REPUBLIC OF LEBANON MINISTRY OF FINANCE

Public Finance Monitor

July 2021

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General Overview

Despite the ongoing economic and financial crisis, the fiscal balance witnessed a remarkable improvement in the first seven months of 2021 compared to the same period in 2020, driven by a sizeable hike of 32.6 percent in revenues along with a 9.0 percent decrease in expenditures due to lower current and capital expenditures.

The **total fiscal balance** registered a surplus of LL 564 billion in Jan-Jul 2021 compared to a deficit of LL 3,164 billion during the same period of 2020. In addition, the **primary balance** posted a large surplus of LL 2,290 billion compared to a deficit of LL 1,065 billion a year earlier.

Table 1: Summary of Fiscal Performance

(LL billion)	Jan-Jul	Jan-Jul	% Change
	2020	2021	2021/2020
Total Budget and Treasury Receipts	8,285	10,983	32.6%
Total Budget and Treasury Payments, of which	11,449	10,419	-9.0%
Interest Payments	1,966	1,608	-18.2%
Concessional loans principal payments (1)	132	117	-11.2%
Primary Expenditures ⁽²⁾	9,350	8,694	-7.0%
Total (Deficit)/Surplus	-3,164	564	-117.8%
Primary (Deficit)/Surplus	-1,065	2,290	-314.9%

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

Revenues

Total revenues increased by LL 2,698 billion (32.6 percent) year-on-year to reach LL 10,983 billion during Jan-Jul 2021.

Tax revenues reached a total of LL 8,463 billion in the first seven months of the year, reflecting an increase of LL 2,387 billion (39.3 percent) compared to a total of LL 6,075 billion during the same period last year. This increase was driven by a rise in all the subcategories mainly in domestic taxes on goods & services and taxes on income, profits and capital gains.

In fact, taxes on income, profits and capital gains were up by LL 714 billion (23.9 percent) year-on-year, in Jan-Jul 2021, driven by an exceptional increase in the income tax on profits by LL 1,066 billion (329.9 percent) to reach LL 1,389 billion¹. Meanwhile, tax on interest income dropped by LL 613 billion (29.2 percent), as total private sector deposits declined by 8.2 percent between July 2020 and July 2021 and interest rates paid on deposits witnessed a significant drop between Jan-Jul 2020 ad Jan-Jul 2021². It is worth mentioning that the year-on-year comparison of tax revenues was highly affected by the repetitive lockdowns imposed facing COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, tax collections witnessed a significant drop starting mid-March 2020 with the extension of most tax declaration and payment deadlines, compared to subdued collections during the first

⁽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 Partly due to the settlement of the exceptional tax imposed on the commercial banks' turnover for 2019 (article #20 from 2020 Budget law).

² Average interest rate dropped from 5.02 percent to 1.97 percent for LL deposits, and from 2.46 percent to 0.47 percent for FX deposits between Jan-July 2020 and Jan-July 2021.



two months of 2021. These revenues started to ameliorate starting March 2021 despite the deteriorating economic situation the country is still facing.

Taxes on property registered an increase of LL 233 billion (34.6 percent) in Jan-Jul 2021, as all its components witnessed considerable year-on-year hikes. In details, real estate registration fees increased by LL 81 billion (15.8 percent)³ during Jan-Jul 2021 compared to the same period of 2020. This was accompanied by respective increases of LL 101 billion (217.8 percent) and LL 52 billion (44.0 percent) in the inheritence fees and the built property tax.

Also, domestic taxes on goods and services hiked by LL 1,280 billion (91.6 percent) year-on-year in Jan-Jul 2021, driven by an increase of LL 1,399 billion (139.8 percent) in the value added tax, as tax declarations deadlines related to the first quarter of 2021 were extended twice till end of May 2021⁴ and afterwards till mid-June 2021⁵. In details, both the VAT collected internally and the VAT collected at customs recorded respective year-on-year rises of 248.6 percent⁶ and 44.8 percent over the covered period. In contrast, transfers from Régie profits declined by LL 133 billion (49.5 percent) and passenger departure tax dropped by LL 4 billion (8.5 percent) during the first seven months of the year.

