

Legal Brief on Law No. 22/2025 – The Reconstruction Law

February 2026

Executive Summary

Following the war in 2023–2024, widespread destruction has severely affected housing and infrastructure. In response, the Government of Lebanon adopted Law No. 22/2025 (the “Reconstruction Law”), granting tax exemptions, fee waivers, and deadline suspensions for affected persons, and regulating the legal status of destroyed structures. This paper provides a legal analysis of the law, in particular Article 12 from the lens of housing, land and property (HLP) and accountability. It draws on a legal review, and consultations with a range of policy, government and civil society representatives. It identifies gaps and proposes recommendations to guide future implementation.

The law constitutes a timely and necessary first step, establishing an overarching legal framework early in the recovery phase and clarifying eligibility for rebuilding in five property categories (including construction on private land, public land, and encroached or prohibited areas). However, it remains high level and heavily dependent on implementing decrees that are either pending or limited in scope. As currently structured, the law primarily benefits owners with clear documentation and financial means to rebuild, leaving complex HLP cases insufficiently addressed.

This paper finds key gaps not addressed in the law which relate to co-ownership, encroachment, tenant protection, gender, and heavily damaged areas. It also does not take into consideration the structural issues with respect to poor land governance in Lebanon, which is particularly pronounced in the South of Lebanon.

In addition, governance and valuation remain central concerns. Past reconstruction processes demonstrated that fragmented valuation systems and politicized compensation bodies undermine trust. Law 22/2025 does not yet establish a unified, transparent damage assessment and compensation methodology, nor does it define appeals mechanisms. Given high community expectations and limited administrative capacity, standardised and transparent valuation—prioritizing speed, equity, and structural safety—will be critical.

Overall, while Law 22/2025 provides a necessary legal entry point, its effectiveness will depend on rights-based implementing decrees, strengthened land governance, inclusive eligibility criteria, tenant protections, gender-sensitive measures, and robust transparency and accountability mechanisms. Without these, reconstruction risks reinforcing pre-existing inequalities and delaying durable solutions for affected communities.

Background

The recent conflict in Lebanon starting in October 2023 confined to Southern Lebanon and the escalation in 2024 which expanded to large swathes of the country including the Beirut Suburbs, and part of the Beqaa valley, has resulted in massive destruction. According to the World Bank assessment¹ conducted in March 2025, over 30 percent of residential buildings in South Lebanon were damaged, with many completely destroyed. The surveyed municipalities in the assessment² led by UNDP and local authorities reported that a total of 59,577 out of 1,024,432 housing units identified by municipalities in the surveyed areas have been damaged, representing around 6 percent of the total housing stock in those surveyed districts. The highest number of damaged housing units were reported in the districts of Baabda (16,000), Nabatiyeh (14,667), and Baalbek (10,274), Sour (6,415), Saida (4,252), Bint Jbeil (2,866), and Marjeyoun (2,725). 29 percent of those are reported to be completely destroyed.

In response, in July 2025, the Government of Lebanon published the Law 22/2025, known as the ‘Reconstruction Law’ which provides a basis to grant persons affected by the 2023- 2024 war with certain tax and fee exemptions or suspension of deadlines and the regulations of the status of destroyed structures.

This paper is intended to inform policymakers, implementing authorities, donors, and civil society actors involved in reconstruction in Lebanon, by analysing Article 12 of Law No. 22/2025 through the lens of housing, land and property rights and accountability to communities and local institutions, identifying legal gaps, and proposing recommendations to guide the development of implementing decrees and future reconstruction policies.

There are many angles to the discussion that are not part of this paper but nonetheless can intersect rapidly with the implementation of the law when more of the application decrees are issued. Some of these topics were also raised during the consultations which fed into this paper. For example, this paper does not address considerations for a holistic approach to reconstruction, such as ‘Build Back Better’ including improving structural specifications of buildings and public spaces to take protection, accessibility, cultural heritage or environmental concerns into account. The paper also does not include considerations on the psychological, social and economic impact of the destruction, lack of reconstruction and prolonged displacement for many impacted families.

¹ documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099030125012526525/p5063801f58e97062197c31ebf5a511c4e1

² [From Crisis to Recovery: Local Authorities Confronting Post-War Realities in Lebanon Rapid Impact Assessment | United Nations Development Programme](#)

Key definitions

For clarity and consistency, the following definitions are used throughout this paper to explain key legal and technical terms relevant to the analysis.

