



Livelihoods sector Cash for Work guidelines

This document intends to support Livelihoods partners who are putting Labor Intensive Programs (cash-for-work) into action by offering advice on the legal aspects and safety precautions of cash for work. Most significantly, though, it offers recommendations for the transfer value for daily wages. Since the economic context is always changing, the transfer value will be regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains relevant. Additionally, by utilizing this document, the sector hopes to guarantee consistency throughout the various interventions, addressing potential conflicts that may emerge from partners' employing different strategies and offering different conditions, especially the transfer value.

What is Cash for Work

"Cash for Work" (CfW) is a program where participants receive cash payments in exchange for performing specific types of work. This approach is often used in humanitarian and development contexts to provide immediate income support to individuals or households, while also contributing to community infrastructure and development projects. CfW programs create temporary income generation opportunities for people, especially in regions with high unemployment rates or during times of economic downturns. Furthermore, the work performed under CfW programs often involves projects that benefit the community, such as repairing roads, building schools, improving water and sanitation facilities, or cleaning up public spaces. These projects can enhance local infrastructure and services. Lastly, participants in CfW programs may acquire new skills or improve existing ones, which can enhance their employability in the future. Training and capacity-building components are sometimes included in these programs.

Cash for work in Lebanon

Following the economic crisis in Lebanon in 2019, the Livelihoods sector and its partners significantly expanded labour-intensive programming to provide Cash for Work (CfW) opportunities to the most vulnerable community members. This initiative aimed to address the immediate needs of those severely impacted by the crisis, such as low-income families, refugees, women, youth, and people with disabilities. By offering temporary employment, CfW programs provided essential cash payments, helping participants meet their basic needs like food, rent, and healthcare. Simultaneously, these programs focused on community development projects, such as repairing infrastructure and improving public services, which not only created jobs but also enhanced local living conditions, especially in the context where local authorities lost their ability to provide these services.

Daily workers (Cash for Work) in the Lebanese Labor Law

Article 7 of the Labor Code states that: Domestic servants employed in private houses; agricultural syndicates which have no relations with commerce and industry and which shall be the object of a special legislation; establishments in which only members of the family are employed under the direction of the father, the mother or the guardian; governmental administrations and municipalities as concerns employees, labourers by the day and casual workers who are excluded from the civil servants regulations, and who shall be the object of a special legislation.¹ As such the Labour Code does not cover domestic workers, agricultural workers, family businesses, government or municipal workers, day labourers or casual workers.



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In terms of work permits, there is a debate on whether displaced Syrians are required to hold a work permit to be engaged in cash for work activities. This comes from several factors:

- The cash for work duration normally extends over 40 days which does not constitute fixed or long-term employment.
- The sectors in which cash for work activities are implemented are those identified by the Government of Lebanon as allowed sectors (agriculture, construction, and environment-cleaning) joined with a lack of clear text requiring work permits in these sectors.
- The administrative challenges in relation to sponsorship especially given the usually high number of beneficiaries, inability of both implementing organizations or contractors (in case available) to assume this role, and the time needed to obtain these permits which might exceed the initial activity timeframe.

Duration of activities

The average number of workdays for each cash for work activity beneficiary is 40 days, 7-8 hours per day. This recommendation comes from the understanding of the labour law that reaching three months on a “job” entail that it is a fixed employment. However, some partners extended this duration to reach 60 days. As such, to have a meaningful intervention, the partners can apply a minimum of 40 days and a maximum of 60 days per round.

Transfer value

To identify and ensure a fair and meaningful transfer value, the sector considered two different variables:

- The Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB): a metric used to estimate the minimum cost of necessities that a household needs to survive. This typically includes essential items like food, water, shelter, and basic hygiene products. The WFP Lebanon Situation Reportⁱⁱ which regularly monitors and updates the SMEB in Lebanon, identified the monthly cost of the full Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) in March 2024 at LBP 36.5 million (USD 403) for a family of five which was an increase by 5 percent from February of the same year.
- The minimum wage: the lowest amount of compensation that employers are legally required to pay their workers for their labour, typically expressed as an hourly, daily, or monthly rate. It is established by law or by contract to ensure a basic standard of living for employees and to protect workers from exploitation and unfairly low pay. The specific rate of the minimum wage is determined by government legislation. In April 2024, the caretaker Minister of Labour announced an increase in the minimum wages in the private sector to become LBP 27 million (USD 298)¹ⁱⁱⁱ.

Aiming to align the financial needs of the workers with both the humanitarian standard and the legal labour standards, the average between the above-mentioned variables is used to identify the new cash-for-work daily wage at USD 16 inclusive of the transportation fees.

