Lebanon Response Plan 2026

Multipurpose Cash and Cash & Voucher Assistance

1. Context

Lebanon continues to grapple with overlapping crises that have severely constrained recovery and heightened vulnerability. Since 2019, the country has faced a sovereign default, financial sector collapse, and triple-digit inflation, resulting in a cumulative Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contraction of 40 per cent. The Lebanese Pound lost substantial value, triggering a liquidity crisis that eroded savings and wages. These conditions drove widespread hardship, high unemployment, and the breakdown of public services.

Signs of stabilization appeared in 2025, with inflation falling to double digits for the first time since the crisis began and the exchange rate stabilizing at LBP 89,700 per USD since late 2023. GDP growth is projected at 3.5 percent for 2025, revised down from 4.7 percent due to regional tensions and slow reform progress. However, fiscal space remains extremely limited: the 2025 budget excludes debt servicing and lacks resources for large-scale recovery or social protection. Lebanon remains in selective default, and progress toward an International Monetary Fund (IMF) program is slow despite recent legal reforms.

Inflation, while lower than previous years, continues to strain households. The Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) for a family of five reached $509 in September 2025, up 16 percent year-on-year, while the food SMEB per person rose to $40.4 (+12 percent). The non-food SMEB increased by 19 percent, driven by electricity, healthcare, and rent costs, particularly in displacement-affected areas. Lebanon's labor market remains highly fragile, with formal employment disrupted by the prolonged economic crisis and the 2023–2024 conflict, forcing a shift toward informal, insecure work that undermines household economic capacity impacting particularly low-income households and refugees.
Poverty remains severe, with about 44 per cent of Lebanon's population and 33 per cent of Lebanese citizens living in monetary poverty. Multidimensional poverty is even higher - 73 per cent of Lebanese and nearly all non-Lebanese residents (UN ESCWA, 2024; World Bank, 2024).

The ceasefire in southern Lebanon since November 2024 remains in place but is fragile, with sporadic airstrikes and shelling along border areas and restricted access in some localities. Recovery from the 2023–2024 conflict is still slow, and displacement pressures persist, with 986,000 IDPs having returned but 64,000 still displaced, alongside 120,000 post-2024 arrivals.[1]

[1] Post-December 2024 arrivals from Syria.

Following the 2023-2024 conflict, and despite the significant de-escalation following the ceasefire, the repercussions of the conflict persist, with approximately $14 billion worth of damage severely constraining local economies and household livelihoods particularly in the most conflict-impacted governorates, along with an estimated recovery need of $11 billion (World Bank, 2025).

Lebanon's social protection system has witnessed significant development in the past few years. In 2024, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) launched the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS). Key social safety net programs in the country include the National Poverty Targeting Program (NPTP), the World Bank-funded Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) - programs that merged into AMAN in 2024, and the National Disability Allowance (NDA) programme. While the AMAN programme currently assists around 800,000 vulnerable Lebanese with monthly multipurpose cash transfers to help cover their basic needs, this represents only half of the population living in poverty. Despite progress, social protection coverage remains low -only 20 per cent of the population is covered by contributory social protection benefits, and just 1.3% percent of GDP is allocated to social protection from the national budget (Institutes des Finances, 2025).

Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) remains the preferred modality of assistance for recipients and stays a viable modality in Lebanon due to functional markets despite ongoing economic challenges. Market functionality assessments show that supply chains are operational, and essential goods remain available in all regions. However, inflation continues to drive price volatility, impacting household purchasing power. Despite these pressures, markets have adapted, and traders maintain stock levels, suggesting that CVA can effectively meet their basic needs when complemented by regular monitoring and adjustments to transfer values. The dollarization of humanitarian cash programmes and choice of redemption currency preserves value of money while maintaining choice and flexibility for recipients. Various Financial Service Providers ensure sufficient coverage across Lebanon to ensure cash liquidity as well as safe and dignified access to assistance for cash recipients. Following the escalation of conflict in late 2024, CVA programmes were widely used to extend assistance to affected populations in areas where markets remained functional. Government policies remain conducive to cash assistance and increasing alignment of humanitarian assistance programmes with the Government's social assistance programmes.

