

## **UNHCR & WFP EVALUATION**

# **Evaluation of the UNHCR/WFP Joint Action for Multipurpose Cash Assistance in Lebanon (2019–2021)**

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### **Decentralized Evaluation Report**

Final Report  
UNHCR – WFP [Lebanon]

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**February 2023**



## Key evaluation information

Evaluation information at a glance	
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#### Disclaimer

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## FOREWORD

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Evaluation is a vital instrument that provides credible evidence of achieved results, successful courses of action, and good practices. It also sheds light on areas where approaches may have been less effective and suggests alternative courses of action that could better serve individuals in need. Furthermore, evaluation serves as a powerful advocacy tool, showcasing organizational achievements and contributions, as well as emphasizing our commitment to continuous learning.

This evaluation, commissioned by the UNHCR and WFP, and co-funded by the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), focuses on the programming of the Joint Action for Multipurpose Cash Assistance between 2019 and 2021. We extend our sincere gratitude to DG ECHO and other donors whose generous contributions continue to make Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance in Lebanon possible. The evaluation provides context-specific recommendations to enhance performance in program design, targeting, delivery, cooperation, advocacy, and accountability. The primary audience for this report includes UNHCR, WFP, and ECHO, while secondary audiences encompass other donors, counterparts from the Government of Lebanon, as well as national and international partners.

The timing of this evaluation aligns with the planning of the next phase of the Joint Action and its recommendations are intended to influence this process positively. We are confident that the findings and insights presented in this report will inform decision-making and guide improvements, ultimately enabling us to better serve and support the individuals and communities we work with. We express our gratitude to all those who contributed to this evaluation, particularly the dedicated evaluators and stakeholders who generously shared their knowledge and experiences. Together, we can ensure that our joint efforts continue to make a positive impact in the lives of those in need.

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## List of Abbreviations

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance
ATM	Automated Teller Machine
BHA	(US) Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
BLF	Banc Libano Française
BML	Beirut-Mount Lebanon
CAMEALEON	Cash Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, Learning Organizational Network
CDC	Center for Disease Control
CFF	Cash for Food
CO	Country Office
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance
DA	Development Analytics
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DG	Directorate General
DR	Desk Review
ECA	Emergency Cash Assistance
ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EDS	Economic Development Solutions
EQ	Evaluation Question
EQA	Evaluation Quality Assurance
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HH	Household
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resources
ID	Identification
IR	Inception Report
JA	Joint Action
KII	Key Informant Interview
LBP	Lebanese Pound
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LOUISE	Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organisational System for E-cards
LRC	Lebanese Red Cross
MCAP	Multipurpose Cash Assistance Programme (UNHCR-specific)
MPC	Multi-Purpose Cash (WFP-specific)
MPCA	Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (general)
MS	Microsoft

NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFDA	Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance
PCAP	Protection Cash Assistance Programme
PIN	Personal Identification Number
PMT	Proxy Means Test
PoC	Person(s) of Concern
RAIS	Refugee Assistance and Information System
RFP	Request for Proposals
SC	Steering Committee
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SIHV	Score-Improving Household Visits
SMEB	Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket
SMS	Short Messaging Service
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNRC	United Nations Resident Coordinator
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
VASyR	Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme
WG	Working Group
WHO	World Health Organisation
WINCAP	Winterisation Cash Assistance Programme



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In order to strengthen programme design, targeting, programme delivery, cooperation, advocacy, and accountability, this summative evaluation of the Joint Action for Multipurpose Cash Assistance has been commissioned by the WFP and UNHCR Country Offices for Lebanon. It covers all Joint Action programming between 2019 and 2021.

### EVALUATION PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purposes/objectives of the evaluation are to:

1. Generate evidence to inform joint UNHCR-WFP future programming for cash interventions, with a view to strengthen gender-sensitive programme delivery in a context of continuing socio-economic crisis.
2. Provide organisational learning, specifically the jointness and complementarity of the activities and following the evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and connectedness.

### CONTEXT

This Joint Action between UNHCR and WFP began in 2018, seven years into the Syria crisis. After a first ECHO-supported action of 34 months (July 2018 to April 2021), UNHCR and WFP are currently implementing a second joint cash action (May 2021 – April 2023). At the outset of the Joint Action, a key driver of vulnerability of Syrian refugees was protracted economic insecurity due to limited employment possibilities, meaning those with capacity to work had few opportunities for self-reliance. Available work is/was generally irregular, poorly paid and potentially exploitative. Poor or chronically vulnerable refugees are also unable to access income or in-kind transfers through the social protection system. Cash assistance provided under the Joint Action was thus designed to provide severely vulnerable refugees with a regular predictable income.

Since the Joint Action began, there has been no significant improvement in the enabling environment for supporting refugees' self-reliance, meaning the same drivers of socioeconomic vulnerability remain. In fact, since late 2019, the Joint Action has coincided with three crises in Lebanon – economic, health and the Beirut Port explosion. A protracted and worsening economic and financial crisis rooted in decades of financial mismanagement led to widespread protests in late 2019, the fall of government and soaring inflation rates associated with a shortage of United States dollars (USD) and the collapse of the Lebanese pound (LBP). By 2021 the de-facto rate was 30,000 LBP to 1 USD.

This was aggravated by COVID-19 in 2020, which led to months of lockdown and strict movement restrictions. In August 2020, the situation was further compounded by the Beirut Port explosion. This catastrophe led to 207 deaths, 6,500 people injured, approximately 300,000 people losing homes and physical damage cost estimated at \$4.6 billion.