Amiri land refers to State-owned land where the State retains ultimate ownership, while individuals may hold legally recognized rights of use and disposition. Such tenure arrangements may create long-standing use rights without full private ownership and have direct implications for proof of rights and reconstruction eligibility.

Compensation refers to financial redress provided in lieu of restitution when return or reconstruction is not possible.

Co-ownership refers to situations where multiple persons hold undivided ownership shares in the same property or building, governed primarily by Legislative Decree No. 88/83 and related provisions.

Encroachment refers to construction or occupation on land without a valid legal right, including on public State land, private State land, municipal land, or land belonging to third parties. The legal consequences of encroachment vary depending on the legal status of the land and the applicable regularization framework.

Old Rent Law in Lebanon refers to lease contracts concluded before the post-war rent legislation, notably Laws No. 159 and 160 of 1992, which placed these contracts under a special statutory regime. Under this framework, rents were effectively frozen at very low historical values and landlords' ability to terminate the lease was strictly limited to specific grounds defined by law, such as demolition or major reconstruction. As a result, these contracts are not governed solely by general contract principles but by mandatory legal provisions that prioritize tenant protection and housing stability until the contract is lawfully terminated under the conditions set by the legislation

Owner refers to a person holding a legally recognized right over land or a building under Lebanese law, whether as a full owner or as a holder of a legally recognized right of disposition or use, where applicable.

Private State land is owned by the State as a private entity and may, under specific legal conditions, be sold, leased, or regularized.

Public State land forms part of the public domain and is reserved for public use; it is inalienable, not subject to regularization, and cannot be privately acquired.

Restitution refers to the restoration of housing, land or property rights to their lawful holders, including the right to return and to rebuild where legally and practically possible.

Surveyed land refers to land that has been officially surveyed and recorded in the cadastral system, while **non-surveyed land** refers to land for which boundaries and ownership details have not been formally established, often requiring alternative forms of evidence.

Tenant refers to a person lawfully occupying a property under a lease or rent arrangement, including under the old rent regime.

Methodology

This paper is grounded on a detailed legal analysis of the law done by NRC Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance staff and NRC contracted lawyers, as well as with interviews and consultations with some key experts and stakeholders. A list is included in Annex A.

In addition, in September 2025, NRC organized a one day-workshop with 29 municipal staff from 15 municipalities (mostly villages within 10 kilometres from the border) and a focus group discussion with 15 women in Nabatiyeh.

Building on these, a Technical Roundtable was organized in November in Saida with a range of stakeholders, including local authorities (governors, mayors and Council of the South's offices), civil engineers, lawyers, architects and representatives from the civil society.

These three steps pointed at converging concerns that are presented below. When available and useful, secondary elements from existing reports are mentioned.

International legal framework

The 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement³, together with the 2005 Pinheiro Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons⁴, are specifically designed to provide practical guidance to States, UN agencies and the broader international community on how best to address displacement-related challenges, including the protection of displaced persons and the restitution of housing, land and property rights.

The Pinheiro Principles stress the importance of consultation and participation in decision-making by displaced persons, consistent with the principle of free, prior and informed consent and the voluntariness of their return. They then outline approaches to technical issues of housing, land and property records, the rights of tenants and other non-owners and the question of secondary occupants. Legislative measures, the prohibition of arbitrary and discriminatory laws, the enforcement of restitution decisions and judgments and the issue of compensation are then explored.

International standards on internal displacement also establish broader non-discrimination obligations in relation to access to housing and shelter, including access to basic shelter and housing, without discrimination. These standards complement the Pinheiro Principles by underscoring the obligations of the State to ensure that housing-related responses to displacement do not exclude or disadvantage vulnerable groups.

³ [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#)

⁴ https://ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/pinheiro_principles.pdf

In practice, remedy can take different forms depending on local circumstances. It is rarely a complete return to the previous status quo. Any restitution process may involve a combination of return, negotiated tenure arrangements, facilitated sales of properties to which displaced persons did not wish to return, but over which they retained rights. Appropriate forms and amounts of compensation may be provided.

Many possible scenarios can emerge within the context of a restitution process. However, the central principles remain:

1. *Displaced people have a preferential right to housing and property restitution as a legal remedy;*
2. *Any divergence from this should be exceptional and fully justifiable in terms of the relevant law; and*
3. *All displaced people must be able to access durable solutions in conformity with their rights.*

Examples in and outside of Lebanon highlight that financial and political dimensions are fundamental in the actualization and prioritization of a compensation scheme - and can be extremely acute depending on context⁵. This paper will not reflect on these dimensions in detail, keeping a focus from the lens from communities, and local stakeholders in relation to accountability, HLP and gaps in the law.

