REPUBLIC OF LEBANON MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Public Finance Monitor

August 2020

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General Overview

The challenging economic conditions have weighted heavily on the public finances during the period of Jan-Aug 2020, affecting both revenues and expenditures. Government revenues witnessed a remarkable year-on-year drop of LL 2,351 billion (20.2 percent) during the first eight months of 2020. The decrease in revenues was mainly driven by lower collections from the value added tax, the income tax on profits, as well as lower transfers from the telecom sector.

On the expenditure front, the Government decision to withhold payments due on Eurobonds starting March 2020 has led to a decrease in total spending by LL 2,979 billion (18.5 percent) as interest payments plunged down by LL 2,844 billion (59.0 percent).

The total fiscal balance registered a deficit of LL 3,821 billion during Jan-Aug 2020 compared to a deficit of LL 4,449 billion during the same period of 2019. In contrast, the primary balance witnessed a significant deterioration from a surplus of LL 556 billion in Jan-Aug 2019 to LL a deficit of 1,713 billion in Jan-Aug 2020.

Table 1: Summary of Fiscal Performance

(LL billion)	Jan-Aug	Jan-Aug	% Change
	2019	2020	2020/2019
Total Budget and Treasury Receipts	11,613	9,262	-20.2%
Total Budget and Treasury Payments, of which	16,062	13,083	-18 . 5%
Interest Payments	4,817	1,973	-59.0%
Concessional loans principal payments (1)	188	135	-28.2%
Primary Expenditures (2)	11,057	10,975	-0.7%
Total (Deficit)/Surplus	-4,449	-3,821	-14.1%
Primary (Deficit)/Surplus	556	-1,713	-

Source: Ministry of Finance (MOF), Directorate General of Finance (DGF)

Revenues

Total revenues decreased by LL 2,351 billion (20.2 percent) year-on-year to reach LL 9,262 billion during Jan-Aug 2020.

Tax revenues reached a total of LL 6,920 billion in the first eight months of the year, reflecting a LL 2,281 billion (24.8 percent)¹ decrease from a total of LL 9,201 billion recorded during the same period of last year. This deterioration was driven by a drop in the majority of tax items with some exceptions witnessed at the level of the tax on interest income, the real estate registration fees and the gasoline excise.

The main decrease was witnessed in domestic taxes on goods and services which dropped by LL 1,273 billion (44.0 percent) year-on-year in Jan-Aug 2020, driven by a LL 1,199 billion (49.7 percent) decline in the value added tax². In details, both VAT collected at customs and VAT collected internally decreased year-on-year over the covered period by 55.6 percent and 42.0 percent, respectively. Also, passenger departure tax and private car registration fees decreased by LL 79 billion (63.9 percent) and LL 59 billion

 $^{^{(1)}}$ Includes only Principal repayments of concessional loans earmarked for project financing

⁽²⁾ Primary expenditures exclude debt related payments (Interest payments and Concessional loans principal repayment)

¹ This year-on-year decrease is partly driven by the general mobilization and lockdown imposed by the Government to counteract the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent extension of all deadlines for tax declarations and payments.

² Mirroring the contraction in private consumption, which is the main driver of the economic growth in Lebanon.



(43.1 percent) respectively during Jan-Aug 2020. These drops were partly couterbalanced by an increase in transfers from the Régie profits which registered LL 268 billion during Jan-Aug 2020 compared to LL 200 billion during the same period of 2019.

Taxes on income, profits and capital gains significantly dropped by LL 669 billion (16.5 percent) year-on-year in Jan-Aug 2020, driven by a drastic year-on-year drop in income tax on profits and income tax on capital gains & dividends by LL 975 billion (74.1 percent) and LL 242 billion (72.1 percent) respectively. Income tax on wages and salaries also decreased by LL 121 billion (18.1 percent). In contrast, taxes on interest income increased significantly by LL 679 billion (39.7 percent) to reach LL 2,390 billion during the mentioned period.

In addition, taxes on international trade dropped by LL 444 billion (34.5 percent) as collections from customs and excises dropped by LL 251 billion (55.8 percent) and LL 193 billion (23.0 percent) respectively. In fact, cars excise were down by LL 142 billion (63.2 percent), owing to a 70.8 percent decrease in the value of imported vehicles. Also, tobacco excise decreased by LL 79 billion (68.4 percent), driven by a 57.3 percent year-on-year decline in the value of tobacco imports. In contrast, gasoline excise increased by LL 32 billion (6.5 percent) as a result of the floor price for gasoline set by the Council of Ministers on March 12, 2020³ which more than offset the volume effect of gasoline imports witnessing a year-on-year drop of 21.3 percent.

