon.
- 9** In response to the 2020 Beirut port explosion, we mobilized an extra \$2 million to help address its impact, including providing aid to affected partner organizations, and funding entities working on reconstruction efforts.