These crises have impacted the socioeconomic vulnerability of refugees and Lebanese due to the curtailment of economic activities as well as dramatic inflation in the prices of essential commodities. By October 2021, the cost of the food survival minimum expenditure basket (SMEB) had increased by 728% and by December 2021 by 998% compared to prices in October 2019, while the cost of non-food basic needs was 217% higher than in 2019. Almost 90% of refugees were living in extreme poverty by 2020, with a similar proportion in 2021 unable to afford the SMEB.

### SUBJECT OF THE EVALUATION, COVERAGE, BENEFICIARIES AND RESOURCES

With funding from the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) and other donors, the Joint Action between the WFP and UNHCR works to provide cash assistance to Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The Joint Action provides monthly assistance in the form of unrestricted cash transfers to severely vulnerable Syrian refugees throughout Lebanon living below the extreme poverty line, for food and essential basic needs. It is made up of three complementary transfers. Two of the transfers – WFP's Cash for Food (CFF) and UNHCR's Multipurpose Cash Assistance Programme (MCAP) – purposefully overlap and are delivered to the same beneficiaries. WFP's CFF provides funds to purchase food and UNHCR's MCAP provides funds for non-food needs. The third transfer is WFP's Multi-Purpose Cash (MPC). This provides

other severely vulnerable refugee households not receiving MCAP and CFF with equal food-specific and unrestricted amounts as provided via CFF and MCAP.

The Joint Action programme logic is intended to result in the outcome of **improved living conditions of the most severely vulnerable refugees in Lebanon through predictable and dignified support addressing food and other basic needs.**

This outcome is designed to contribute to the overall impact of **improved living conditions for the most vulnerable and reduced susceptibility of vulnerable families to exploitation and other protection risks such as child labour, survival sex, evictions, and premature returns.**

This Joint Action is not a standalone activity but is part of the wider humanitarian response in Lebanon. While it represents the largest part of WFP and UNHCR cash assistance for refugees; both agencies also implement other cash programmes. Some, such as WFP's food e-cards and part of UNHCR's Protection Cash Assistance Programme (PCAP) are exclusive of the Joint Action while others, such as UNHCR's Winterisation Cash Assistance (WinCAP) intentionally partially overlap with the Joint Action initiatives. While the Joint Action represents the largest component of the wider refugee cash response in Lebanon, there are numerous other small-scale cash programmes implemented by other organisations.

The Joint Action is implemented in annual cycles, with beneficiaries enrolled to receive monthly assistance based on an annual retargeting exercise carried out towards the end of the previous years' cycle. Each administrative stage of the Joint Action programme cycle is implemented through the shared operational processes established under the Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organisation System for E-cards (LOUISE) platform. During the evaluation period, various changes have been made to these processes in response to the changes in the enabling environment and in attempts to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the Joint Action based on evidence and learning.

Since 2016, WFP and UNHCR have harmonised their targeting approach for all cash transfer activities and adopted a vulnerability-based model based on proxy means test (PMT). This has continued under the Joint Action. The formula is derived from econometric analysis of household socioeconomic data and demographic data in the annual Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees (VASyR) and in the UNHCR database which estimates the strength of a household's observable characteristics as predictors, or proxy measures, of poverty (which characteristics are statistically associated with low per capita expenditure). The formula is applied to the basic socio-demographic data held on refugees known to UNHCR to generate a welfare (expenditure) score for each household, without the need for household visits, and this score is used to rank the Syrian population. All households with a score under the SMEB are classified as severely vulnerable and are considered eligible for support for food and basic needs.

The payment service is provided by Bank Libano Francaise (BLF) via a contractual arrangement partnership with WFP. UNHCR (and UNICEF) also have bilateral participation agreements with BLF, based on the Master Banking Agreement between WFP and BLF. Beneficiaries attend partner-managed sites where their identity is verified, and the Common Card and PIN are given out. Assistance is transferred through the LOUISE Common Card, with all cash assistance included in a common wallet.

The Joint Action proposal to ECHO in 2018 noted that WFP and UNHCR aimed to jointly support 336,000 severely vulnerable refugees with a full package of assistance covering food and non-food basic needs. The final total number of beneficiaries reached as reported by UNHCR and WFP in 2021 was 624,212 (corresponding to 99,643 households) with a cumulative budget for the duration of the Joint Action of \$569,658,333.

## MAIN USERS/INTENDED AUDIENCE

This evaluation's primary audience includes UNHCR, WFP and ECHO. The secondary audience includes other donors, Government of Lebanon counterparts, as well as national and international counterparts and partners. The evaluation timing coincides with planning of the next phase of the Joint Action and recommendations are intended to influence this.

## MAIN FEATURES OF THE METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluations and Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. It also adheres to the principles of independence and impartiality, credibility and utility.

The evaluation derived its approach based on the standard Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Evaluation Criteria and four **evaluation questions**, which set out the key areas of research that were tested by the evaluators. Each of these questions has associated **sub-questions** (14 in total), which were tested by the evaluators via indicators for which primary and secondary data were collected and analysed via the **research tools**. A diagrammatic representation of the analytical process is presented below:

**Figure 1: Evaluation design and analytical process**



Specific research tools utilised were:

- Desk review of secondary documents and data
- Collection of primary data via:
  - Key informant interviews
  - Focus group discussions
  - A remote (telephone) household survey conducted by a specialist data collection firm
  - Site visits/direct observation of UNHCR and WFP refugee registration/validation locations, field offices and financial service providers.

