



WFP's Economic Crisis Response Food Assistance for Vulnerable Lebanese Families

In the midst of a deep economic crisis and skyrocketing food prices, WFP's in-kind food assistance will ensure 100,000 Lebanese families (400,000 people) do not go hungry

Since 2019, Lebanon has faced a series of challenges that eroded people's ability to afford food, shelter, and healthcare across all populations, including the Lebanese. This has meant that WFP's role in providing life-saving food assistance in Lebanon was no longer aimed solely towards refugees, but to the hard-hit Lebanese as well.

Today, with the persisting financial collapse and the lack of adequate social safety nets to cushion the impact of these shocks, many Lebanese, including women and children, are faced with a serious threat to their food security. Lebanese families' ability to afford adequate and sufficient food, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable, has been drastically reduced due to food price inflation combined with overall inflation, devaluation of the Lebanese lira against the US dollar, unemployment, and salary cuts.

Now, well over half the Lebanese population is estimated to be living below the poverty line with over a third estimated to be extremely poor – or 'food poor'.

In order to protect the lives, livelihoods, and dignity of the poorest and most vulnerable during this crisis, WFP is scaling up from 62,500 Lebanese families (250,000 people) to provide unconditional in-kind food assistance to 100,000 Lebanese families (about 400,000 people) across the country.

**1.38
MILLION**
Lebanese are
extremely poor

340%
Increase in the price of
the WFP food basket
(Oct 2019–May 2021)

WHEN A FOOD PARCEL DELIVERS HOPE

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, in-kind food was chosen as the transfer modality for WFP's initial crisis response to mitigate the risk that people would not be able to go to shops or ATMs because of lockdown measures. Now, WFP will continue providing in-kind food assistance to mitigate the risks of market volatility and threats to food availability and access.

Lebanon relies heavily on food imports. The massive currency depreciation and capital control measures in Lebanon have put food availability at risk as retailers face increasing obstacles to make payments to suppliers and importers in order to replenish their stock.

Food access is also at risk. Between October 2019 and May 2021, WFP recorded an increase of 340 percent in the price of the basket of basic food commodities. In other words, people now need over four times the amount they would have needed pre-crisis to purchase the bare minimum needed to survive.

Therefore, the provision of food parcels helps counter the impact of inflation and decreased purchasing power for families, freeing up resources to cover their other basic needs, such as medicine, rent, education, and otherwise. The in-kind modality also ensures that finite resources are maximized, especially given the continuing exchange rate fluctuations.



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SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES



Hamda, a Lebanese resident, receives her food parcel at a WFP distribution site. WFP/Edmond Khoury

SAFE AND DIGNIFIED DISTRIBUTIONS

The assistance is delivered as a family food ration designed to provide around 70 percent of the total individual energy requirement (1,665 kcal per day) for a family of five on a monthly basis. The 63 kg ration, procured locally with minimal impact on the local market, currently includes rice, pasta, bulgur, lentils, beans, chickpeas, canned tuna, vegetable oil, and salt, allowing WFP to provide cost-effective and nutritionally balanced food to reach as many families in need as possible.

Distributions are organized with strict COVID-19 safety measures in place and are staggered to avoid crowding. WFP and partner staff are on the ground at each distribution to ensure the safety and dignity of families receiving assistance. In certain locations and for specific cases, door-to-door distributions may also be organized.

ENSURING THE RIGHT PEOPLE, EVERYWHERE, ARE REACHED

In order to reach the most vulnerable Lebanese families across Lebanon, WFP's cooperating partners collected referrals to the assistance programme directly through their hotlines and through local actors (including municipalities and Social Development Centres), NGOs, grassroots movements, and religious charities. A web-based self-registration form developed by WFP was also used to ensure maximum outreach to vulnerable people who may not have been referred to partners.

To ensure those most in need are reached, WFP employed household targeting using food security and economic vulnerability indicators through a questionnaire designed based on the results of the WFP web-based survey and the m-VAM survey conducted jointly with the World Bank. Gender-based vulnerabilities and considerations are also considered throughout the targeting process.

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wfp.lebanon@wfp.org

wfp.org/countries/Lebanon

As Lebanon and its people continue to be heavily affected by the country's socio-economic crisis exacerbated by COVID-19, WFP also continues to assist vulnerable families by providing them with in-kind food packages.

For Lina, a mother of six children, this assistance "could not have come at a better time." As food prices are on the rise, "it is difficult to put food on the table, especially with a big family like mine," she says. With six children out of school, Lina finds herself hopeless when it comes to their future, "their life is passing by without education, and we cannot do anything because of the economic situation." However, Lina can rest her mind when it comes to feeding her little ones, "I am relieved from a significant concern now."

For Abdallah, the parcels came at a very critical time as well. With his little girl Lamar, suffering from a severe health condition, the assistance helped a father who can barely keep up with his daughter's medical bills. "I could not be more thankful. The kids were not eating properly anymore because I am not working, so we had to rely on whatever we can get," he says.

WFP conducts post-distribution monitoring (PDM) and qualitative interviews to ensure that distributions go smoothly and to assess beneficiary feedback, preferences, and food security outcomes. During focus group discussions in April 2021, beneficiaries expressed their satisfaction with the food parcel they were receiving.

In addition, WFP is launching a new call centre in 2021 for vulnerable Lebanese to enhance accountability and ensure that families receiving assistance can provide their feedback and concerns, as well as inquire about the assistance.

2021 AND BEYOND

For 2021, given the continued economic challenges and increasing risks to market functionality, WFP will continue to distribute in-kind food assistance through December 2021, expanding to reach 400,000 vulnerable Lebanese affected by the economic crisis.

At the same time, WFP is also supporting efforts to implement and scale-up national social assistance and safety net programmes, which will provide more sustainable social assistance to the families most in need.