Other tax revenues (namely fiscal stamp fees) decreased by LL 94 billion (24.5 percent) to reach LL 289 billion in Jan-Aug 2020.

In contrast, taxes on property registered a LL 199 billion (34.2 percent) increase in Jan-Aug 2020, mainly as real estate registration fees witnessed a significant year-on-year rise of LL 275 billion (85.6 percent)⁴, of which an increase of LL 43 billion registered between August 2019 and August 2020. This rise came as a result of the increasing appetite for real estate as a safer alternative for bank depositors starting late-2019. This trend regained momentum after the adoption of a 5-step opening plan by the Council of Ministers on 24 April 2020. On the other hand, built property tax and inheritance fees dropped by LL 59 billion (31.5 percent) and by LL 16 billion (23.9 percent), respectively.

Non-tax revenues declined by LL 694 billion (36.6 percent) to reach LL 1,204 billion during the first eight months of 2020.

Income from Public Institutions and Government properties witnessed a year-on-year drop of LL 630 billion (54.1 percent) over the covered period, as transfers from the Telecom Surplus, revenues from Port of Beirut and property income (namely rent of Rafic Hariri International Airport) declined by LL 390 billion (56.5 percent), LL 150 billion (68.1 percent) and LL 45 billion (55.0 percent), respectively.

Moreover, administrative fees and charges dropped by LL 107 billion (19.5 percent) reaching LL 442 billion over the period under review, due to a decrease in all its subcategories, except for the vehicle control fees which rose by LL 35 billion (24.2 percent). In details, passport fees, administrative charges and notary fees fell by LL 74 billion (41.6 percent), LL 16 billion (53.0 percent) and LL 14 billion (31.1 percent), respectively.

³ COM decision #16 dated 12/03/2020 has set a floor price of LL 24,000 for gasoline-98 octanes and LL 23,500 for gasoline-95 octanes, stipulating also that the surplus generated due to the fall in international fuel prices will be considered as an additional revenue under "gasoline excise".

⁴ As per the data from the General Directorate of Land Registry and Cadastre, the number of sold properties increased by 44.7 percent during Jan-Aug 2020 while their average price increased by 47.2 percent compared to the same period last year.



On the other hand, other non-tax revenues (mostly retirement deductibles) increased by LL 56 billion (35.4 percent), as deductibles related to military salaries and retirement⁵ generated LL 34 billion during Jan-Aug 2020. In addition, exceptional revenues from the settlement of violations related to maritime properties reached LL 24 billion during Jan-Aug 2020 compared to nil a year earlier.

Treasury receipts witnessed a significant increase of LL 623 billion to reach LL 1,139 billion in Jan-Aug 2020 compared to LL 515 billion during the same period of the 2019⁶. The reason behind this substantial rise was a refund transaction of LL 644 billion executed during the month of April as the deal between the Central Bank and the Ministry of Finance to reverse the coupon payments related to Jan-Mar 2020 materialized. This refund was registered under treasury receipts, and will be used gradually to cover other interest payments due during 2020⁷.

Expenditures

Total expenditures regressed by LL 2,979 billion (18.5 percent) to reach LL 13,083 billion in Jan-Aug 2020 compared to LL 16,062 billion in Jan-Aug 2019.

Current primary expenditures⁸ showed no change when compared to the same period of last year, registering a total of LL 9,150 billion. In details, some items witnessed a year-on-year increase during the period under consideration, mainly those covering transfers to the Higher Council of Relief, hospitals, retirement and medicaments by LL 225 billion⁹, LL 150 billion, LL 141 billion and LL 85 billion, respectively. These increases were offset by a year-on-year drop in other expenditure items, mainly transfers to Electricité du Liban (EDL) by LL 561 billion (37.1 percent) and end of service compensations by LL 329 billion (55.2 percent).

Interest payments dropped by LL 2,844 billion (59.0 percent) in Jan-Aug 2020 as interest payments due on foreign currency debt decreased significantly by LL 1,602 billion (88.3 percent) after the Government opted to default on its maturing Eurobonds in March 2020. Moreover, interest payments on local currency debt decreased by LL 1,242 billion (41.3 percent) over the covered period. Foreign debt principal repayment also dropped by LL 53 billion (28.2 percent) to register a total of LL 135 billion during Jan-Aug 2020.

Capital expenditures decreased significantly by LL 333 billion (46.9 percent) to reach LL 377 billion in Jan-Aug 2020, mainly as expenses related to maintenance, transfers to CDR, and transfers to the Higher Council of Relief dropped by LL 123 billion (51.9 percent), LL 97 billion (55.1 percent) and LL 20 billion (100.0 percent), respectively.