In addition, taxes on international trade increased by LL 128 billion (16.9 percent) as cars excise and custom fees increased by LL 133 billion (180.9 percent) and LL 88 billion (48.8 percent) respectively. On the other hand, gasoline excise went down by LL 97 billion (21.0 percent).

Other tax revenues (namely fiscal stamp fees) increased by LL 32 billion (12.4 percent) to reach LL 293 billion in Jan-Jul 2021.

Non-tax revenues rose by LL 652 billion (58.5 percent) to reach LL 1,765 billion during Jan-Jul 2021. In details, income from public institutions and Government properties witnessed a year-on-year hike of LL 658 billion (127.5 percent) over the covered period as transfer from the telecom surplus increased by LL 681 billion (226.9 percent), and revenues from Casino du Liban rose by LL 71 billion (207.9 percent). This was partly offset by a decrease in the transfer from public financial institution (BDL) from LL 60 billion during Jan-Jul 2020 to nil during Jan-Jul 2021, and a LL 33 billion decline in the revenues from Port of Beirut to register LL 37 billion in the first seven months of 2021.

In contrast, administrative fees and charges decreased by LL 28 billion (7.1 percent) reaching LL 369 billion over the period under review, due to a decrease in vehicle control fees, permit fees and other administrative fees and charges which dropped by LL 57 billion (33.6 percent), LL 15 billion (35.5 percent) and LL 12 billion (51.1 percent) respectively. On the other hand, passport fees witnessed an increase of LL 48 billion (55.7 percent).

In parallel, other non-tax revenues (mostly retirement deductibles) increased by LL 20 billion (10.4 percent) to reach LL 208 billion in Jan-Jul 2021, of which LL 30 billion collected from deductibles related to military salaries and retirement⁷. This increase was

³ As per the data from the General Directorate of Land Registry and Cadastre, the number of sold properties significantly increased by 26.7 percent during the first seven months of 2021 compared to the same period of 2020. This rise more than counterbalanced the 21.6 percent drop witnessed in the average price of these properties.

⁴ As per MoF decision #322/1 dated 20 May 2021.

⁵ As per MoF decision #361/1 dated 01 June 2021.

⁶ Partly affected by the merchants' obligation to issue their receipts in LL (therefore implicitly taking into account the black market exchange rate) along with the relative tax collections as per notice #114 dated 15 January 2021 issued from the Minister of Finance.

⁷ New deductibles introduced as per 2019 Budget law #144 dated 31 July 2019.



mainly driven by the hike in the revenues from the settlement of building violations that reached LL 28 billion during Jan-Jul 2021 compared to almost nil a year earlier.

Treasury receipts witnessed a large decrease of LL 341 billion to reach LL 755 billion in Jan-Jul 2021 compared to LL 1,096 billion during the same period of the 2020. In fact, last year's exceptional figure was driven by a refund transaction of LL 644 billion executed during the month of April 2020 as the deal between the Central Bank and the Ministry of Finance to reverse the coupon payments related to Jan-Mar 2020 materialized. Also, 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.

Expenditures

Total expenditures regressed by LL 1,030 billion (9.0 percent) to reach LL 10,419 billion in Jan-Jul 2021 compared to LL 11,449 billion in Jan-Jul 2020.

Current primary expenditures⁸ registered a drop of LL 152 billion (2.0 percent) reaching a total of LL 7,589 billion during the first seven months of 2021. This decline was mainly driven by a decrease in salaries, wages and social benefits expenses and transfers to Electricité du Liban (EDL) by LL 135 billion (3.8 percent) and LL 162 billion (20.1 percent), respectively. In contrast, other expenditure items witnessed a year-on-year increase in Jan-Jul 2021, mainly retirement expenses, others (judgments & reconciliations, mission costs, other) and medicaments which rose by LL 272 billion (19.1 percent), LL 64 billion (109.0 percent) and LL 61 billion (46.6 percent), respectively. Also, transfers to the NSSF reached a total of LL 50 billion during Jan-Jul 2021 compared to nil during Jan-Jul 2020.