Guided by the evaluation matrix throughout data collection, the evaluation team engaged with a broad range of stakeholders, including implementing partner staff, UNHCR and WFP staff at regional and country office levels, other United Nations agencies (notably UNICEF), donors and the IASC cluster/sector/working group leads and coordinators, as well as additional duty bearers (both state and non-state actors), beneficiaries and service providers. Importantly, the evaluation team emphasised obtaining the views and understanding the experiences of community members and especially women to ensure the findings were contextually grounded and the recommendations for future programming relevant.

A total of 69 key informants and 150 current or discontinued beneficiaries of the Joint Action were interviewed across all regions of Lebanon and UNHCR/WFP Lebanon country offices. A further 1063 households were contacted via telephone to participate in a survey of knowledge, attitudes and practices around their household economy and use of cash transfers.

## SUMMARISED KEY FINDINGS

### *Evaluation Question 1: Relevance/appropriateness – How relevant was the Joint Action to the needs of the target population?*

The Joint Action was – and continues to be – **highly relevant** to the needs of refugees in Lebanon. During the evaluation period UNHCR and WFP have made strong efforts to engage with and understand the needs, preferences and concerns of refugees and the overarching Joint Action design and modality choice reflects these needs and preferences for assistance. This relevance is rooted in well-established and consistent annual vulnerability assessments (the annual VASyR), validation and retargeting exercises that rely on robust and timely primary data in order to guide programming. In the face of extreme challenges caused by the unprecedented ‘triple crisis’, the implementing agencies showed responsiveness to this changing context, introducing a range of modifications to the Joint Action which contributed to maintaining the relevance and appropriateness of cash assistance at scale, despite these challenges.

Changes that have not been made as swiftly concern the expansion of payment delivery points beyond BLF and the issue of dollarisation. While more could have been done earlier to support diversification of pay-out points, the decision on whether to dollarise assistance provided on the JA is not so straightforward, and there are risks on both sides. In the meantime, the United Nation’s efforts to negotiate the preferential exchange rate have successfully mitigated some of the risks associated with the continued use of LBP.

The **targeting design** is increasingly integrating gender and equity issues, e.g. in the efforts to include the vulnerability profiles through the GRM and, and starting 2022, through the implementation of *categorical targeting* based on these vulnerability profiles. PMT and the GRM has been a successful and largely objective technical approach to the challenge of providing basic assistance to large numbers of people. However, gender considerations are not deeply embedded within the project – it is more gender sensitive, rather than attempting to be responsive or transformative.

While the implementing agencies have taken steps to understand the concerns of refugees, the extent to which these have been acted on has varied. This is a point of frustration for refugees and contributed to a perception that refugee voices are not being heard. A key issue here relates to the perception of the targeting approach (PMT based on the desk formula using refugee registration data). There is strong consensus on the advantages and limitations of this targeting approach, which has helped manage the challenge of meeting needs at scale in an efficient and impartial way, but with trade-offs in certain key areas concerning accuracy and transparency among both refugees and implementing stakeholders. Key advantages include:

- Cost-efficiency of reaching some 1.5 million people without needing to conduct door-to-door assessments
- Accuracy of identifying vulnerable people in line with other, similar, cash programming globally.
- Measures to include and address/reach specific vulnerabilities such as female-headed households and/or those with disabilities.
- Appropriateness in use of expenditure data as a proxy for establishing the poverty line.

Disadvantages noted by stakeholders and derived from the evaluation research were:

- Challenges of using the ranking to make meaningful decisions on eligibility,
- The lack of transparency of an inherently complex model and the lack of clarity provided to refugees on the reasons for eligibility or ineligibility, (complicated by the homogeneity of vulnerability in much of the population), a key issue which undermines the perceived effectiveness of the programme among refugees.
- Changes in the socio-economic context since 2018 that call into question the continued relevance and appropriateness of the current targeting approach. There is little evidence that alternative targeting approaches have been considered and/or modelled in detail, though growing recognition that this could be needed.

## **Evaluation Question 2: Effectiveness – How effective was the joint action in meeting its objectives?**

Although the prevailing socio-economic deterioration in Lebanon has led to the Joint Action not succeeding in meeting many of its originally-planned outcomes, one area where the programme has surpassed targets is in terms of the number of households provided a cash transfer. From a target at programme outset of 56,000 households (336,000 individuals), the Joint Action was reaching 99,643 households (almost 625,000 individuals) by completion of the evaluated phase of the programme in 2021 – an almost **doubling of the numbers of families reached by the Joint Action**. This was a programmatic shift based on consultation with refugees on their preference for cash assistance, which led to UNHCR and WFP reaching more people via increasing value of the Joint Action funding (in USD) relative to the Lebanese Pound. It also reflected challenges related to the position of the Government vis-à-vis cash assistance to Syrians and possible misalignment with national social safety net programmes.

While the negative socio-economic impact of the crises that Lebanon has experienced since 2019 means that the Joint Action objectives of improved living conditions and socio-economic outcomes are not being fully achieved, the potentially catastrophic effects of these crises on the Syrian population are being mitigated amongst a substantially larger population than planned.

Despite the solid basis for reaching greater than planned numbers of Syrians with cash transfers, as noted above, evidence from both Syrians and institutional stakeholders suggests that such approach is coming to the end of its practical utility. The negative consequences of an ever-diminishing transfer value are beginning to outweigh the value of more needy families receiving assistance. One of the main indicators in relation to Joint Action outcomes - the prevalence of negative (food and/or livelihood) coping strategies or protection risks (e.g. child labour, survival sex, evictions, premature returns) – shows little or no positive progress and indeed regression across a number of measures. Thus, the transfer value is no longer adequate, despite efforts to increase it. There was almost unanimous consensus that cash transfers, while insufficient to meet needs on their own, provide a basic needs foundation for households. Many respondents felt that Lebanon would see substantial occurrence of major protection issues (child labour, early marriage, GBV, sex work) without cash transfers, with none asserting the contrary.