Treasury expenditures witnessed an increase of LL 187 billion (18.7 percent) to reach LL 1,185 billion in Jan-Aug 2020. This came despite the drop in payments to municipalities, deposits and VAT refund which shrank by LL 163 billion (36.1 percent), LL 113 billion (49.9 percent) and LL 83 billion (41.5 percent) respectively during the period under consideration.

⁵ New deductibles introduced as per 2019 Budget law #144 dated 31 July 2019.

⁶ It is worth mentioning that treasury receipts are transitory in nature and as such, variations in these collections are usually not reflective of the economic activity.

 $^{^{7}}$ These payments are classified under other treasury expenditures, resulting in the hike shown in table 5.

⁸ Current primary expenditures represent current expenditures excluding interest payment and debt service.

⁹ This consists of treasury advances granted to the Higher Council of Relief dated 2 April 2020 and 8 June 2020 as part of the social safety net targeting the most vulnerable households. It covers a disbursement of an amount of LL 400,000 per household.



Public Debt

Gross public debt stood at LL 142,119 billion by the end of August 2020, increasing by LL 3,969 billion (2.9 percent) from end-2019. On the other hand, net debt rose more rapidly by 4.5 percent to reach LL 127,939 billion as public sector deposits dropped by LL 1,497 billion (9.5 percent) over the period under consideration.

Local currency debt increased by LL 1,728 billion (2.0 percent) to register LL 89,007 billion as of end-August 2020, compared to LL 87,279 billion as at end-2019. In details, local currency debt held by the Central Bank increased by LL 2,279 billion (4.5 percent) to reach LL 52,996 billion by the end of August 2020, followed by a smaller rise in other local currency debt holdings with TBs held by public entities increasing by LL 213 billion (2.1 percent) to reach LL 10,181 billion. In contrast, TBs held by commercial banks dropped by LL 722 billion (2.9 percent) to reach LL 24,594 billion by the end of August 2020.

The stock of **foreign currency debt** grew by LL 2,241 billion (4.4 percent) to reach LL 53,112 billion at end-Aug 2020. In details, this increase was mainly driven by a LL 1,809 billion of arrears in coupons due to the Government decision to default on Eurobonds, adding to a LL 127 billion of accrued interest in arrears. Also, bilateral, multilateral and foreign private sector loans increased by LL 85 billion, whereas Paris III related debt decreased by LL 43 billion compared to the end of 2019. As for the stock of marketissued Eurobonds, it remained unchanged at a level of LL 47,206 billion, including an amount of LL 3,769 billion as arrears in principal as of end-August 2020.



SECTION 1: REVENUE OUTCOME

Table 2: Total Revenues

(LL billion)	2019	2020	% Change
(LE Billion)	Jan-Aug	Jan-Aug	2020/2019
Budget Revenues, of which:	11,098	8,123	-26.8%
Tax Revenues	9,201	6,920	-24.8%
Non-Tax Revenues	1,897	1,204	-36.6%
Treasury Receipts	515	1,139	120.9%
Total Revenues	11,613	9,262	-20.2%

Source: MOF, DGF

Table 3: Tax Revenues

(LL billion)	2019	2020	% Change
	Jan-Aug	Jan-Aug	2020/2019
Tax Revenues:	9,201	6,920	-24 . 8%
Taxes on Income, Profits, & Capital Gains, of which:	4,053	3,384	-16.5%
Income Tax on Profits	1,316	341	-74.1%
Income Tax on Wages and Salaries	666	545	-18.1%
Income Tax on Capital Gains & Dividends	336	94	-72 . 1%
Tax on Interest Income	1,711	2,390	39.7%
Penalties on Income Tax	24	14	-39.8%
Taxes on Property, of which:	581	780	34.2%
Built Property Tax	187	128	-31.5%
Real Estate Registration Fees	322	597	85.6%
Domestic Taxes on Goods & Services, of which:	2,896	1,623	-44.0%
Value Added Tax	2,413	1,214	-49.7%
Other Taxes on Goods and Services, of which:	262	123	-53.0%
Private Car Registration Fees	137	78	-43.1%
Passenger Departure Tax	124	45	-63.9%
Taxes on International Trade, of which:	1,288	844	-34.5%
Customs	451	199	-55.8%
Excises, of which:	838	645	-23.0%
Gasoline Excise	488	519	6.5%
Tobacco Excise	116	37	-68.4%
Cars Excise	226	83	-63.2%
Other Tax Revenues (namely fiscal stamp fees)	383	289	-24.5%



