



International Conference on
Social Protection
in contexts of **Fragility & Forced Displacement**

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LEBANON



*"The items
I frequently buy
with the green card
are rice, lentils, oil
and ghee..."*

Khadra

TESTIMONIES

"The items I frequently buy with the green card (Halla NPTP card) are rice, lentils, oil and ghee in order to feed my big family."

Khadra, Lebanese NPTP food assistance beneficiary in the North



"Education is important, but without this program, my children wouldn't be in school this year."

Syrian female, 40, beneficiary of No Lost Generation/the Min Ila Child-focused humanitarian cash transfer

"My husband passed away and I have a disabled child. The day I received the money was such a relief as I had nothing in my pocket."

Female beneficiary of Winter Cash Assistance for Lebanese, Baalbek



BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Syrian refugees face a protracted displacement situation and rising physical, social and economic vulnerability: the average family faces almost US\$900 in debt, and 71% live below the national poverty line (US\$3.84/day), with 52.2% in extreme poverty. Refugees' limited livelihood opportunities further expose them to exploitation, negative coping strategies and hazardous living conditions. Furthermore, poverty among Lebanese is also rising. One-third of Lebanese youth are unemployed, a 50 percent rise since 2011, in a labour force estimated to be 50 percent larger than pre-crisis.¹ Even low-wage jobs are becoming harder to find, particularly as the pace of economic growth is slowing. Reception fatigue among host communities is rising, along with calls for refugees' early return, making it increasingly important to link the humanitarian response in an equitable manner to support poor Lebanese and the development of local communities, while maintaining robust assistance to refugees.

A number of cash and in-kind programs now exist for both Lebanese and Syrians, including Palestinians from Syria. Programs for Palestinians from Lebanon have continued to run through UNRWA.

UNHCR provides multi-purpose monthly cash assistance to the 30,000 most vulnerable Syrian refugee families (plus around 1,300 refugee families of other nationalities) in Lebanon, using a 'bottom-up' approach to reduce vulnerability to exploitation and other protection risks, while promoting access to work and building resilience. UNHCR also provides Emergency Cash Assistance (ECA, a one-off measure to address a wide range of protection, emergency or life-saving incidents) and Protection Cash Assistance (PCA, intended to bridge a period of hardship related to a protection incident) as part of the case management response.

Some of WFP's initiatives include: food assistance to around 750,000 Syrian refugees through an electronic card redeemable at contracted WFP shops; a public primary school snack program for nearly 17,000 vulnerable Lebanese and displaced Syrian children; building productive community assets to provide income opportunities for vulnerable Lebanese and displaced Syrians; and linking small-scale producers and food assistance recipients. WFP expects to reach some 51,000 beneficiaries with its livelihoods projects through 2017. In September 2017, WFP rolled out unrestricted cash assistance (available through ATMs or redeemable in contracted shops) to 170,000 Syrian refugee beneficiaries, and this year will roll out a similar program (Cash for Food and Other Needs, available through ATMs) to around 78,786 beneficiaries.

UNICEF provides child-focused grants intended to help households avoid negative coping strategies harmful to children and invest in children's human capital development. UNICEF, together with WFP and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) delivers the No Lost Generation (NLG)/ Min Ila Child-focused Humanitarian Cash Transfer Program (for Syrians) to cover the indirect costs of education (e.g. transport, clothing and food). WFP covers the monthly costs of school meals. UNICEF also supports the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) to deliver winter cash assistance to poor Lebanese and winter assistance to Syrians living in informal tented settlements (Winter Program).

Together, these programs are part of a Humanitarian Safety Net that runs in parallel to MoSA's national safety net, the National Poverty Targeting Program (NPTP). The NPTP, established in 2011, identifies the most vulnerable Lebanese households and is the entry point to a range of benefits, mainly focused on fee waivers for services (e.g. health care, public primary education) rather than regular transfers; WB, WFP and UNICEF later introduced transfer programs for NPTP beneficiaries. The WB and WFP in 2014 added to the NPTP basket a restricted cash assistance through an e-card redeemable at WFP contracted shops, reaching around 27,209 extremely vulnerable beneficiaries, and around 53,000 beneficiaries in 2016.