Interest payments dropped by 358 billion (18.2 percent) in Jan-Jul 2021 as interest payments due on domestic debt decreased by LL 189 billion (10.7 percent), and those due on foreign currency debt dropped by LL 170 billion (80.5 percent) over the covered period, after the Government opted to default on its maturing Eurobonds in March 2020. Foreign debt principal repayment also declined by LL 15 billion (11.2 percent) to register a total of LL 117 billion during Jan-Jul 2021.

Capital expenditures significantly decreased by LL 190 billion (52.1 percent) to reach LL 175 billion in Jan-Jul 2021, as expenses related to maintenance, construction in progress and equipment dropped by LL 94 billion (83.0 percent), LL 57 billion (29.7 percent) and LL 39 billion (76.2 percent), respectively.

Treasury expenditures witnessed a decrease of LL 356 billion (32.2 percent) to reach LL 748 billion in Jan-Jul 2021, as other treasury expenditures payments dropped by LL 483 billion partly due to a decline in VAT refund by LL 51 billion. This drop was partly counterbalanced by a hike in payments to municipalities by LL 158 billion (58.9 percent).

Public Debt

Gross public debt stood at LL 148,024 billion by the end of July 2021, increasing by LL 3,916 billion (2.7 percent) from end-2020. On the other hand, net debt rose at a slower pace by 1.1 percent to reach LL 130,336 billion as public sector deposits increased by LL 2,555 billion (16.9 percent) during the first seven months of 2021.

Local currency debt increased by LL 1,758 billion (2.0 percent) to register LL 91,520 billion as of end-July 2021, compared to LL 89,762 billion as of end-2020. In details, local currency debt held by the Central Bank increased by LL 1,309 billion (2.4 percent) to

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



reach LL 56,388 billion by the end of July 2021, followed by a rise in other local currency debt holdings, with TBs held by public entities increasing by LL 915 billion (8.8 percent) to reach LL 11,308 billion. On the other hand, TBs held by commercial banks decreased by LL 392 billion (1.7 percent) to reach LL 22,765 billion by the end of July 2021.

The stock of **foreign currency debt** grew by LL 2,158 billion (4.0 percent) to reach LL 56,504 billion at end-July 2021, reflecting a significant increase of LL 1,812 billion in the arrears in coupons. On the other hand, Paris III related debt decreased by LL 53 billion compared to the end of 2020.



SECTION 1: REVENUE OUTCOME

Table 2: Total Revenues

(LL billion)	Jan-Jul	Jan-Jul	% Change
(LE DIMOTI)	2020	2021	2021/2020
Budget Revenues, of which:	7,189	10,228	42.3%
Tax Revenues	6,075	8,463	39.3%
Non-Tax Revenues	1,113	1,765	58.5%
Treasury Receipts	1096	755	-31.1%
Total Revenues	8,285	10,983	32.6%

Source: MOF, DGF

Table 3: Tax Revenues

(1. billion)	Jan-Jul	Jan-Jul	% Change
(LL billion)	2020	2021	2021/2020
Tax Revenues:	6,075	8,463	39.3%
Taxes on Income, Profits, & Capital Gains, of which:	2,987	3,701	23.9%
Income Tax on Profits	323	1,389	329.9%
Income Tax on Wages and Salaries	471	623	32.1%
Income Tax on Capital Gains & Dividends	82	187	129.3%
Tax on Interest Income	2,098	1,484	-29.2%
Penalties on Income Tax	13	18	38.3%
Taxes on Property, of which:	674	908	34.6%
Built Property Tax	117	169	44.0%
Real Estate Registration Fees	511	592	15.8%
Domestic Taxes on Goods & Services, of which:	1,398	2,678	91.6%
Value Added Tax	1,001	2,400	139.8%
Other Taxes on Goods and Services, of which:	113	122	8.0%
Private Car Registration Fees	69	82	18.7%
Passenger Departure Tax	44	40	-8.5%
Taxes on International Trade, of which:	756	883	16.9%
Customs	180	268	48.8%
Excises, of which:	575	615	6.9%
Gasoline Excise	462	365	-21.0%
Tobacco Excise	35	38	9.8%
Cars Excise	73	206	180.9%
Other Tax Revenues (namely fiscal stamp fees)	261	293	12.4%