Reconstruction in Lebanon

1970s, 1990s, 2006, 2020 – sadly, a rich experience to draw from

Since the 1970s, Lebanon established an expansive institutional infrastructure to deal with disasters, reconstruction, and displacement from man-made and natural disasters. Lebanon has passed several reconstruction laws over the past decades, each tied to a major episode of destruction. However, the country has not integrated the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement or the Pinheiro Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons in the laws.

Following the July 2006 war, the Government of Lebanon adopted compensation and reconstruction measures through the Council of the South and the High Relief Commission, backed by donor contributions. These were not consolidated into a law until 2014 (Law No. 263 of 15 April

⁵ For instance, while both restitution and compensation rights were enshrined in the Dayton Peace Accords ending the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the international community decided to focus solely on restitution and return and did not use the mechanism foreseen by the Accords to fund compensation of destroyed property. The fund remained empty, as donors feared that to compensate the displaced for their HLP, without return and restitution, would consolidate the objectives of ethnic cleansing, hence, perpetuating the outcomes of internationally codified crime.

2014 on the Reconstruction of Buildings Destroyed as a Result of the Israeli Aggression on Lebanon in 2006, published in the Official Gazette No. 17 of 22 April 2014).

The process of the 2006 restitution is often regarded as exceptionally complex, even when compared to comparable understanding in other post-conflict countries, and involved numerous actors, large sums of money and varied political interests. In 2008, NRC and the University of York conducted an evaluation⁶ and a comparison of the different compensation models, in order to provide recommendations on compensation and future emergency preparedness planning. It described for example that assessment for damage were fragmented through different lead agencies and/or donors, that accountability was weak, and that disbursed funds, while significant, were not distributed in a transparent fashion.

After the 2020 Beirut Port explosion, emergency decrees and donor driven initiatives were introduced to address housing and heritage damage, though without a comprehensive reconstruction law. Research conducted by NRC in 2021⁷ highlighted a series of challenges such as the risk of predatory real-estate developers' behaviours, the high level of informality on almost all aspects⁸ and the numerous complications which resulted from the lack of a unifying framework for reconstruction. A one-stop-shop set up was highly recommended in the Municipality of Beirut to facilitate permit processes, clarify steps, and unify criteria for all stakeholders, as many procedural steps remained ad-hoc, and dependent on individuals eager to facilitate processes rather than a matter of law. Although the contexts of these examples differ, some of the recommendations remain relevant in the context of the 2025 Reconstruction Law.

Scope of the 22/2025 Law

In light of the magnitude of the destruction and losses after the escalation with Israel, the need emerged for exceptional legislation aimed at supporting affected citizens and alleviating their financial burden, whether through tax exemptions, suspension of legal deadlines, or by addressing the status of real estate that has been damaged or destroyed.

Law No. 22/2025 of 11 July 2025, published in the Official Gazette No. 31 dated 17 July 2025, grants wide-ranging exemptions and relief measures to persons affected by the Israeli attacks on Lebanon. It suspends deadlines for tax obligations, exempts destroyed or damaged properties from built property tax, municipal fees, and utility charges, and waives fees for reconstruction permits. It also provides exemptions for damaged vehicles, donations, and assistance, while offering income tax relief and extended loss carry-forward provisions for affected businesses.

⁶ (PDF) [Housing Compensation & Disaster Preparedness in the Aftermath of the July 2006 War in South Lebanon](#), 2008, Norwegian Refugee Council and the University of York

⁷ [hlp-in-beirut-in-the-light-of-the-port-blast-executive-summary.pdf](#)

⁸ The spectrum of informal practices includes (i) informal building additions, (ii) informal contractual agreements, (iii) clouded property titles, (iv) informal landlordism or the practice of renting out an illegally held property, (v) informal service provision, (vi) informal evictions and recourse, (vii) informal practices surrounding mortgage holders, and (viii) informal claims to post-disaster compensations.

Article 12 specifically addresses the legal status and reconstruction of destroyed buildings. Basically, the law divides the properties in 5 categories:

- i- destroyed buildings constructed on their owner's land;
- ii- destroyed buildings constructed on land belonging to others;
- iii- destroyed buildings constructed on, or encroaching upon, public property;
- iv- destroyed buildings constructed in areas where building is prohibited; and
- v- destroyed buildings constructed on private State or municipal property.