In 2024, cash actors disbursed $365.8 million in direct cash transfers, representing approximately a third (28%) of the Lebanon Response Plan (LRP) budget, plus $87 million through the ESSN program outside of the LRP.[2] 67 partners implemented CVA with support from 27 donors, making Lebanon the fifth-largest CVA program globally. Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) accounted for 71 percent of CVA transfers, followed by sectoral cash for food (19 percent), livelihoods (4.5 percent), shelter (2 percent), education (2 percent) and protection (1.5 percent).

CVA will continue to play a central role in Lebanon's humanitarian response in 2026, serving as a flexible and efficient modality across multiple sectors. MPCA and sectoral CVA will be used to support essential needs such as such as food, shelter, and WaSH, as well as contribute to protection, durable solutions (i.e., returns) and livelihoods programming.

2. Rationale, Purpose, and Objectives

MPCA is prioritised in the LRP as the preferred response modality to improve vulnerable families' access to basic goods and services and in emergency settings, offering unrestricted and unconditional cash transfers to meet households' basic and recovery needs in a timely, efficient, and dignified manner, aligned with global best practices.
This action will contribute to *Strategic Objective 2: Provide immediate humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations to ensure critical needs are met*. Multipurpose cash assistance programmes continue to serve as a vital source of income for vulnerable households. People assisted primarily use the cash received to meet essential needs such as food, healthcare, rent, and fuel for winter heating.

3. Coverage, Targeting, and Funding Requirements

In terms of **coverage**, and in line with established best practices, MPCA will be implemented in close coordination and alignment with other assistance modalities under this appeal. Based on discussions between relevant sectors and guided by lessons learned in terms of operational capacity and available funding streams for different response modalities, 998,253 vulnerable people have been prioritized to receive MPCA to help cover their basic needs in 2026.

The total target includes 695,500 Displaced Syrians (418,500 with full MPCA packages and 277,000 with cash transfers covering non-food basic needs only, complementing Cash for Food programmes). Up to 150,000 out of 350,000 vulnerable Lebanese not currently covered by AMAN will receive MPCA in response to shocks in support of the Government's shock-responsive safety net (when requested by the Government), while the other 200,000 will be targeted through sectoral modalities. In the event of extreme shocks, an additional 100,000 individuals will be targeted with emergency MPCA complementing the Shock Responsive Social Safety Net (SRSN) response, through inclusion in a flash appeal.

Vulnerable persons of all other population groups, including 99,853 Palestine Refugees in Lebanon (PRL) and Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS), 48,000 migrants and 4,900 Others are targeted to receive MPCA in 2026 under this appeal. Meanwhile, 209,315 people have been prioritized to receive winter cash assistance.

The targets for each population group have been calculated using the Economic Capacity to Meet Essential Needs (ECMEN), combined with Multidimensional Deprivation Index (MDDI) for Lebanese and Displaced Syrians, ECMEN alone for Palestine refugees, and complemented by Food Consumption Score (FCS) from the MSNA for migrants. According

to the 2025 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR), the 2023 Lebanon Household Survey (LHS) complemented by real-time monitoring data, 23 percent of Lebanese and 69 percent of displaced Syrians could not afford the SMEB or were multidimensionally deprived. The calculation of the target for the Lebanese population considers the support already provided through the AMAN programme, which targets families whose expenditures are below both the MEB and the SMEB. This adjustment helps avoid duplication and ensures that resources are allocated efficiently. In the case of PRS and PRL, the 2023 UNRWA Socioeconomic Survey indicated that 42 percent of PRL and 65 per cent of PRS live below the SMEB.

In terms of **targeting**, LRP partners will continue to prioritize households experiencing socio-economic hardship, protection risks, recent displacement, and exposure to manmade or natural disasters in all areas of Lebanon for MPCA programming. These criteria will be guided by relevant evidence such as data from key household-level assessments, including but not limited to the VASyR, Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and Household Budget Survey (HBS). This evidence-based approach ensures that assistance reaches those most in need.

For displaced Syrians and Others, a combination of socio economic, categorical, and geographic criteria will be used to identify and select the most vulnerable. A similar targeting approach will be applied to migrants and PRL, ensuring that assistance is tailored to the specific vulnerabilities of each group. For PRS, universal targeting will be applied, reflecting the current targeting approach. This approach will be used for both MPCA and seasonal winter support. For vulnerable Lebanese, the targeting methodology will follow similar methodologies and the related guidance stipulated by MoSA, depending on the nature of the shock.

