



Basic Assistance Working Group Meeting: May 2021- Minutes of Meeting			
Date	26/5/2022	Time	10:00am
Facilitators	Ruba Cheaib	Duration	2 hours
Minutes Prepared by	Ruba Cheaib		
Agenda	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sector updates April Assistance + Overall Coverage Socio-economic indicators SMEB and Transfer Values 2. WFP Situational analysis 3. LOUISE updates 4. Tensions update from UNDP 5. Discussion on Persons with Disabilities and Older Persons 		
Agencies represented	<p>Action Against Hunger; Aida; Al Majmoua; Arcenciel; Association of Charity and Voluntary Convention (CVC); Cash and Learning Partnership Network; Cash Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Organizational Network (CAMEALEON); CARE; Caritas Lebanon; Caritas Switzerland; Canadian Embassy; Comitato Internazionale Per Lo Sviluppo Dei Popoli (CISP); DG ECHO; FCDO Lebanon; Hilfswerk Austria International; Human Aid and Development (HAND); Inter-Agency Coordination Unit; International Committee of the Red Cross(ICRC); INTERSOS; International Organization for Migration (IOM); Islamic Relief Lebanon; The Lebanese University Task Force; Medecins Sans Frontieres; Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA); Mission East; Norwegian Refugee Council; Oxfam GB; Relief International; Salam LADC; Save the Children (SCI); Secours Islamique France (SIF); Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC); Taawon (Welfare Association)- Lebanon Branch; Tafaol Association; Tracaire; United For a Better Tomorrow (UFBT); UNDP; UNHCR; UNRWA; UNICEF; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; UNRWA; WFP; World Vision Lebanon (WVL)</p>		

1. Sector Updates (presented by Ruba Cheaib)

a. Assistance- April 2022- (coming from Activity Info Reporting)

- In April 2022, a little under 216, 000 households received multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA), 173,000 were Syrian households, 43,500 Lebanese households (majority of which, around 42,000 households were assisted through the National Poverty Targeting Program (NPTP)). This is a slight increase since March due to the NPTP scale up.
- Around 126,000 households received child specific social assistance mainly through UNICEF's Haddi program. This includes 70,000 Syrian, 45,000 Lebanese, 11,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and 1,100 Palestine refugees from Syria.
- Total USD value disbursed in regular assistance (MPCA and child specific grants) in March was almost \$22M. The majority of MPCA is being disbursed in LBP while most child specific grants are being disbursed in USD. This is an increase from March (\$18M) due to increases



NPTP caseload and increases in transfer value.

- Throughout April, a small amount of seasonal cash assistance continued to be disbursed mainly due to some retroactive and final payments taking place.
- Details on monthly reporting from Activity info can be found on the BA online dashboard here: <https://ialebanon.unhcr.org/BADashboard>
- Expected coverage of MPCA to Displaced Syrians: Figures presented here represent the targets for respective agencies and thus may differ from the monthly figures reported on Activity Info which reflect the number of families that received a cash payment that month. Of those living in extreme poverty (264,000), 256,000 (97%) are assisted with either food assistance (cash for food or food e-card) or MPCA or both. Around 177,000 households are targeted for MPCA- 67% of the Sector target. Around 87,000 families living under the SMEB and not receiving MPCA (33% gap). These figures have remained stable over the past few months, with no major expansions or reductions.
- Coverage of Lebanese: A total of 77,000 vulnerable Lebanese were assisted under the Sector- 63% of the targeted 122,000 families.

b. Socio-economic Indicators:

- Consumer Price Index (CPI): The April CPI saw an 7% increase since March 2022. The April CPI recorded an annual increase of 206%, compared to April 2021. *Refer to presentation slides for more details on monthly changes on sub-categories.*
- Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB): The main sources of data feed in to the SMEB monthly updates: WFP price monitoring, the CPI and expenditure data from the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR). The SMEB, from March to April, recorded an 9% increase and stands at around 6,000,000 LBP per month (estimated for a family of five). The food basket recorded a 13% increase and the non-food components increased by 4%. Since April 2021, the SMEB has increased by 192%.
- Transfer Value for MPCA: Based on the prices in April, the recommended transfer value for multi-purpose cash to cover non-food needs is around 2,000,000 LBP per family per month (equates to \$81 based on most recent informal exchange rates). The transfer value being disbursed by UNHCR and WFP has been increased to 1,000,000LBP from 800,000 LBP for MPCA and 500,000LBP per person for food since April. The Majority of NGOs providing MPCA are doing so in USD and the values is around 100 USD with some intending an increase to cover food and non-food needs. The Sector will be developing an advocacy note highlighting the impact of the local and global crises on prices in the country, impact on people targeted and importance of ensuring a meaningful assistance through cash for basic needs.