The law allows *owners* to rebuild structures according to their prior legal condition, whether compliant or already subject to regularisation under other applicable laws. The law requires regularisation and payment of fees for illegal or partly illegal construction. In cases where buildings were constructed on land belonging to others, on public property, or in prohibited zones, reconstruction is restricted, and financial assistance is offered instead. Article 12 also provides a framework for reconstruction on State or municipal lands if the property owner is ready to buy the land, in an attempt to balance property rights with public safety and legal compliance.

However, the law does not present a proper framework on how surveys should be conducted, how timelines are set, or what studies are needed. It also does not mention compensation or consider instances of HLP documentation challenges. It therefore mainly addresses those who already have funds to rebuild and relatively clear property rights -which are only a fraction of the affected people, failing to include complex HLP cases, tenants' rights, or women specific HLP needs.

Moreover, most provisions are contingent on implementing decrees that have not yet been issued, which continues to limit their effectiveness in practice. While some initial implementing decisions have been issued by the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities and the Ministry of Finance, these remain limited in scope. For example, Decision No. 1868 issued by the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities introduces temporary exemptions from selected fees and administrative charges for buildings damaged or destroyed as a result of the hostilities and limits reconstruction to the pre-existing structure without expansion. It also introduces a documentation mechanism requiring verification of damage through an official report issued by the Internal Security Forces, in addition to a certification by the competent municipality confirming the situation on the ground.

However, these decisions do not address broader legal and procedural issues, including eligibility criteria for complex HLP cases, co-ownership, tenants' rights, encroachment, reconstruction timelines, or dispute resolution mechanisms. As a result, significant legal and procedural gaps persist, and this was also apparent in NRC's consultations. One respondent described a "*legal framework full of gaps, ambiguities and inequalities*". Another one agreed that "*the law is an important step but is not enough*".

Inherent challenges to HLP issues in Lebanon, in particular in the South

The HLP context in Lebanon faces a range of structural and institutional challenges and weaknesses, and these are even more evident in Southern Lebanon. One participant in the roundtable qualified the state of HLP in South Lebanon as a “*forest of violations*”, where there is a low number of buildings with permits, and even the ones with permits “*often exceed the permit by adding floors*”.

In Lebanon, the Directorate General of Land Registry and Cadastre (DLRC) oversees property registration. Many records remain incomplete or inconsistent. Surveys often fail to clearly demarcate boundaries, and cadastral maps are not always updated. This undermines trust in the system and makes property transactions or compensation processes vulnerable to disputes. A participant in the technical roundtable noted: “*land was never surveyed in many southern towns*”. This creates an immense legal barrier to proving ownership and obtaining rebuilding permits. A key informant also flagged that many informal areas are built on very large plots that are not subdivided, with hundreds of houses on each parcel. Ownership is tangled, and therefore legal processes become extremely difficult.

The Lebanese cadastre system also suffers from structural weaknesses, outdated records, and poor enforcement, and these problems are magnified in South Lebanon due to conflict-related destruction and displacement. 65 percent of the overall land in Lebanon are surveyed, while 35 percent are not surveyed⁹. While private State lands are registered in the land registry, public State lands are not registered at all¹⁰. Thus, the government does not have access to reliable information on its own property assets.

This lack of reliability undermines property rights, complicates restitution, and increases the risk of disputes in housing compensation and reconstruction. If land and property were not surveyed, its boundaries, coordinates and dimensions are not stored in State archives. In such cases, individuals may have some HLP documents, but they may not prove full legal ownership, and copies are not recorded by State bodies. If these documents are destroyed or lost, parties must reach an agreement on what details they contain, including land dimensions.

IOM conducted a rapid needs assessment¹¹ on HLP issues for people in the South and confirmed that in the South, inconsistent land surveying may lead to potential land disputes. A key informant

⁹ The Policy Initiative, 2022, Land Enclosure in the Wake of Lebanon’s Multiple Crises,

¹⁰ Under Lebanese law, State land is divided into private State land and public State land based on its legal nature and function, not ownership alone (Decision No. 3339 of 12 November 1930, as amended). Private State land, including certain amiri lands, forms part of the State’s private domain and is subject to registration in the land registry and private-law rules. Public State land, including protected public land and land allocated for public use or public service, forms part of the public domain, is inalienable, and is generally not registered in the land registry, as it is governed by public-law rules.

¹¹ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/117832>, HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION IN THE SOUTH OF LEBANON: A RAPID NEEDS ASSESSMENT, IOM, July 2025

also confirmed that border villages, owing to proximity to the Blue Line, have poor delineation of property.