In terms of **funding**, a total of $305.4 million is required in 2026 to support 998,253 persons with multipurpose cash assistance, seasonal winter cash assistance and emergency multipurpose cash.

4. Transfer Value and Modalities

Regular MPCA will be provided for a minimum of three months, with the possibility of extending assistance coverage to up to 12 months for eligible households. Based on an analysis of the gap between SMEB requirements and the average household's economic capacity to meet their own food and other basic needs, vulnerable families should receive $25 per person for food needs and $125 per household to cover their other basic needs. Operationally, and in light of funding constraints and required prioritization, displaced Syrian families, Others and migrants currently receive a maximum transfer value of $145 per household per month, subject to family size, composed of $20 per person for food needs (capped at five household members) and $45 for non-food needs. For PRS, the transfer value is set at $60 per household and $25 per individuals per month, disbursed bimonthly. For PRL, $50 per person is disbursed on a quarterly basis. For Lebanese nationals, the recommended

transfer value will be determined in coordination with MoSA and align with social protection programs.

Delivery of emergency multipurpose cash must be sequenced with referrals to national social protection programmes for longer term support, where feasible. Seasonal cash assistance will be informed by market assessments and will target the most vulnerable households to support their thermal well-being and help prevent these households to resort to harmful coping strategies.

Transfer values will be regularly reviewed and adjusted as feasible to ensure they remain adequate considering inflation and responsive to the evolving needs of vulnerable populations, and in alignment with the national social safety net programme. In situations of crises, emergency MPCA may be provided with an adjusted transfer amount that reflects the additional cost of displacement, heightened risks and the loss of income and livelihoods, based on emergency guidance by the Cash Working Group.

5. Implementation Arrangements

MPCA is delivered through a broad network of operational actors, including UN agencies, international and national NGOs as well as national Red Cross/Red Crescent societies. Transfers will primarily be made via prepaid cards and over-the-counter disbursements through licensed financial service providers, such as banks and money transfer operators. These operational arrangements will continue in 2026, and further scaling up the use of common delivery mechanisms will be explored to further increase cost-efficiency.

Recognizing the efficiency of current MPCA delivery mechanisms and the importance of optimizing scarce resources, the Lebanon Cash Working Group (CWG) will further promote and facilitate joint MPCA initiatives. These refer to coordinated assistance provided by two or more humanitarian actors or sectors to the same beneficiaries, with components aligned with MPCA guidance and delivered as a unified MPCA package. The Basic Assistance (BA) and Food Security and Agriculture (FSA) sectors have jointly implemented MPCA for displaced Syrians over several years, with the FSA sector covering the food component and the BA sector the non-food portion. The 2026 MPCA targets continues to reflect this collaborative approach; it continues to leverage complementarity, including for 277,000 vulnerable displaced Syrians who will receive the full MPCA packages through different available CVA modalities and a common delivery mechanism. Building on this model, the CWG will also work with sectors to align the design of sectoral cash programmes to MPCA design in the form of targeted sectoral top-up grants to achieve sector-specific outcomes (e.g., shelter, protection, WaSH, etc). Seasonal cash assistance, such as winterization, may also be delivered as a top-up grant, making additional resources available to MPCA recipients to meet their additional needs during winter.

Protection considerations remain central to the MPCA response in Lebanon. The CWG will build on the foundation laid by the BA and FSA sectors, reinforcing measures to address

gender dynamics, protection risks, conflict sensitivity, and the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) in CVA programming. Prioritized actions in 2026 will include:

- Ensuring the voices and perspectives of vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women and girls from different population cohorts are reflected in market and feasibility assessments, programme design, delivery, reporting and monitoring.
- Strengthening transparent communication on programme coverage, targeting and selection, transfer values, and assistance duration.
- Ensuring that complaint, feedback, and response mechanisms remain accessible and responsive to promote accountability.

6. Risks and Mitigations

Lebanon's ongoing economic situation poses considerable risks to the effectiveness of MPCA. Inflation continues to undermine the real value of cash transfers, reducing their ability to meet basic needs. Donor funding volatility further threatens programme continuity, limiting the scale and duration of assistance. To mitigate these risks, the response will integrate regular market monitoring to ensure transfer values remain responsive to economic fluctuations and local price trends. Advocacy efforts will be strengthened to promote sustained and flexible donor engagement, emphasizing the impact and efficiency of MPCA. Adaptive programming will be prioritized, allowing for timely adjustments in targeting criteria, assistance duration, and delivery modalities in response to emerging needs and contextual shifts. Finally, complementary services and referral pathways will be reinforced, linking cash recipients to protection, health, and livelihood support, where feasible. These measures will be coordinated with all relevant stakeholders to ensure a harmonized and accountable approach across the response.