Table 4: Non-Tax Revenue

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2019	2020	% Change
Jan-Aug	Jan-Aug	2020/2019
1,897	1,204	-36.6%
1.165	535	-54.1%
	333	
1,018	434	-57•4%
80	47	-40.8%
220	70	-68.1%
26	17	-36.5%
690	300	-56 . 5%
60	60	-0.5%
83	37	-55.0%
4	4	-18.8%
549	442	-19.5%
434	354	-18.3%
44	30	-31.1%
177	103	-41.6%
146	181	24.2%
21	19	-10.4%
14	8	-42.8%
31	14	-53.0%
2	1	-44.1%
57	49	-14.8%
26	24	-8.0%
25	12	-49.7%
158	214	35.4%
	1,897 1,165 1,018 80 220 26 690 60 83 4 549 434 44 177 146 21 14 31 2 57 26 25	1,897 1,204 1,165 535 1,018 434 80 47 220 70 26 17 690 300 60 60 83 37 4 4 549 442 434 354 44 30 177 103 146 181 21 19 14 8 31 14 2 1 57 49 26 24 25 12



SECTION **2: E**XPENDITURE **O**UTCOME

Table 5: Expenditure by Economic Classification

(LL billion)	2019 Jan-Aug	2020 Jan-Aug	% Change 2020/2019
1. Current Expenditures	14,155	11,258	-20.5%
1.a Personnel Cost, of which	6,691	6,540	-2.3%
Salaries, Wages and social benefits	4,054	4,083	0.7%
Retirement and End of Service Compensations, of which:	2,349	2,161	-8.0%
Retirement	1,754	1,894	8.0%
End of Service	595	267	-55.2%
Transfers to Public Institutions to Cover Salaries	287	296	3.0%
1.b Interest Payments, of which: (1)	4,817	1,973	-59.0%
Domestic Interest Payments	3,003	1,762	-41.3%
Foreign Interest Payments	1,813	212	-88.3%
1.d Foreign Debt Principal Repayment	188	135	-28.2%
1.e Materials and Supplies, of which:	197	245	24.8%
Nutrition	35	35	0.9%
Fuel Oil	24	4	-82.4%
Medicaments	79	164	107.4%
1.f External Services	95	106	11.7%
1.g Various Transfers, of which:	1,779	1,725	-3.1%
EDL (2)	1,513	952	-37.1%
NSSF	0	0	-
Higher Council of Relief	0	225	-
Contributions to non-public sectors	159	147	-7.9%
Transfers to Directorate General of Cereals and Beetroot (3)	12	0	-100.0%
1.h Other Current, of which:	314	468	49.0%
Hospitals	243	393	61.5%
Others(judgments & reconciliations, mission costs, other)	69	71	2.7%
1.i Other Financial expenses	1	0	-100.0%
1.j Interest subsidy	73	65	-11.2%
2. Capital Expenditures	710	377	-46.9%
2.a Acquisitions of Land, Buildings, for the Construction of Roads, Ports, Airports, and Water Networks	0	0	-98.7%
2.b Equipment	49	52	5.0%
2.c Construction in Progress, of which:	391	198	-49.4%
Displaced Fund	0	0	-
Council of the South	49	30	-38.2%
CDR	176	79	-55.1%
Ministry of Public Work and Transport	50	33	-33.6%
Other of which:	116	53	-54.4%
Higher Council of Relief	20	0	-100.0%
2.d Maintenance	237	114	-51 . 9%
2.e Other Expenditures Related to Fixed Capital Assets	32	14	-56.9%
3. Budget Advances (4)	114 96	187	64.4% -10.8%
 4. Customs Administration (exc. Salaries and Wages) (5) 5. Treasury Expenditures (6) 	86	76	
Municipalities Municipalities	998	1,185	18.7%
Guarantees	453 64	289	-36.1%
Deposits ⁽⁷⁾	64 226	57	-11.0% -40.0%
Other, of which:		113 726	-49.9% 183.9%
VAT Refund	256 199	726 117	-41.5%
6. Total Expenditures (Excluding CDR Foreign Financed)	16,062	13,083	-41.5% -18.5%
	10,002	.,,,,,,	10.5/0



Source: Statement of Account 36, Cashier Spending, Public Debt Department Figures, Fiscal Performance Gross Adjustment Figures

(1) For a detailed breakdown of interest payments, kindly refer to table 6.