Many people lost housing, land, and property documentation during displacement, further weakening tenure security. Communities reported varying degrees of knowledge about how to restore missing documentation, highlighting a lack of clarity and accessibility in the system, and women in particular face specific HLP challenges, where they tend to have limited information and ownership documentation.

In the consultation with Mokhtars and mayors, they confirmed that they play a key role in issuing attestations related to possession or ownership, particularly where formal documentation is missing or incomplete. In some villages, this also relies on the knowledge of local elders, who are familiar with the history of land use and buildings and can help confirm long-standing possession or use, as well as the existence and condition of a property before the damage. This reflects the type of local verification now partly used under recent implementing decisions to confirm the situation on the ground. However, these practices vary by location and do not replace formal survey or technical assessment procedures.

Key findings

The Reconstruction Law remains an important step towards the development of a legal framework which can support households and communities to rebuild. The financial measures proposed have a potential impact to kick-start reconstruction for some. In comparison to previous similar situations, the Law is also timely.

The section below seeks to highlight findings from the legal analysis conducted and NRC-led community consultations.

Complex cases requiring legal or technical clarifications

Co-ownership

“*Co-ownership nightmare*” was one expression used by a participant in the Technical Roundtable, also recalling the experience of the 2006 post-war reconstruction, where the absence of specific provisions addressing co-ownership in the exceptional reconstruction framework, combined with existing co-ownership rules and administrative practice, often resulted in the need for unanimous agreement among co-owners in order to start the rehabilitations. The 2008 evaluation conducted by NRC and the University of York highlighted that the compensation process for co-owned buildings was bureaucratically complex and socially contentious. Damage was assessed at the building level, but compensation had to be divided among multiple owners. This created disputes because different owners often had different levels of damage (e.g., one apartment destroyed, another only partially affected). Owners had to coordinate reconstruction collectively, since

rebuilding required agreement on shared structures (foundations, walls, roofs). Disagreements among co-owners often delayed reconstruction, leaving some families displaced longer. Co-owned buildings were among the slowest to be rebuilt, because reconstruction required collective decision making and pooled resources. Families in these buildings were more likely to remain displaced or return to unsafe, partially repaired homes.

The key informants consulted confirmed, that reconstruction in co-owned buildings is often delayed due to consent requirements among co-owners under the legal framework governing co-ownership of buildings, in particular Legislative Decree No. 88/83 on the ownership of floors and apartments, sometimes interpreted in practice in light of Article 20 of Legislative Decree No. 3339 of 12 November 1930 on real property rights. This can result in a requirement for a high level of consent where works are perceived to affect common parts or the legal status of the building, which makes the process extremely heavy and delays the realization of people's rights. While for common areas in buildings, Article 12 of the Reconstruction law makes reference to Legislative Decree No. 88/88 for unitized buildings, that gives a possible exception to "only" 75percent of owners needing to consent in case the buildings are out of use because of the severity of damage and less than 60percent of the amounts for reconstruction has been secured.

In the workshop with Mokhtars, it was suggested that Mokhtars and municipal representatives can organize a committee to help resolve amicably disagreements between co-owners.

Encroachment

Participants in the Roundtable estimated that a "significant portion" of the destroyed buildings are without permits and "on State, municipal or public land". The provisions in the current law include such cases in Article 12 section 3 and section 5, by which residents are not granted the right to rebuild unless they either regularize or purchase the land.

Section 3 adds that "*if reconstruction is impossible because the larger part of the building is located on public property, the owner of the destroyed building shall be granted financial assistance.*" There is a reference to future decrees that will clarify this process as well as the amount of compensation. Similarly, there are no details on the purchase option - how prices will be set up, whether the occupants will have priority, whether other potential buyers can bid, etc.

The absence of more detailed guidance was often presented as a good illustration of how top-level the law currently is. Local officials who participated in the Technical Roundtable express that this put them "*between a rock and a hard place*" as they are "*torn*" between the need for people to have a roof and the requirement to enforce the law.

The lack of provision for tenants

The Law is entirely targeted at property owners, and no provision is made for tenants. As such, it risks excluding tenants from reconstruction and restitution-related processes and runs counter to

international standards on equal treatment of displaced persons. Principle 13 of the Pinheiro Principles includes that States should ensure that users of housing, land and/or property, including tenants, have the right to participate in the restitution claims process, including through the filing of collective restitution claims.