*If you have enough to survive for 15 days in a month, you will bite your hand for the remaining 15 days until the next month. If not, you need to engage in risky strategies.*

– NGO representative

While **Female-headed households** are systematically worse off in Lebanon, with a resulting preferential allocation of Joint Action support to these, the outcomes of Joint Action programming are relatively evenly distributed amongst men and women in households. However, this has led to some misrepresentation of HH status not captured by monitoring of/compliance with vulnerability criteria. A key challenge is that the programme scale precludes universal validation visits to households, thus many households self-report as female-headed to obtain more assistance.

There is emergence and increase of both **inter and intra-communal tensions** – one pervasive element is the perceived inequality or prejudice around cash assistance. Syrians in Lebanon are increasingly being misrepresented as being responsible in some manner for the socioeconomic deterioration of the country and the increasing poverty of Lebanese. Refugees agreed that problems with prejudice and racism were increasingly prevalent, with Lebanese blaming their Syrian neighbours for their increasing poverty, the lack of job opportunities, inflation, the fuel crisis and withdrawal of subsidies. Negative perceptions have been further reinforced by the circulation of inaccurate information circulated via social media. Limited information is shared with the Lebanese community about the assistance provided by the international community, which is contributing to these issues

The systems and measures applied to reinforce the **accountability to affected population (AAP)** (monitoring processes, complaint, referral and feedback mechanism, joint call centre, communication on targeting, discontinuation) are by and large well received and accessible to the Syrian population. The primary communication channel, mobile telephone SMS, is well received by and has been accessible to refugees, though there are concerns about what the increasing cost of living and inflation in telecoms services will mean going forward, particularly for the call centres operated (originally Jointly, separately since 2021) by UNHCR and WFP. Indeed, high levels of mobile telephone access and refugee's preferences for using mobile

telephones to receive information, mean that a call centre is a relevant channel for communicating with refugees on the Joint Action.

While the division of Joint Action responsibilities between UNHCR and WFP leads to some duplication of effort in SMS communication to some Joint Action beneficiaries, there are few negative effects reported with this.

### **Evaluation Question 3: Efficiency – How efficient were the design and implementation of the Joint Action?**

The Joint Action **payment processes** generally function well. Delivery of cash assistance to beneficiaries has been timely, providing predictable monthly transfers, attributed to rigorous digital payment processes and systems established and refined via LOUISE over several years. UNHCR and WFP exhibit adaptability to modify payment processes, to ensure continued, predictable and timely payments despite challenges in the enabling environment.

Beneficiaries also reported predictable and timely payment disbursement. While most people found that the transfer came through on time every month, and very few (less than 2 per cent) reported frequent issues, some inefficiencies contribute to delays in other parts of the programme cycle, which can lead to some delays in disbursement of payments to beneficiaries (for example, e-card distributions can be delayed due to ‘no shows’ from beneficiaries).

Processes under the Joint Action have been well designed and have proven to be generally capable to manage the (somewhat competing) challenges of delivering assistance cost-efficiently, at scale, while still being accessible to vulnerable groups. The Joint Action has tended to follow a ‘one size fits all’ approach to delivery. In other words, the focus on meeting needs at scale, in a way that maximises efficient use of limited resources, has – understandably – limited room for diversifying or tailoring delivery processes to fit the constraints of different vulnerable groups. Some elements have been designed with access and inclusion in mind – for example, doorstep services for those with mobility challenges, with thus some consideration of vulnerability due to disability.

Since the Joint Action began, the implementing agencies have made good efforts to improve the **mainstreaming of age/gender/diversity** within the Joint Action, such as:

- Research into vulnerable profiles to enhance inclusion of particular vulnerable groups
- Improving accessibility of the Grievance Redress Mechanism via online application and proactive identification of households fitting vulnerability profiles.
- Commissioning additional ATMs to mitigate delays or high transport costs at cash points.
- Addressing accessibility, poor confidence and difficulties faced in payment transaction processes for women via communication and training to increase awareness/knowledge on how to operate ATMs.

However, despite these efforts, refugees increasingly experience difficulties and delays in redeeming their transfers at pay-out points, which particularly affects vulnerable groups. The decision of the Joint Action agencies to look beyond BLF and diversify pay out points to address these difficulties is welcome.

**Human and financial resources:** The Joint Action was implemented via a basket of funding from ECHO and other donors (including the US Bureau of Population, Resettlement and Migration) that provided earmarked as well as flexible funding. Analysis of the allocation of the funding across the different operational, overhead and transfer costs indicates that approximately 88 per cent of all programme funding was disbursed as cash transfers to Syrian households, with the remaining 12 per cent of the programme funding being used for operational costs of managing the programme. Overall, UNHCR and WFP have implemented the Joint Action with an appropriate mix of multi-donor funding allocations to overhead, operational costs and cash transfers, though given the challenges faced by the mainstream banking sector in Lebanon there may be further efficiencies to be generated, particularly in how transfers are undertaken (i.e. bank fees, exchange rates). Given plans to initiate cash transfers via MTOs, there is a case to be made (via robust analysis/evaluation of the MTO pilot) for generating savings on these banking fees (and ATM monitoring costs).