7. CVA Overview 2026 *(direct assistance only)*

Sector	CVA Type	Budget	Proportion
Multisector (coordinated by CWG)	MPCA (recurrent, emergency & seasonal)	300,469,250	51%
Livelihoods	Training, business grants and Cash for Work (CfW) / Work based Learning	115,936,000	20%
Food Security and Agriculture	Cash for Food/Food Vouchers	97,500,000	17%
Protection	Cash for Protection & Emergency Cash and Return grants	37,761,050	6%
Shelter	Cash for Rent	26,659,200	5%
WaSH	Cash for Wash	8,250,000	1%
Nutrition	Cash for Nutrition & complementary cash	195,000	0.03%
		586,770,500	**100%**

8. Cash Coordination Arrangements and Links with Social Protection Systems

In alignment with the global cash coordination model endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and in the spirit of the Humanitarian Reset, the CWG in Lebanon has been merged with the Basic Assistance Sector to streamline efforts and ensure coherence across humanitarian cash programming in an advisory role to the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG). Lebanon's CWG now reflects the global principles on cash coordination and will support humanitarian actors in Lebanon in ensuring harmonization, coherence and complementarity of CVA as a modality across all sectors and population groups.

The CWG will lead technical and operational coordination of MPCA and winter cash assistance, in close coordination with relevant sectors. The CWG is also responsible for systematically integrating CVA, particularly MPCA, into humanitarian responses and preparedness plans – wherever feasible and appropriate. While sector-specific cash coordination remains within respective sectors, the CWG also provides technical support to sectors and at the inter-sector level promotes coherence and complementarity. The CWG and relevant sectors have developed a *way of working document* to ensure clear roles and responsibilities with regards to MPCA design and coordination. The key priorities for 2026 include:

- Alignment of sectoral cash programmes with MPCA, including on transfer values, assistance duration and, where relevant, targeting criteria.
- Reinforcing existing deduplication efforts to maximize efficient resource use.

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Social Affairs/Social Development, the CWG remains committed to aligning with national guidelines, in line with broader reforms to strengthen coherence between humanitarian assistance and national social protection systems. Social assistance programs including the SRSN developed during the 2024 escalation of hostilities will transition to MoSA's Social Assistance Committee (SAC) in 2025/26. Under MoSA's NSPS, all social protection programs targeting Lebanese citizens including poverty-targeting and shock-responsive initiatives will be coordinated by MoSA through the SAC. Additional plans are underway to expand the AMAN program to increase coverage for people living in poverty.

The CWG will ensure close alignment with the overarching objectives of MoSA and support to the Government of Lebanon's social assistance programmes under the NSPS, including through continued investment in MoSA's capacity to lead and fully operationalize social protection systems. The CWG will establish strong linkages with the SAC, including through regular attendance of SAC meetings. The SAC and the CWG will jointly determine CWG's role in the coordination of cash assistance to vulnerable Lebanese families in future crises, ensuring that this support complements national systems. As a SAC member, the CWG will continue to advocate for and enable preparedness and shock-responsive mechanisms within social protection programs. The CWG stands ready to provide technical advisory, operational support and/or emergency MPCA transfers to vulnerable Lebanese through the national Shock Responsive Safety Net in case national systems are overstretched, based on

MoSA's request. For assistance coordination purposes for vulnerable Lebanese families, CWG and sector partners will rely on de-duplication done through MoSA.

To complement the MoSA-led social protection expansion, the CWG will focus on humanitarian cash assistance for non-Lebanese populations groups that are not yet covered by social protection programmes, including displaced Syrians, PRS, PRL, migrants and Others. The CWG will continue coordinating humanitarian cash assistance for these groups to meet their basic needs, aligned with the overall social protection strategy. To ensure coordinated assistance, CWG and sector partners will continue to rely on established de-duplication mechanisms.

This approach ensures both long-term systems strengthening and continued emergency response capacity to leave no vulnerable family behind.