This issue is not new in Lebanon. A key informant recalled that this was already the case in the aftermath of Beirut Port explosion in 2020, since the Building Law grants landlords alone the right to apply for repairs: *“If a landlord refuses, tenants have no legal avenue to demand it”*. After the port explosion, some landlords refused to restore damaged buildings even when tenants offered to pay themselves, preferring to have the buildings demolished, hoping to profit later from redevelopment and investment opportunities especially where tenants benefited from the ‘old rent law’¹², which allows only narrow reasons for eviction of tenants, which does include demolition of a building).

Decrees developed as part of the Reconstruction Law should introduce special provisions for tenants by which in a damaged building, either a landlord or a tenant should be able to apply for a repair permit and benefit from the relevant financial incentives currently included in the Law – understanding additional measures could be introduced to ensure owner’s awareness and non-objection.

There are additional concerns for the “old-rent tenants”, particularly at risk of eviction or exclusion, especially in urban areas like Tyre. Under Law No. 194/2020¹³, issued following the Beirut Port explosion, residential and non-residential lease contracts in the affected areas were automatically extended for a full year from the date of publication of the law (until 22 October 2021), and landlords were prohibited from evicting tenants or increasing rent during this period

Gender considerations to HLP rights

The fourth Pinheiro Principles focuses on the HLP rights of women, requesting that States “take positive measure to ensure gender equality” in HLP matters to remedy the effects of de facto or de jure discrimination on the basis of sex or social roles. According to article 7 of the Lebanese Constitution, women have the same rights as men to conclude contracts and own and administer properties. There are 15 separate personal status laws in Lebanon (based on different religious sects), which govern different aspects such as marriage and divorce but also inheritance. In general, women are granted inferior rights with respect to property acquisition and retention¹⁴.

Two women participants in the Focus Group Discussion flagged that gold and jewellery is usually part of the endowment and remains the wife’s possession. Some women are asked by their husband

¹² The “old rent” law refers to rent contracts concluded prior to the adoption of the post-war rent legislation, notably Rent Acts No. 159 and 160 of 1992, which froze rents and significantly restricted the grounds for eviction. Under this legal framework, demolition of a building is one of the limited circumstances in which a landlord may lawfully terminate an old rent contract.

¹³ Law no. 194/20 aimed at protecting the areas affected by the Beirut Port explosion and supporting their reconstruction, published in the Official Gazette No. 41 on 22 October 2020.

¹⁴ [Lebanon | Arab Land Initiative](#)

to sell their gold to pay for reconstruction and indicated they were doubtful they would be reimbursed once the compensation is received.

The evaluation of the 2006 compensation schemes evidenced that female-headed households have experienced greater delays and faced additional complication when accessing compensation mechanisms. It suggested that a special commission for women should be established to monitor and ideally fast-track access to compensation for women and women-headed households.

Women who participated in the focus group discussion flagged the need to increase women's awareness about the law and the processes. They also expressed that every committee should intentionally include women's participation, including by law-set quotas - reporting that they hardly see any women participating in official gatherings or reconstruction programmes launches.

Measures that could be relevant for Lebanon could include the design of special programmes aimed at assisting women to submit restitution claims, and gender-sensitivity training for officials entrusted with HLP-restitution matters, involving women's organisations in committees and outreach.

Heavily damaged areas

A take-away from the Technical Roundtable is that areas with a high level of destruction may warrant a specific approach. The destruction in the border villages is described as "unique, with demolitions, bulldozing and tools of eradication". Participants called for a trauma-informed process that integrates in the process the psychological and community well-being. Material evidence of building or property limits may have been erased. As these villages are often close to the border and therefore are likely to have poor land records, the production of reliable evidence on the detailed property is unlikely. One way would be to standardise the typology of housing (e.g. small/medium/big) and agricultural land (e.g. land size and land use) and include alternative evidence including community and local authority validation. This should extend not only to the delineation of a property but also to the state of the property prior to destruction as the current law only allows exemptions to rebuild to pre-conflict condition.

It is important to note that the destruction of property does not extinguish ownership rights. Compensation or restitution mechanisms must continue to recognize original property rights even when physical structures no longer exist. In heavily destroyed areas, restitution should first be understood as restoration of legal title and rights, even if physical reconstruction is delayed due to access or lack of financial resources. Legal uncertainty fuels secondary occupation, land grabbing, and displacement.

The 2006 evaluation found that 21.7percent of families had not returned to permanent housing more than two years after the war, with the worst-hit villages contributing heavily to this figure.