¹ LBP 18 million as basic salary and LBP 9 million as transportation fees



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	Monthly (USD)	Daily (USD)
SMEB	403	18
Minimum wage	298	14
Average	351	16

The rationale and benefits from using this approach are:

- Addressing basic need: the SMEB represents the minimum cost required for basic survival, thus incorporating it will ensure the wage meets the fundamental living cost for workers.
- The legal compliance: minimum wage laws are established to protect workers from exploitation and ensure fair compensation for their work and is a legally mandated basis that must be met, thus incorporating it ensures compliance with legal labour standards.

Other considerations with possible financial implications:

- To enhance women participation several recommendations, encourage the provision of childcare services. Two effective practices are recognized for integrating childcare services in CfW initiatives where women are involved. Firstly, designating one woman worker as a dedicated caregiver for children, remunerated through cash-for-work arrangements, ensures child-care provision during work activities. Secondly, allocating a budget specifically for childcare, ranging between USD 3,000 to 20,000 based on project locations, ensures sustained accessibility for women participants throughout the project duration. The childcare budget could be channelled to nurseries nearby, establishing a child-friendly space, or rehabilitating a close nursery. It is also worth noting that child-care is preferable to be close to the women's household and not the project site, so women do not have to pay transportation for the child.
- To enhance participation of people with disabilities, partners are recommended to provide specialized transportation or to pay an additional amount to cover specialized transportation that could be used by the person with disability. This additional amount can be determined on the actual cost that would be incurred by the beneficiary but not to exceed three dollars per working day.

Transfer modalities

There are several modalities to conduct the cash transfer to the beneficiaries. The most common method is through financial services providers (FSP). The limitation of this approach is the requirement for documentation which might not be available to all beneficiaries.

Transfers through FSPs incur fees that should be paid by the partners, or contractors/implementing partners to transfer money to allow beneficiaries to get full net amount of the daily wage.

In the cases where beneficiaries lack their identification documents a "proxy" who is a person identified by the beneficiary to act on his/her behalf. In the cases where a proxy is used, partners and beneficiaries should be aware of the protection risks resulting from this measure. This is of special importance with women, youth, and persons with disabilities. In such cases, partners are responsible for raising awareness of possible risks and conduct due diligence to ensure that beneficiaries are



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willingly taking this decision. A formal delegation request must be signed by the beneficiary to facilitate the access of the proxy to the payment. **Exceptionally, partners can resort to cash in hand.**

Payments can be made on a monthly or bi-weekly basis, which can be decided depending on the vulnerability of the beneficiaries where the most vulnerable might be in need to cash more often. Bi-weekly payments, however, pose special considerations in the project budgets as transfer fees will be twice as much of the monthly payments.

Safeguards (working conditions, insurance...)

Lebanese laws and regulations do not provide for specific provisions regarding persons that work on an hourly, daily, or seasonal basis. Therefore, persons working on an occasional basis are in principle subject to the Labor Code unless they are among the occupations exempted under the Code, such as daily and casual workers.² Due to the lack of specific provisions regarding this category of employees, their rights are calculated on a pro-rata basis (i.e., minimum wage, annual leave). They are also subject to the law of work accidents^{3iv}.

Below is a selected list of main topics to consider. Partners can refer to the following guidance notes for further guidance:

- Gender Mainstreaming in Livelihoods [Here](#): provides guidance and recommendations to ensure women participation and inclusion in the sectors' different activities.
- Recommended Parameters on Outreach Identification and Selection [Here](#): provides recommendation on best practices to identify and select beneficiaries.
- Main principles outlined under the decent work component based on the ILO's EIIP Guidelines and safeguards [Here](#)

Decent work principles

Decent Work is at the core of implementation, entailing of opportunities for work that are productive and deliver a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for the workers and their families and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men. are as follows.

Outreach

To enhance social cohesion, and to avoid tension and discrimination in recruitment, the priority is a balance between the host and displaced community⁴, thus, a comprehensive outreach and communication strategy is crucial to alleviate any kind of tension that may result. Potential workers can also be identified by sharing information on upcoming (with location, type of activity, number of beneficiaries) with MoSA (through SDCs) and UNHCR (through CDCs) who would in turn forward information to appropriate target groups and individuals based on their vulnerability lists.

Local authorities and the targeted community must be oriented towards the project and workers. Information on work conditions and the specific requirement for security screening shall be made public

² Article 7 of the Labor Code

³ Decree Law No. 136 issued on 16 September 1983

⁴ 50/50 ratio



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as early as possible. Employers must not discriminate between men and women with regards to type of work and wages or recruitment. Instead, employers should implement concrete measures to increase the participation of women and persons with disabilities. Communication campaigns targeting both displaced populations and vulnerable host community members prior to registration, are needed to attain maximum levels of transparency.