**Timeliness of adaptation to the changing context:** a variety of important changes have been made to the Joint Action implementation during the evaluation period. Some of these changes are:

- Maintaining relevance in the face of COVID and the triple crisis.
- Establishment and revision of outcome/output measurement mechanisms and data.
- Reaching a substantially larger population than planned.
- Increasing safety and security of distributions via ATM monitoring.
- Redesigning the call centre approach.
- Increasing accessibility of cash transfers through different modalities.

These have been important to adapt the Joint Action to the changing context as well as to improve the programme based on evidence and learning, as well as link it to longer-term development initiatives that may create efficiencies via improved coordination/targeting. Key factors influential in enabling, or constraining, timeliness of these changes are preparedness, legal/regulatory challenges, risk tolerance, coordination challenges and organisational capacities.

#### ***Evaluation Question 4: Coherence/Connectedness – How effective was the coordination between WFP and UNHCR, and with other actors, in implementing the Joint Action?***

There are several **high-level/global MoUs/agreements** that govern joint programming and coordination between UNHCR and WFP. These constitute a solid basis for coordination across the Joint Action (and other cash transfer) programming.

In practice, evidence from external stakeholders indicates that initial coordination between WFP and UNHCR faced challenges, but this has greatly improved over the course of the project, including synergies as a result of joint programming. Further, coordination with respect to Working Groups and interagency forums was universally reported to be strong, and welcomed, though the substantial number of actors delivering assistance in Lebanon presents a challenge to true consultation/participation.

Despite the broad consensus of the utility of the basic assistance/cash coordination platforms in Lebanon, coordination has some way to go to be optimised to the level aspired to via the global MoU. Evidence indicates that work is still siloed, with, for example, some duplicative approaches to data collection (e.g., coping strategies outcome monitoring being conducted separately by both organisations) – although there is a degree of joint monitoring and the implementing agencies have a joint results framework.

With respect to **Joint Action interaction with other programmes/activities** of the two organisations (e.g., PCAP, ECA, Food e-card, WINCAP), there is definite continuum of assistance between the Joint Action and these initiatives, particularly where individual cases of exclusion or vulnerability are identified, most prominently in protection, where UNHCR implements a range of protection interventions (e.g. PCAP), but also other modalities such as seasonal assistance.

However, different cash interventions are somewhat fragmented. Some of these follow the same targeting approach (food e-card, WinCap) with some efforts to align/layer these with the Joint Action. Others follow different targeting and thus are inhibit accountability to affected populations. The fragmentation of these various interventions at a time of increasingly stretched resources (with inflation eroding the buying power of any given intervention denominated in LBP) means relatively larger transaction costs (mostly denominated in US dollars) and thus undermines cost-efficiency.

Further, the Joint Action has more limited linkages to those implemented by **other agencies** – mediated via the sectoral working groups and primarily focused on the avoidance of duplication. Involvement of other agencies in the Joint Action, notably **non-governmental implementing agencies**, is largely limited to provision of specific services around cash transfer mechanics and data collection/monitoring, although there is evidence of capacity and willingness of such partners to do more.

Beyond the assistance modalities implemented by UNHCR and WFP, the design of the Joint Action incorporated clear intentions to integrate into a variety of **external humanitarian response and protection mechanisms within Lebanon**. Operationalisation of these intentions has had some, but limited success.

Indeed, there is little articulation of a specific social protection engagement strategy within the Joint Action programme logic or documentation itself (i.e. it is not covered under the Joint Action objectives or narrative descriptions), but there is some articulation of social protection engagement within the UNHCR and WFP’s wider country strategies, of which the Joint Action is part.

The limited details around integration with social protection mechanisms at the start of the Joint Action period were a reflection of the fact that the Lebanese social protection system was poorly developed with limited scope for inclusion of refugees. However, since initiation of the Joint Action there have been several developments in the enabling environment for social protection. These developments can have implications for the Joint Action in terms of possible synergies and entry points for engagement across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus with social protection.

## SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions	Linked Recommendations
<p><b>Conclusion 1.1.1:</b> The Joint Action has, across its design, implementation and via a range of ongoing data collection activities and assessments, maintained its relevance for the basic needs of increasing numbers of Syrians in Lebanon.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 1.1.1:</b> Humanitarian cash transfers are vital and need to be continued. UNHCR and WFP should intensify or accelerate efforts to increase relevance, effectiveness and efficiency through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Diversification of financial service providers,</li> <li>b. Agreeing the next steps (if any) for dollarisation,</li> <li>c. Minimising delays and inefficiencies in cash delivery,</li> <li>d. Incorporating analysis of the legal, policy and macro-economic landscape into risk assessments,</li> <li>e. Simplifying the approaches to cash transfers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conclusion 1.1.2:</b> The Syrian population’s ability to safely access the programme is increasingly constrained by a variety of challenges, including inter-communal tensions, issues with banks and rising costs. Solutions to these are needed but change is happening slowly.</p>	<p><b>Conclusion 1.2.1:</b> There are a variety of measures implemented across the Joint Action to ensure equity and inclusion of vulnerable groups, including women, as well as appropriate sex, age, disability and diversity data collection processes. However, the programme has not sought to achieve gender transformative results.</p> <p><b>Conclusion 1.2.2:</b> Preferential targeting of female-headed households, inclusion measures and sex-and-age-disaggregated monitoring data are useful and valid gender considerations but insufficient to address the deeper gender inequalities faced by Syrian women in Lebanon.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 1.2.1:</b> UNHCR and WFP should seek greater opportunities to enhance the gender responsiveness of the Joint Action beyond gender-sensitive cash disbursement processes.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion 1.3.1:</b> The current PMT/GRM-based targeting system reflects a strong emphasis on impartiality and efficiency over transparency and predictability. This is a direct and predictable result of choices made by UNHCR and WFP. However, alternative choices may result in small losses in efficient beneficiary selection, i.e. increased inclusion/exclusion errors.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 1.3.1:</b> Continue efforts to identifying /reassessing out of date household registration data as part of GRM redesign and ensure it continues to identify cases of erroneous exclusion. Complement this with robust identification of protection cases and in-person validation visits by partners.</p>