Table 4: Non-Tax Revenue

(1. billion)	Jan-Jul	Jan-Jul	% Change
(LL billion)	2020	2021	2021/2020
Non-Tax Revenues	1,113	1,765	58.5%
Income from Public Institutions and Government Properties, of which:	516	1,173	127.5%
Income from Non-Financial Public Enterprises, of which:	421	1,144	171.7%
Revenues from Casino Du Liban	34	106	207.9%
Revenues from Port of Beirut	70	37	-47.0%
Budget Surplus of National Lottery	17	20	23.3%
Transfer from the Telecom Surplus	300	981	226.9%
Transfer from Public Financial Institution (BDL)	60	0	-100.0%
Property Income (namely rent of Rafic Hariri International Airport)	31	23	-26.4%
Other Income from Public Institutions (interests)	3	6	90.9%
Administrative Fees & Charges, of which:	397	369	-7.1%
Administrative Fees, of which:	317	309	-2.3%
Notary Fees	26	28	8.0%
Passport Fees/ General Security	87	135	55.7%
Vehicle Control Fees	169	112	-33.6%
Judicial Fees	16	13	-19.0%
Driving License Fees	6	12	98.3%
Administrative Charges	14	20	45.7%
Sales (Official Gazette and License Number)	1	1	-9.2%
Permit Fees (mostly work permit fees)	43	28	-35.5%
Other Administrative Fees & Charges	23	11	-51.1%
Penalties & Confiscations	11	14	25.3%
Other Non-Tax Revenues (mostly retirement deductibles)	189	208	10.4%



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

Table 5: Expenditure by Economic Classification

(LL billion)	Jan-Jul 2020	Jan-Jul 2021	% Change 2021/2020
4 Current Evnenditures			
1. Current Expenditures 1.a Personnel Cost, of which	9,839 5,427	9,314	-5.3 % 1 . 2%
Salaries, Wages and social benefits	3,530	5,495 3,395	-3.8%
Retirement and End of Service Compensations, of which:	1,633	1,864	14.1%
Retirement	1,423	1,695	19.1%
End of Service	210	169	-19.5%
Transfers to Public Institutions to Cover Salaries	264	236	-10.7%
1.b Interest Payments, of which: (1)	1,966	1,608	-18.2%
Domestic Interest Payments	1,756	1,567	-10.7%
Foreign Interest Payments	211	41	-80.5%
1.d Foreign Debt Principal Repayment	132	117	-11.2%
1.e Materials and Supplies, of which:	211	242	14.5%
Nutrition	34	13	-61.9%
Fuel Oil	4	6	47.1%
Medicaments	132	193	46.6%
1.f External Services	102	78	-23.4%
1.g Various Transfers, of which:	1,530	1,231	-19.6%
EDL (2)	807	645	-20.1%
NSSF	0	50	_
Higher Council of Relief	225	175	-22,2%
Contributions to non-public sectors	105	76	-28.3%
Transfers to Directorate General of Cereals and Beetroot (3)	o	0	-
1.h Other Current, of which:	419	515	23.0%
Hospitals	356	391	9.7%
Others(judgments & reconciliations, mission costs, other)	58	122	109.0%
1.i Other Financial expenses	0	0	-
1.j Interest subsidy	52	29	-44.5%
2. Capital Expenditures	365	175	-52.1%
2.a Acquisitions of Land, Buildings, for the Construction of Roads, Ports, Airports, and Water Networks	0	0	-
2.b Equipment	51	12	-76.2%
2.c Construction in Progress, of which:	190	134	-29.7%
Displaced Fund	o	0	-
Council of the South	23	22	-4.5%
CDR	79	93	17.8%
Ministry of Public Work and Transport	33	1	-98.0%
Other of which:	53	17	-67.2%
Higher Council of Relief	0	5	-
2.d Maintenance	113	19	-83.0%
2.e Other Expenditures Related to Fixed Capital Assets	10	10	-2.3%
3. Budget Advances (4)	68	122	80.2%
4. Customs Administration (exc. Salaries and Wages) (5)	73	60	-17.8%
5. Treasury Expenditures (6)	1,104	748	-32.2%
Municipalities	268	426	58.9%
Guarantees	54	32	-40.2%
Deposits (7)	75	65	-12.6%
Other, of which:	708	225	-68.2%
VAT Refund	100	50	-50 . 5%