2. WFP Situational Analysis (presented by Marco Principi, WFP)

- Latest updates from Port of Beirut website: The declining trend in the weight of unloaded food continues with a 13% decrease when comparing the first four months of 2022 with 2021, a 27% decrease compared to 2020 and a 31% decrease compared to 2019. A 43% decrease is noted for live animals, 38% decrease in fats and oils and 16% decrease in cereals.
- Food availability in WFP contracted shops: A slight improvement is noted in stock availability at WFP contracted shops with 82% of shops reporting having more than two weeks of stock coverage and 6% of shops reported disruptions in orders in April. With regards to electricity shortages, 48% of shops reported full outages from both Électricité Du Liban (EDL) and private generators (similar to previous months) and 95% of shops had contingency measures. Scarcity of certain products and disruptions in the supply chain peaked in March but has since then stabilized.
- Demand: Exchange rates: The exchange rate reached a peak of 34,000 LBP to USD in May, the highest

recorded after the peak reach in December. There was an increase in the Sayrafa rate reaching 24,500 LBP to USD.

- Weekly costs-preliminary data. By the week of May 17th, the cost of the food basket registered at 770,000LBP (an increase of about 50,000 since the previous week) and the non-food SMEB registered at around 1,400,000LBP. Prices of Combustible fuel continued to increase. Please refer to slides for detailed prices of combustible fuels.
- Wheat update: Cues in front of bakeries are noted in past weeks as millers were running out of subsidized wheat. The Minister of Economy agreed with the head of bakeries association that they would have access to subsidized wheat while the council of ministers agreed to provide \$1.2M to continue the subsidy until the World Bank loan kicks in. The Minister of Economy issued a decision limiting the production of wheat flour only for bread. The union of bakeries is requested another increase in prices and three wheat shipments are awaiting payments to unload. Bread packages were sold were 30,000LBP, more than double the official price (16,000LBP- an 874% increase since the start of the crisis).

3. LOUISE Updates (presented by Charbel Habib and Leila Meliouh, WFP)

- Operational Updates: LOUISE will be expanding the network of Points of Service (POS) by end of June to 50 Money transfer operators (MTOs). In this way beneficiaries can redeem assistance at these MTOs using the card. They will be selected near beneficiaries and to decrease loads on ATMs. May uploads were completed considering the election period. Staggering for MPCA and cash for food was done over ten days. No tensions were noted. Food e-card was staggered over four days. Overall redemption rate for April was 99.35% (for MPCA and cash for food)- one of the highest redemption rates achieved. Most (85%) beneficiaries redeem within the fifth day of the loading.
- Mitigation measures: WFP and UNHCR have scaled up the crowd management (including deployment of trained monitors and security guards) control to the 41 busiest ATM locations. This allows timely management and response to any issues reported. Planned expansion of current redemption points by 30% by combination of MTOs and ATMs.
- Redemption: 99.99% of transactions took place at BLF ATMS (tend since April 2021) as banks are limiting ATM usage to their customers.
- Assistance: WFP is providing food assistance at 500,000LBP per person capped at six. MPCA from WFP and UNHCR is 1,000,000 per household.
- WFP monitoring findings: In 2022, WFP and UNHCR have introduced an improved way of monitoring ATMs focusing on the busiest ATMs. These ATMs have been equipped with additional staffing from cooperating partners and security guards. These findings reflect results from WFP process monitoring. Aggregated information from LOUISE agencies can be presented at the next working group meeting, including ATMs monitored by UNHCR. In the previous year, redemption time stood at 30 minutes with a peak in September to 90minutes (fuel and electricity shortages). Redemption rates now stands at 25 minutes. Around 81% beneficiaries reported being confident using ATMs. Clear targets have been set for how much confidence beneficiaries have when use ATMs without support. One major issue that was noted was literacy and more time was spent training beneficiaries to feel confident. There are also plans to introduce other ways to train beneficiaries. Beneficiary satisfaction to use ATM stood at 8.5/10.

4. Tensions update (presented by Fadel Saleh, UNDP)

- The tensions monitoring system informs the LCRP to develop a better understanding on tensions and provide recommendations. A link will be shared to the most recent dashboards and Lebanon specific guidance notes.
- Five key trends: Inter-communal tensions and scapegoating of refugees; deterioration in community security; intra-communal tensions; surge in online tensions; and increased distrust and dissatisfaction with services.
- Inter-communal tensions and scapegoating of refugees: Relations between Lebanese and Syrians is



at an all time low with 49% of respondent citing negative relationships. There is a shrinking of the protection space across the country, marked by a surge in evictions and pressure on NGOs/UN. Increase in antagonistic statements by political and religious figures is expected to increase with upcoming municipal elections. The primary reason for inter-communal tensions remains to be unemployment and competitions for jobs. Drivers of tensions include competition of jobs (46%), political situations (26%) and competition for utilities (25%). When combined, most of the tensions mirror the socio-economic conditions.