Working hours

A normal working day should be eight hours, and in very exceptional cases, up to 12 hours (to be compensated and considered as the exception and not the rule). During the working day and after 6 consecutive working hours for men and 5 for women, workers are entitled to one hour break according to the Lebanese Labour Law. Additionally, one full day of uninterrupted rest per week should be provided for all workers.

Health and Safety

Compliance with ILO's conventions and the Lebanese legislations is seen as a minimum requirement when it comes to Occupational Safety and Health (OSH). Employers shall provide safety induction training or briefing to all personnel upon starting on sites, comprehensive First Aid Kits and safe drinking water should be always present, no firearms, weapons, illegal substances, or alcoholic beverages on site to be present, Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) should be provided to all. Employers must cover the cost of treatment when workers are injured by accident at the workplace and provide a valid insurance policy to cover work related incidents. It is important to mention that it is mandatory for all contractors to provide a safety plan and compliance to the same should be contractually binding.

Effective Inclusion

The CFW initiative should ensure that we are being inclusive to all segments of the community without leaving anyone behind (this includes men, women, Lebanese, Syrians, and other nationalities) with a cross-cutting target for Persons with Disabilities across all groups.

The project should have an equal-opportunity approach for women and Persons with Disabilities, to be engaged either in labour-intensive works or as contractors (company owner or staff), advocating with contractors for employment of persons with disabilities in the workforce.

Minimum age

The Lebanese Labour Law allows in certain cases the employment of children under the age of 18. However, it is advisable that no children under the age of 18 are allowed to be engaged in labour-intensive work for reasons related to the nature of the infrastructure work that might risk the health and safety of children.

Contracts

All beneficiaries who enter a working arrangement with the project must sign an employment contract which will allow them to work on the project. Contracts should outline the rights and obligations of the workers in a language understood by them (usually Arabic); for workers that do not read and write the contract is read to them in detail.



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All contracts must be submitted to the organization with a copy of the worker's identification documents and can only be accepted if the sanction list screening process⁵ has been performed by the contractor through the financial service provider paying out the wages. It is the contractors' responsibility to validate that Identification documents are valid prior to recruiting any worker given that payments are processed through a third-party financial institution and payments cannot be made except upon valid identification documents.

Grievance mechanism

The complaint mechanism within the project should be an integral part of the programme to give the opportunity for direct and indirect beneficiaries to voice their concerns anonymously and in full confidence. It is the role of the organization to mobilize this mechanism, ensure the confidentiality of all complaints and address those relevant as soon as possible. It is important to mention that all those who submit a complaint are protected against any type of retaliation. Female workers/beneficiaries/stakeholders are given the option to speak with a female officer or team member.

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Support

Furthermore, enhanced training and capacity building should be provided to all team members, especially those present on site to receive and refer cases relevant to PSEA. This will entail close linkages with specialized units and different partner organizations that have the capacity and needed resources to address such cases in a safe and prompt manner.

ⁱ <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/guidelines/guide-to-employment-rights/lebanon-employment-rights-guide---english.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/wfp-lebanon-situation-report-april-2024>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.pcm.gov.lb/archive/j2024/j16/wfm/m13164.htm>

^{iv} Ibid

⁵ *Prior to recruitment of any potential participants that fit the socio-economic criteria of vulnerability, the responsible partner should check the names of potential participants and verify their names against international sanctions lists, including the EU and the UN sanctions list (<https://scsanctions.un.org/search/> (make sure to press reset after each entry); <https://www.sanctionsmap.eu/#/>) If the potential participants' names are cleared, the responsible partner can recruit the potential participants.*



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Addendum – Cash for Work Guidelines of Livelihoods Sector (Update: April 2025)

Background

The livelihoods Sector in Lebanon has facilitated a guidance note to elaborate important aspects related to Cash for Work or short-term employment modalities in the Livelihoods Sector in 2024. Cash for Work remains one of the important pillars of the Livelihoods strategy in Lebanon, which helps create short-term job opportunities for the eligible workforce. The guide document advocated a common wage rate for unskilled workers of 16\$ per day as casual labor. The transfer rate was triangulated from the average between Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB), which was 403 USD per month at the time, and the transitional wage rate of 351 USD per month proposed by the interim Ministry of Labor in 2024. However, the escalation of hostilities and market uncertainties didn't allow the actual monitoring of prevailing wage rate throughout 2024. The release of the guidelines in July 2024 also made it challenging for donors and implementing partners to re-adjust their programming parameters. This wage rate disparity remained challenging for the partner organizations during the implementation phase throughout the second half of 2024 and the first quarter of 2025. This addendum document aims to fill this gap, updating the wage rate transfer with the predominant one for casual unskilled labor and providing further clarity on the modalities agreed within the guidance document released by the Livelihoods sector in July 2024.