6. Total Expenditures (Excluding CDR Foreign Financed) 11,449	10,419	-9.0%
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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 Transactions¹

(LL billion)	2020	2021	% Change
(LE Billion)	Jan-Jul	Jan-Jul	2021/2020
Interest Payments	1,966	1,608	-18.2%
Local Currency Debt	1,756	1,567	-10.7%
Foreign Currency Debt, of which:	211	41	-80.5%
Eurobond Coupon Interest*	157	0	-100.0%
Concessional Loans Interest Payments	53	41	-22.9%
Foreign Debt Principal Repayment	132	117	-11.2%

Source: MOF, DGF

Table 7: Transfers to EDL

(LL billion)	Jan-Jul 2020	Jan-Jul 2021	% Change 2021/2020
EDL of which:	807	645	-20.1%
Debt Service	2.4	0.9	-64.3%
Reimbursement for purchase of Natural Gas, Fuel & Gas Oil	804	644	-20.0%

⁽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-July 2021

(LL billion)	Dec-19	Dec-20	Jul-21	% Change Jun 21 / Dec 20
Gross Public Debt	138,150	144,108	148,024	2.7%
Local Currency Debt	87,279	89,762	91,520	2.0%
* Accrued Interest Included in Debt	1,294	1,338	1,388	3.7%
a. Central Bank	50,717	55,079	56,388	2.4%
b. Commercial Banks (Including REPOs)	25,316	23,157	22,765	-1.7%
c. Other Local Currency Debt (T-bills), of which:	11,246	11,526	12,367	7.3%
Public Entities	9,968	10,393	11,308	8.8%
Contractor bonds ⁽¹⁾	120	120	120	0.0%
Foreign Currency Debt (2)	50,871	54,346	56,504	4.0%
a. Bilateral, Multilateral and Foreign Private Sector Loans	2,850	2,991	3,097	3.5%
b. Paris III Related Debt (Eurobonds and Loans) ⁽³⁾	242	151	98	-35.0%
c. Market-Issued Eurobonds, of which:	47,206	47,206	47,196	0.0%
Arrears in Principal	0	3,769	6,923	83.7%
d. Accrued Interest on Eurobonds	570	587	598	1.9%
e. Arrears in Coupons	0	3,142	4,954	57.7%
f. Accrued interest in Arrears	0	269	659	145.0%
g. Special T-bills in Foreign Currency ⁽⁴⁾	3	0	0	-
Public Sector Deposits	15,677	15,133	17,688	16.9%
Net Debt	122,473	128,975	130,336	1.1%
Gross Market Debt ⁽⁵⁾	74,441	75,553	77,284	2.3%
% of Total Debt	54%	52%	52%	-

⁽¹⁾ Contractor bonds issued in LBP. Contractor bonds issued in USD are listed under "Special T-bills in foreign currency".

⁽²⁾ Figures for Dec 19- Dec 20 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, first and second tranches of the French loan received in February 2008 and October 2012 respectively.

⁽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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