In 2008, IOM¹⁵ compiled 10 case studies on compensation schemes. More detailed information is provided below under section on Valuation and Compensation. It includes the notion of “area-based compensation” approaches whereby villages are rebuilt as village, e.g. not ad hoc but a holistic plan by including shared infrastructure and services that makes returns possible to avoid protracted or permanent displacement. The review also highlights that the higher the level of destruction and compensation involved, the stronger the need for reliable bodies and transparency, as large scale destruction usually increases political pressure and risk of capture. NRC’s report on HLP after the Beirut Blast also suggests that area-based recovery approaches should be considered.

Governance

Any mechanism must show transparency, clarity on the processes and the indicators, and include appeals mechanisms.

As per Principle 20 of the Pinheiro Principles, States should designate specific public agencies to be entrusted with enforcing HLP-restitution decisions and judgments. They should ensure, through law and other appropriate means, that all spheres of government, including local and national governments and authorities, are legally obligated to respect, implement and enforce HLP-restitution decisions and judgments made by relevant bodies.

NRC consultations included different layers of local authorities, including Mokhtars, mayors and municipality members, the Council of the South, and a Governor’s Office. These people see themselves as the ones who will have to apply the laws and will be held accountable by their constituents. They requested clear legal frameworks and budget to manage the reconstruction at their level. They also see themselves as representing the communities directly affected by the destruction and displacement and call for a tighter connection between them and the central level in Beirut.

Women in the focus discussion requested women’s participation. They also called for the fewest number of intermediaries.

A fair and effective reconstruction process in Lebanon requires an institutional framework that brings together ministries, official agencies, local authorities, and committees representing affected families, acknowledging where they may be existing initial forms of organisation. Such a framework must be multi-layered, combining ministries responsible for surveys, compensation, and reconstruction with unions of municipalities and representatives of the affected population.

Transparency and disclosure must be the minimum foundation for participation; without them, communities are left in uncertainty and distrust, undermining the legitimacy of reconstruction

¹⁵ [property restitution compensation.pdf](#), IOM, 2008 The “old rent” regime refers to rent contracts concluded prior to the adoption of the post-war rent laws, notably Rent Acts No. 159 and 160 of 1992, which froze rents and significantly restricted grounds for eviction. Under this regime, demolition of a building is one of the limited circumstances in which a landlord may lawfully terminate an old rent contract.

efforts. Communication is key, including consultations with affected families and civil society groups. It may also help to curb rumours, manage expectations, and ensure transparency with regard to all aspects of the process so that the programme not only be fair and unbiased, but also be perceived as such.

Valuation and Compensation: transparent management of expectations

IOM has compiled¹⁶ 10 case studies of compensation schemes reviewing seven key topics: 1- the legal framework of claims programmes, 2-their organisational structure and 3- their funding structure, 4- inheritance issues, 5- the legal remedies available against programme decisions, 6- the issues surrounding secondary occupancy in property restitution programmes and 7- the methodologies developed for the valuation of losses in compensation programmes. Several features can be found in practically all claims' programmes:

- Large numbers of cases that effectively exclude the possibility of resolving them within the domestic court system;
- High expectations within the affected communities and strong political pressure to deliver results in a short period of time; and
- Limited financial and human resources available to administer the programme and/or to fund compensation or in-kind benefits.

The challenge is therefore to balance individual aspirations with the necessity to bring a just solution to all claimants within a reasonable timeframe, while striving for a fair and efficient process. The IOM compilation suggests that the higher the destruction, the more standardised and collective valuation makes sense. It also stresses that speed and equity matter more than perfect accuracy.

The current law does not give details about the assessment of damage, possible valuation or compensation. The MOIM decision issued in December on Article 2 of the law does clarify that verification of damage through an official report issued by the Internal Security Forces documenting the condition of the building before and after the damage, in addition to a certification issued by the competent municipality confirming the actual situation on the ground. In practice, however, the decision does not explain how the pre-damage condition should be established when a building has been fully destroyed and no physical traces remain. This challenge was raised during focus group discussions, where municipal engineers noted that in some instances, they were unable to carry out damage assessments because the property had been completely destroyed.

¹⁶ [property restitution compensation.pdf](#), IOM, 2008 The "old rent" regime refers to rent contracts concluded prior to the adoption of the post-war rent laws, notably Rent Acts No. 159 and 160 of 1992, which froze rents and significantly restricted grounds for eviction. Under this regime, demolition of a building is one of the limited circumstances in which a landlord may lawfully terminate an old rent contract.