<p><b>Conclusion 1.3.2:</b> Currently, the targeting process is an opaque, data-driven process not widely understood and thus prevents informed and meaningful stakeholder feedback. Creation of marginalised household profiles to facilitate automatic inclusion for cash transfer may serve as an excellent opportunity to improve accountability to affected populations and conflict sensitivity (aspects of inter/intra-community tensions).</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 1.3.2:</b> UNHCR/WFP should explore how information related to marginalisation profiles of households (that have limited possibilities for falsification) could be made public, so as to be easily understood and thus significantly improve transparency.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion 1.4.1:</b> Multi-purpose cash targeting, via proxy means testing and supported by the GRM, has been a successful and largely objective technical approach to the challenge of providing basic assistance to large numbers of people and has benefits in terms of cost efficiency, timeliness, and impartiality.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 1.4.1:</b> UNHCR and WFP should continue mechanisms to allow people facing acute crises to qualify for assistance in off-calendar periods outside inclusion through the complex PMT system. This should be coupled with a predictable and transparent cash support entry and exit processes for recipients that are decoupled from annual re-enlistment tied into annual budgeting.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion 1.4.2:</b> The targeting model has limitations when viewed from the point of view of complexity, transparency and accountability.</p>	
<p><b>Conclusion 2.1.1:</b> In response to the deepening crises in Lebanon, the Joint Action is reaching many times the originally planned population, and is mitigating the effects of these crises for recipients. However, inflation is reducing the relative buying power of the transfer value, leading to a deterioration in living conditions among the Syrian population.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 2.1.1:</b> In 2023, critically rethink the objectives, and the design, of cash for food and basic assistance to reflect the substantially greater reach of the programme with more limited contribution on a per capita/household basis.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion 2.2.1:</b> Challenges faced by the Syrian population in Lebanon are exacerbated for women and girls, and the Joint Action has had an impact on mitigating these. However, limited collection and analysis of data on gender constrains recognition of these challenges and therefore evidence-based programming strategies that target women and girls.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 2.2.1:</b> Increase monitoring and analysis of outputs for both women-headed households and analysis of gender-related outcomes for women and girl members in all households.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion 2.2.2:</b> Poorer outcomes for Syrian women and girls are likely to continue within Lebanon, exacerbated by limitations on their ability to seek justice or redress and limited data collection and compliance activities by the Joint Action.</p>	
<p><b>Conclusion 2.3.1:</b> Visibility of the programme is not sufficient to counter inaccurate information and misconceptions regarding the support that have negative protection consequences for Syrians.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 2.3.1:</b> UNHCR and WFP should increase programme visibility and advocacy at all levels to combat inaccurate information about the programme and highlight its contributions to the socio-economic environment of Lebanon (see also recommendation 4.4.1).</p>
<p><b>Conclusion 2.3.2:</b> While the Joint Action is not the cause of deteriorating relations between the Syrian and Lebanese populations, there is a risk that the Joint Action intensifies intra-community tensions, given limited coordination of cash programmes across populations, with the Joint Action scale and visibility making it a target for socio-political frustrations.</p>	

<p><b>Conclusion 2.4.1:</b> The primary communication methods have been effective for information dissemination, but 2022 changes in the telecommunications market are leading to higher user costs.</p> <p><b>Conclusion 2.4.2:</b> The Joint Call Centre, as originally designed and managed, was not fit for purpose for the increased number of beneficiary households and data needs of both organisations. The revised approach of separate (but linked) call centres may go some way to address these limitations.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 2.4.1:</b> UNHCR and WFP should accommodate substantially diminished access by the Syrian population to mobile/cellular connectivity through an updated communications strategy and leveraging the changes to the call centre approach to track and maximise its accountability function.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion 3.1.1:</b> The Joint Action has successfully managed somewhat conflicting priorities of scale and delivery challenges on the one hand and diversity on the other, albeit with trade offs in relation to cost-efficiency and the need to reach vulnerable groups.</p> <p><b>Conclusion 3.1.2:</b> The Joint Action has been successful in ensuring a good balance of accountability of cash transfer mechanisms to donor responsiveness and refugee needs and capacities. However, the deteriorating socio-economic context has led to increasing challenges in the efficiency of mechanisms.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 3.1.1:</b> To maximise cost-effectiveness, UNHCR/WFP should conduct an analysis of the costs and benefits of different approaches for targeting basic assistance.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion 3.2.1:</b> The Joint Action is reaching considerably more beneficiaries than planned. Increasing numbers of Syrians moving below the survival expenditure level means that the strategy to reach more, with less, has merit, but programme savings are required to sustain this.</p> <p><b>Conclusion 3.2.2:</b> The cost structure of the Joint Action is robust, with a reasonable ratio of operational cost to cash transfers (12 per cent). Nonetheless, there is scope and need for making cost savings, particularly in the areas of administrative costs related to banking and currency exchange.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 3.2.1:</b> UNHCR and WFP should maintain their strategy of seeking to mitigate the worst of the crises for the maximum amount of people as being the most appropriate strategy to meet the overall goal of the Joint Action, if not the specific objectives.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion 3.3.1:</b> The Joint Action has been successful in adapting to the changing context in Lebanon, though timeliness has been a constraint, due to a variety of factors. However, there are ongoing opportunities to be more responsive to the needs of the Syrian population and in a more timely fashion.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 3.3.1:</b> UNHCR and WFP should advocate for service-oriented solutions that allow vulnerable populations (refugees and Lebanese) to meet basic needs outside of cash assistance.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion 4.1.1:</b> Despite differences in mandate and competitiveness inherent to different organisational approaches, there have been some definite successes with respect to coordination.</p> <p><b>Conclusion 4.1.2:</b> Data-sharing between UNHCR and WFP in relation to beneficiaries of Joint Action cash was problematic, although both appear to be making progress towards mutually acceptable working arrangements on this.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 4.1.1:</b> To clarify the processes and boundaries of data-sharing on the Joint Action, UNHCR and WFP should revisit the 2018 Data-Sharing Addendum to the Global MoU ensuring that it is fully internally consistent and reflects both organisations' data policies.</p>