- Deterioration in community security: Most common incidents include theft, roadblocks, and armed clashes. In 2022, the average is around 400 incidents per month.
- Intra-communal tensions: Tensions between Lebanese a highly dependent on political rifts. Relations are deteriorating over the past years with 51% of respondents seeing the relationship as negative (2% in 2018) and 42% in April 2022. Drivers are political and sectarian conflict (66%); unfair distribution of resources and economic competition.
- Increased distrust and dissatisfaction with services: Trust in central government institution are deteriorating since 2019. None-the-less, local level institutions are maintaining community approval. NGOs and UN are highly trusted but this comes with high levels of expectations. Most common service that people are dissatisfied with is electricity (97%), social services (63%), health services (61%) and others. With the remaining subsidies on some basic goods, the public remains highly concerned about their ability to access cash, medicine, and other service. Most respondents reported being concerned about being able to withdraw money from the bank (50%), exchange rates, lifting subsidies and access to health care. 67% of respondents were positive towards local charities and organizations, 61% towards UN and NGOs, and 36% towards municipal authorities.
- Elections: 58% were worried about the threat of violence (highest in Akkar, Bekaa, Balakbek Hermel and Beirut and Mount Lebanon). Over 100 incidents were noted on election day. The overall process took place in calm manner. No security or widespread conflict was noted. However, social media landscape was highly antagonistic with high levels of hate speech online.

5. Discussion on Persons with Disabilities and Older Persons

- At the inter-sector level, quarterly “in-focus” documents are developed to highlight one specific topic. The next “in-focus” report will be looking at persons with disabilities and older persons. Sectors are requested to provide inputs to the information gathered in this regard. It is also a good opportunity for the Sector to have a discussion on this topic and see if any gaps exist.
- Overall statistics: From the VASyR, we know that the Syrian refugee population is a young one with around fifty percent being under 18. Older persons make up a small proportion of the population, perhaps leading to this group falling through the cracks. For persons with disabilities, around 9% of Syrian individuals have a disability. At the household level, 30% of households have at least one member with a disability. Data from the MSNA shows that 58% of Lebanese households have at least one member with a disability. One third of Syrian households that are living below the SMEB had at least one member with a disability. When looking at reasons why they cannot access health or education services, this group mainly reports financial barriers. For coping strategies, in general, families are resorting to the same types of coping strategies, regardless of disability status. Most commonly- reducing food expenditure and taking on debt. Some strategies that do show some variation include reducing expenditures on health and education with a higher number of households with a disabled member doing this. Data gathered from VASyR uses the Washington group question, it was requested to provide more details on how disabilities are captured.
- Discussion:
 - Some further guidance may be needed to ensure that BA Partners are aware of referral mechanisms in place specifically for persons with disabilities to strengthen coordination between BA partners and agencies working specifically with these population groups.
 - Services available for this population include MPCA, disability allowance and in-kind

assistance. The national disability allowance, to be launched by UNICEF, ILO and MOSA, targeting persons with disabilities. The objective of the intervention is to support these individuals meet the additional costs incurred due to living with a disability and provide a basic level of income and expand their access to services and employment. This is extremely important given the economic situation and the absence of a social protection system. Some mitigation measures in place for this intervention would include adding a proxy recipient and household visits for persons with a severe disability. Agencies also ensure referrals to health services if needed for persons with disabilities and older persons, as well as provide transportation support to ensure inclusion of these population groups.

- Adaptations to programs include the UNHCR/WFP Grievance Redress Mechanism which actively targets persons with specific profiles (including disability status and elderly) for MPCA outside the main targeting mechanism. Partners also ensure that distribution sites are accessible to persons with disabilities and older persons. The Sector is working to develop guidance for in-kind assistance and will take this into account.
- Additional efforts are made to identify these individuals through outreach.
- Sector level tools are developed for PDMs and OMIs where the Washington Group Questions have been included. Thus, if data is being collected indicators can be disaggregated by disability status. However, information sharing on this may be weak.
- If referrals are being provided from UNHCR to partners for MPCA, age and disability status is not necessarily shared along with the other details. It may be worth to assess the reasons behind this and if there are any barriers to doing this.
- The Sector has several key risks and mitigation measure identified linked to these populations. This includes development of PDM and OM tools (done) and developing a minimum standard of inclusive access for assistance (not done). One main risk identified was increased risk of exploitation for these persons if redemption points are not accessible.
- A lot of data exists in VASyR and RAIS to look at socio-economic vulnerability, assistance status and disability status/ age. However, analysis is lacking and can be improved. Disability status is highlighted to be a standard disaggregation across all indicators in 2022. Data on risk impacts and prevalence is also lacking.