The 2006 experience, where different reconstruction schemes used different systems has fuelled a sentiment of opacity and corruption. The NRC-University of York report explains that valuation techniques for housing compensation after the July 2006 war were fragmented and inconsistent, with different actors applying their own models to assess damage. The Council of the South and Jihad al Bina'a each used separate approaches, while donors such as Qatar and the Kuwait Fund sometimes bypassed State institutions altogether. This lack of a unified system produced contradictory results, with official figures often presenting discrepancies with community-level surveys. The Council of the South's use of a private audit firm is reported to have increased delays and political influence rather than improving transparency.

The same report also highlights that determining the level of damage for a housing unit proved to be the most important and contentious component of the compensation process. It proved exceptionally difficult given the lack of land records indicating which structures had existed in which areas. While damage to an intact house may be relatively simple to assess, engineers and others involved in the process found it difficult to ascertain how many floors and units had existed in a particular building. As per the 2006 compensation scheme evaluation, this has led to disputes on units' size or units' number in a given building. This has been also discussed in the Technical Roundtable and focus group discussions -while there is collective knowledge about the ownership certificate at local level, there were instances where the engineers were not able to provide any damage assessment as they came to evaluate a fully destroyed building.

Clearly, valuation is a policy choice, not a purely technical one. Compensation bodies fail when they are politicized, perceived as biased or linked to conflict actors. It is important that the next steps address this as NRC engagement with local stakeholders has shown that frustrations vis-à-vis the State is already high – municipal actors feel they have to navigate this very complex issue alone, and that they have not been engaged in the process thus far.

This report recommends that future compensation processes adopt a single, independent valuation system, involve communities in participatory assessments, and links any financial payouts to quality standards and structural safety rather than treating compensation as an end in itself.

Recommendations

This report suggests the following recommendations intended for stakeholders engaged with reconstruction in Lebanon, including policy makers, donors, and civil society actors.

Overall, reconstruction should **adopt a right-based approach**, anchoring reconstruction firmly in the Pinheiro Principles, ensuring displaced persons' preferential right to restitution and equal treatment for owners, tenants, women and vulnerable groups.

Further recommendations are divided into two sections, the first focusing on implementation and set up of reconstruction processes, and the second relating to promoting accountability and transparency for affected communities and stakeholders.

On the process set up:

1. **Institutionalise transparency:** Develop a standardised methodology for assessing housing damage and valuing compensation, with community/local authorities' validation in areas lacking records. Integrate an appeal system, developed in consultation with local inputs and clearly laid out from the inception.
2. **Strengthen land governance:** Accelerate cadastral surveys, digitise property records, and clarify ownership in un-surveyed areas to reduce disputes and improve tenure security.
3. **Elaborate decrees that will provide sufficient guidance for the complex property ownership/occupancy cases, such as**
 - Amend application decrees to allow tenants to apply for repair permits and safeguard old-rent tenants from eviction,
 - Provide clarity on the process for buildings with illegal encroachments, in particular when State land is open to purchase – how is the price set, who has priority to buy, etc.
 - Consider a dedicated process for villages which are heavily damaged or completely destroyed.
4. **Gender-sensitive outreach:** Launch awareness campaigns for women on their HLP rights, train officials in gender-sensitive restitution, and establish fast-track channels for women-headed households.

On ensuring accountability and transparency of the process

5. **Community participation:** Institutionalize consultation and clear communication and disclosure with affected families, local authorities, and civil society to ensure legitimacy and trust in the process - including particular attention to gender-sensitive restitution. This will be essential to **manage expectations and reduce misinformation**.

6. **Conflict resolution mechanisms:** Create municipal-level committees (including Mokhtars, elders, engineers, and women representatives) to mediate co-ownership disputes and facilitate collective reconstruction.
7. **Capacity building:** Provide municipalities with capacity, technical training, and legal guidance to manage reconstruction locally. Consider a help-desk system for claimants.

Annex A: list of key informants and consultations

Key informants:

1. Abir Saksouk / The Public Works Studio, September 2025
2. Nizar Saghie, Legal Agenda, September 2025

Focus Group Discussion with Women Led-Organisations, September 2025 – 15 women attended; held in Nabatiyeh

Workshop on the reconstruction law with Mokhtars and Municipal members – September 2025 – 29 participants (28 men, 1 women), held in Saida

Technical Roundtable on the implementation on reconstruction law, November 2025, 14 participants including from the Government (at Council, Union and Governor level), lawyers, Architects, Engineers, think tanks, and civil society actors, held in Saida

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[Land Enclosure in the Wake of Lebanon's Multiple Crisis - the Policy Initiative.](#)