<p><b>Conclusion 4.2.1:</b> Although not articulated from the outset, clear overlaps and synergies exist between cash modalities and management tools used by both UNHCR and WFP, justifying the overall joint approach to the programme.</p>	
<p><b>Conclusion 4.2.2:</b> The scope and purpose of cash modalities for different purposes has diminishing value and cost-efficiency when being stretched increasingly thinly to achieve maximum breadth.</p>	<p><b>No recommendation (see recommendation 3.1.1)</b></p>
<p><b>Conclusion 4.3.1:</b> Cash programming for refugees is insufficiently linked to longer-term development in the face of new challenges (political disinterest, social tension, deteriorating economy, decreasing aid).</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 4.3.1:</b> UNHCR and WFP should consider ways that the Joint Action could better link with and support recovery and self reliance pathways of Syrians to compensate for diminishing humanitarian funds, including additional sources of funding and deepening engagement with other actors along the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion 4.3.2:</b> Linkages between the Joint Action modalities and other cash transfer initiatives are primarily focused on avoidance of duplication, which is largely (though not completely) successful.</p>	
<p><b>Conclusion 4.3.3:</b> Limited NGO/CSO sector engagement is a missed opportunity to deepen humanitarian-peace-development nexus work.</p>	
<p><b>Conclusion 4.4.1:</b> Recent developments in the enabling environment for social protection may provide new entry points for programming across the nexus.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 4.4.1:</b> Redesign of the Joint Action objectives should include connections to the wider response and/or assistance to Lebanese.</p>

# INTRODUCTION

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IMC Worldwide (US)/DT-Global<sup>1</sup> has undertaken an evaluation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)/World Food Programme (WFP) Joint Action for Multipurpose Cash Assistance in Lebanon from 2019–2021.<sup>2</sup>

The Joint Action for Multipurpose Cash Assistance was initiated in 2018 by UNHCR and WFP with the aim of improving the living conditions for the most vulnerable and reducing the susceptibility of vulnerable families to exploitation and other protection risks such as child labour, survival sex, evictions, and premature returns. In order to strengthen programme design, targeting, programme delivery, cooperation, advocacy, and accountability, this summative evaluation of the Joint Action has been commissioned by the WFP and UNHCR Country Offices for Lebanon. It covers all Joint Action programming between 2019 and 2021.

The evaluation terms of reference (TOR) presents the background to the humanitarian crisis in Lebanon, the Joint Action, the evaluation purpose and scope, illustrative research questions, and overall evaluation management (see also Appendix 15 for a full description of evaluation management and steering). UNHCR and WFP also provided guidance on illustrative data sources, the methodology and preferred data collection methods. The evaluation requirements and associated guidance were developed into a full methodology via an evaluation inception report to provide a comprehensive description of the intended research methods, research targets, schedule and deliverables. The inception report was approved in July 2022 by the evaluation Steering Committee (SC).

This report presents the full findings of the evaluation on the basis of analysis of quantitative and qualitative, primary and secondary data collected over the June–September 2022 period by the evaluation team and validated by the evaluation SC and Evaluation Reference Group (ERG).

The SC will be responsible for the dissemination of evaluation deliverables to all relevant stakeholders, including end users.

## 1.1. EVALUATION FEATURES

The evaluation has a clear remit to produce an analysis of the performance of, and operational recommendations for, the Joint Action, using the evaluation findings as the principal evidence base. The purposes/objectives of the evaluation are to:

1. Generate evidence to inform joint UNHCR-WFP future programming for cash interventions, with a view to strengthen gender-sensitive programme delivery in a context of continuing socio-economic crisis.
2. Provide organisational learning, specifically the jointness and complementarity of the activities and following the evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and connectedness.

The evaluation’s primary audience includes UNHCR, WFP and ECHO. The secondary audience includes other donors, Government of Lebanon counterparts, as well as national and international counterparts and partners as well as stakeholders within the Syrian and Lebanese communities. The evaluation timing coincides with planning of the next phase of the Joint Action and recommendations are intended to influence this (as described in the evaluability assessment conducted as part of the inception process).

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1 As of June 2022, IMC Worldwide, the originally-contracted entity for this evaluation, changed its name to DT-Global. In line with the original contract for the evaluation, This report uses “IMC Worldwide/DT-Global” or just “DT-Global”, with accompanying explanatory text such as this footnote.