The establishment of a 'humanitarian safety net' in Lebanon to cope with the influx of over 1.2 million Syrian refugees (Lebanon has a population of 4 million plus non-Lebanese refugees who pre-dated the Syrian crisis) has spurred the further development of national safety nets and the wider social protection system. This situation contrasts with countries like Turkey or Yemen, where the focus has been on scaling up existing national systems - regular cash or in-kind transfers to the poor and vulnerable - to meet emergency needs.

¹ IMF Country Report No. 14/238.



PROMISING PRACTICES

The NLG/Min IIa Program has shifted the humanitarian cash transfer focus from households' survival needs, to reducing negative coping strategies and developing children's human capital. Households face barriers to supply-side interventions in primary education (expansion of school capacity, provision of supplies, etc.) because of indirect (e.g. transportation) and opportunity costs (e.g. child labour). The NLG/Min IIa program offers a monthly cash transfer to families enrolled in afternoon '2nd shift' (who are likely to be vulnerable) and household visits with referrals to complementary services for children who do not attend. Through a combination of cash and referrals, the program can address income- and non-income-related vulnerabilities. The program is being replicated by UNICEF Jordan, and has also demonstrated to the Government of Lebanon the effectiveness of cash transfers for addressing child poverty. UNICEF supported MoSA to translate this into the national system through a feasibility study for a child-focused cash transfer targeting vulnerable Lebanese children. MoSA included plans for a child-focused cash transfer in its most recent strategy document.

UNICEF, UNHCR, the WFP and NGOs deliver cash payments jointly through a common system called the Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organizational System for E-cards (LOUISE) which makes all payments through a single ATM Card ('Red Card'), and is soon to launch a common call center and website to boost cost-efficiency and ease of use for the beneficiary. Using LOUISE, beneficiaries can more easily access their cash; resolve difficulties in accessing funds through greater ease of communication; and experience the transfers as a comprehensive package of safety net interventions. The common card allows for cost savings across agencies while preserving the fundamental principles that make cash-based programming so effective – that cash must be complemented with an integrated package of interventions, service provision and referrals/case management that address non-income constraints.

WFP's work in the framework of the Syria crisis highlights how humanitarian assistance in fragile and conflict-affected contexts can spur the establishment of national safety nets to target vulnerable host communities. WFP and UNICEF capitalized on its corporate expertise to transfer knowledge to the Lebanese Government to strengthen its national programs. Lessons from the WFP-NPTP experience form a basis to further strengthen the NPTP through supporting and further developing infrastructure and collaborating on additional programs to deliver food support to a wider range of vulnerable Lebanese beneficiaries, child-sensitive programmes and technical assistance in policy direction.

MAIN CHALLENGE(S) AHEAD AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

- Because cash programs were traditionally implemented during short-term emergency contexts (i.e. through national safety net programs or NGOs), donors tend to treat cash programs in protracted crises as mere short-term emergency cash transfers, rather than safety nets as part of an integrated protection response and toolkit that includes advocacy, increased livelihood opportunities, referrals and case management.
- Safety nets require multi-year funding, unlike emergency cash transfers which are for shorter durations. Predictability and regularity of cash-based safety nets is a key feature of their success in reducing poverty and encouraging investment in human capital development.
- Where a country lacks an established national system for social protection, an approach that provides all people the same level of benefits regardless of nationality can be challenging to implement. While focus should be on strengthening the national system rather than creating a parallel system, the system of benefits for refugees tends to develop more quickly than that for nationals.



USEFUL RESOURCES

Feasibility Study for a Child-focused Cash Transfer Program for Refugee Children.
Sharlene Ramkissoon for UNICEF Lebanon, February 2016.

Briefing Note: NLG/Min IIa Child-focused Humanitarian Cash Transfer Program.
UNICEF Lebanon, 2017.

[Available upon request](#)