Rationale and Purpose of the Note

Following seven waves of a periodic quarterly survey (starting in 2021) that collected information on the wage levels of daily unskilled workers in various economic sectors, targeting different regions and nationalities, the ILO commissioned CRI to conduct a survey targeting a much larger sample of the same profile and composition of daily workers. In December 2023, 2,000 daily workers in agriculture, construction, agrifood, and public sector were interviewed across the Lebanese territory. The results of the survey revealed an average daily wage of USD 12 (USD 13 in the construction sector) compared to USD 6 in December 2022.

Recently, and to continue monitoring daily wages, especially following the recent war, the ILO has commissioned another two waves of wage monitoring that mirror the December 2023 wave in terms of size and composition. The first of these two waves were conducted in February 2025, and the second should take place six months later in August 2025.

The report attempts to compare the results of the current survey with those of the latest wave (December 2023) while showing the evolution of the daily wage across all previous waves of wage monitoring, to shed some light on the evolution of the economic situation of unskilled workers and their households.

The consultants' sampling framework included the following main characteristics:

- Statistical unit: Unskilled daily Wage Earner (i.e. lowest income bracket), 15 years of age or older
- Sample size: 2,250 daily wage earners
- Distribution variables: Region, Sector of activity, Gender, Disability, and Nationality



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While the report includes a significant number of interesting findings across sectors, genders, and nationalities, the most important findings that are relevant to all daily workers are mentioned below:

- Most daily workers earn their wages in US Dollars: 77% compared to 63% in December 2023.
- The current average daily wage stands at USD 15 compared to USD 12 in December 2023 and USD 6 in December 2022. This represents an increase of 25% on top of the 100% increase recorded between December 2023 and December 2022.
- The average monthly household income for Lebanese HH is 581\$, 595\$ for Palestinian HH and 480\$ for Syrian families.
- The desired wage rate across the respondents is much higher than the current earning level owing to inflation, uncertainty in the job market and overall contraction of the economy.

The Livelihoods Sector was requested through the Cash for Work Working Group led by KfW to consider the findings of the most recent wage rate monitoring exercise and see the possibilities of harmonizing the wage rate adjustment. The Livelihoods Sector, after discussions within its Core Group members, agreed to acknowledge the necessary changes in the wage transfer value in line with the findings of the recent wage monitoring exercise. This may recognize and promote more coherence among the CfW interventions implemented throughout the country, regardless of the donor and implementing partner.

The proposed change in wage rate transfer is supported by the following considerations.

- In the report, ILO has made several suggestions on how to calculate an adjustment in the wage of unskilled labor recruited through short term employment programs or CfW projects, and based on the findings of the average wage across all sectors and regions, it is important to provide 15\$/day for 7 to 8 hours of work of unskilled labor, keeping in mind the decent work conditions highlighted in the guidelines of 2024. The rate is inclusive of transportation allowance as well but does not include health insurance. Partners who provide additional case-specific protection (e.g. accident coverage, referrals to social services etc) for physically demanding work should highlight it separately within the reporting tools and which could be standardized in the upcoming rounds.
 - The disability allowance of an additional 2\$ a day will apply to support laborers with any physical disability
 - The rate is not applied to the workforce of skilled categories, whose value is defined by market forces based on supply and demand trends for a particular skill.
 - While disparities are recognized among different sectors and geographic areas, there is a fear that different rates for different sectors will create competition among workers in different geographical localities and sectors. The Livelihoods sector will adopt and advocate a single transfer value to mitigate the impact of disparities, and all implementing partners will be required to adhere to this value.
 - The wage rate monitoring exercise will be repeated during the last quarter of the year by the ILO and inform back of any adjustments required within this transfer value.
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- Setting wage rates is the purview of the Government Legislation Authorities. The Livelihoods Sector will respect any new recommendations of wage rates from the concerned authorities within the new government.
- The Livelihoods Sector will advocate increased coherence on the wage rate transfer; however, it does acknowledge the limitations of those partners who find it difficult to adjust their ongoing interventions.

The cash for work guidelines will be circulated again among the stakeholders, including the new addendum document as an annex, while partners will be encouraged to report the challenges (bilaterally/sector meetings) they face regarding this new proposed wage rate.