- (2) For a detailed breakdown of transfers to EDL, kindly refer to table 7. EDL has been reclassified to various transfers from "other treasury expenditures", following the reclassification of the 2009 Budget Proposal and in line with the Fiscal Performance.
- (3) Transfers to Directorate General of Cereals and Beetroot include both administrative expenses and payments for wheat subsidy.
- (4) Budget Advances were previously classified under "other". Given their growth, and in line with the Ministry of Finance's efforts to ensure transparency, they will be published in a separate line. They will be regularized at a later stage, and it is only after their regularization that they can be classified according to their economic nature in the budget system.
- (5) Customs administrations include payments excluding salaries and wages made to customs and paid from customs cashiers. They can only be classified after Customs submit the supporting documents to the Directorate General of Finance.
- (6) Starting December 2011, the Treasury expenditures section in the monthly, quarterly and yearly reports and its corresponding figures differ from the eponym section appearing in the Fiscal performance reports published by the Ministry of Finance because of the reclassification affecting certain payments from guarantees and treasury advances accounts which are manually reclassified in their budgetary economic classification articles.
- (7) Deposit payments are payments made by the treasury to public administrations, institutions, municipalities, and funds, from revenues it has collected on their behalf.

Table 6: Details of Debt Service Transactions(1)

(LL billion)	2019 Jan-Aug	2020 Jan-Aug	% Change 2020/2019
Interest Payments	4,817	1,973	-59.0%
Local Currency Debt	3,003	1,762	-41.3%
Foreign Currency Debt, of which:	1,813	212	-88.3%
Eurobond Coupon Interest*	1,746	157	-91.0%
Special bond Coupon Interest*	0	0	-56.5%
Concessional Loans Interest Payments	67	54	-19.6%
Foreign Debt Principal Repayment	188	135	-28.2%

Source: MOF, DGF

Table 7: Transfers to EDL

(LL billion)	2019	2020	% Change
(LE Dillion)	Jan-Aug	Jan-Aug	2020/2019
EDL of which:	1,513	952	-37.1%
Debt Service	4	2	-31.0%
Reimbursement for purchase of Natural Gas, Fuel & Gas Oil	1,509	949	-37.1%

⁽¹⁾ Please note that the classification of debt service expenditures is now broken into two separate categories as follows: Interest Payments (as per GFS classification) and repayment of principal on concessional loans earmarked for project financing.

^{*} Includes general expenses related to the transaction



SECTION 3: PUBLIC DEBT

Table 8: Public Debt Outstanding by Holder as of End-Aug 2020

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(LL billion)	Dec-18	Dec-19	Aug-20	% Change Aug 20 / Dec 19
Gross Public Debt	128,347	138,150	142,119	2.9%
Local Currency Debt	77,852	87,279	89,007	2.0%
* Accrued Interest Included in Debt	1,123	1,294	1,416	9.4%
a. Central Bank	39,006	50,717	52,996	4.5%
b. Commercial Banks (Including REPOs)	27,402	25,316	24,594	-2.9%
c. Other Local Currency Debt (T-bills), of which:	11,444	11,246	11,417	1.5%
Public Entities	9,956	9,968	10,181	2.1%
Contractor bonds ⁽¹⁾	166	120	120	0.0%
Foreign Currency Debt (2)	50,495	50,871	53,112	4.4%
a. Bilateral, Multilateral and Foreign Private Sector Loans	2,920	2,850	2,935	3.0%
b. Paris III Related Debt (Eurobonds and Loans) ⁽³⁾	344	242	199	-17.8%
c. Market-Issued Eurobonds, of which:	46,678	47,206	47,206	0.0%
Arrears in Principal	0	0	3,769	-
d. Accrued Interest on Eurobonds	547	570	836	46.7%
e. Arrears in Coupons	0	0	1,809	-
f. Accrued interest in Arrears	0	0	127	-
g. Special T-bills in Foreign Currency ⁽⁴⁾	6	3	0	-100.0%
Public Sector Deposits	14,186	15,677	14,180	-9.5%
Net Debt	114,161	122,473	127,939	4.5%
Gross Market Debt ⁽⁵⁾	76,204	74,441	75,868	1.9%
% of Total Debt	59%	54%	53%	-
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⁽¹⁾ Contractor bonds issued in LBP. Contractor bonds issued in USD are listed under "Special T-bills in foreign currency".

⁽²⁾ Figures for Dec 18- Dec 19 may differ from previously published data due to updated information regarding bilateral and multilateral loans in the DMFAS system.

⁽³⁾ Eurobonds Issued to Malaysia as part of its Paris III contribution, IBRD loan, UAE loan, the first tranche of the French loan received in February 2008 and the second tranche received in October 2012.

⁽⁴⁾ Special Tbs in foreign currency (expropriation and contractor bonds).

⁽⁵⁾ Gross market debt equals gross debt less the portfolios of the BDL, NSSF, bilateral and multilateral loans and Paris III related debt.





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