2 Note that while the Joint Action commenced in 2018 (and hence some descriptions of the programme necessarily include data from the entire programme), the evaluation covers implementation of the Joint Action from 2019 to 2021, but incorporate more recent data (up to September 2022) where the evaluation team deems it appropriate and useful with a view to providing UNHCR and WFP with forward-looking and actionable findings/recommendations.

## 1.2. CONTEXT

Lebanon is a densely populated country of approximately 5.8 million.<sup>3</sup> This includes approximately 1.5 million, mostly Syrian, refugees – the largest number of refugees per capita in the world. Refugee registration in Lebanon was suspended in mid-2015, and the total number of Syrian registered with UNHCR in Lebanon is 839,086 as of mid-2022.<sup>4</sup>

This Joint Action between UNHCR and WFP began in 2018, seven years into the Syria crisis. At that time, a key driver of the vulnerability of Syrian refugees was protracted economic insecurity due to the limited employment possibilities, meaning those with capacity to work had limited opportunities for self-reliance. Available work opportunities are/were generally irregular, poorly paid and potentially exploitative.<sup>5</sup> Poor or chronically vulnerable refugees are also unable to access income or in-kind transfers through the social protection system.<sup>6</sup> Cash assistance provided under the Joint Action was thus designed to provide severely vulnerable refugees with a regular predictable income source.

Since the Joint Action began, there has been no significant improvement in the enabling environment for supporting refugees' self-reliance, meaning the same key drivers of socioeconomic vulnerability remain. In fact, since before the onset of and during the Joint Action, the country's population – both refugees and Lebanese – have faced a worsening economic situation, and inequalities have been deepening. This is a consequence of pre-existing development constraints including poor governance, weak rule of law and accountability, corruption, unemployment, and high levels of informal labour.

Since late 2019, the Joint Action has coincided with three crises in Lebanon – economic, health and the Beirut Port explosion. A protracted and worsening economic and financial crisis rooted in decades of financial mismanagement led to widespread protests in late 2019 and the fall of the government.

The financial crisis was caused by high levels of public debt (one of the largest debt-to-gross domestic product ratios in the world), a large deficit in current accounts due to trade deficits in goods, and soaring inflation rates associated with a shortage of United States dollars (USD) and the collapse of the Lebanese pound (LBP). By March 2020, the country's sovereign debt burden rose to 150% of the gross domestic product (GDP), leading to the first debt default in the country's history. With 80% of its food imported, Lebanon's economy is structurally dependent on the global economy. By 2020 the LBP lost about 80% of its value compared to the USD, to which it had been pegged. By 2021 the de-facto market rate was 30,000 LBP to 1 USD.<sup>7</sup> Since 2019, the economic crisis has destabilised the exchange rate, impacted liquidity and threatened the sustainability of the Lebanese banking sector and prevented much-needed public and private investments.

This has been aggravated by the COVID-19 situation in 2020, which led to months of lockdown and strict movement restrictions. In August 2020, the situation was further compounded by the Beirut Port explosion. This catastrophic event led to 207 deaths, 6,500 people injured, approximately 300,000 people losing their homes and physical damage cost estimated at \$4.6 billion.<sup>8</sup>

GDP fell by 5.6% in 2019 and by a further 25% in 2020.<sup>9</sup> The crippled economy has led to heightened social tensions and increasing sectarian divides amidst political paralysis. In mid-2021, the country faced a fuel crisis leading to widespread power outages. A new government formed in September 2021 – following 13 months of a caretaker government – but by the end of 2021, this new government had yet to take key actions needed

3 Estimate: no official census has taken place in Lebanon since 1932. Lebanon is the ninth-most densely populated country worldwide. Source: WFP Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis of Lebanese Residents, July 2022, Figure 3.3.

4 UNHCR, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>, accessed May 2022.

5 In 2020, Syrian refugees were still restricted to three job sectors: construction, agriculture, and domestic workers. Work permits are not easy to obtain, as they require a Lebanese sponsor and the payment of a large sum of money. Also, obtaining a work permit comes with the risk of losing humanitarian assistance.

6 Social protection is still at a nascent stage in Lebanon. Prior to the JA the National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP) was the only national social protection scheme providing predictable social transfers (food e-vouchers) to poor Lebanese households, and only covered 15,000 households of the 43,000 registered extreme poor households. Prior to the triple crisis, the government was resistant to providing cash assistance and refugees were not eligible for social assistance.

7 WFP (2021) ACR 2021 (in comparison, the official pre-crisis exchange rate was 1500 LBP).

8 NASSAR, Chirine Khalil, and Corina-Cristiana NASTACĂ. "The Beirut Port Explosion: Social, Urban and Economic Impact." *Theoretical and Empirical Researches in Urban Management*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2021, pp. 42–52, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27035545>. Accessed 27 Apr. 2022.

9 World Bank. 2020. Lebanon's Economic update, cited in the Evaluation Terms of Reference.

for recovery. General elections in mid-May 2022 led to a significant number of MPs forming a sovereign and reformist opposition bloc, with Hezbollah, Lebanon’s largest single political party, losing its parliamentary majority.

These crises have impacted the socioeconomic vulnerability of refugees and Lebanese due to the curtailment of economic activities as well as dramatic inflation in the prices of essential commodities. Between October 2019, when the crisis began, and April 2020, there was a 56.1% rise in the average price (in Lebanese Pounds) of the survival minimum expenditure basket (SMEB).<sup>10</sup> By October 2020, there had been a 174% increase in the price of food and 175% increase in non-food costs. Inflation and the currency devaluation tripled the cost of living in 2020. By October 2021, the cost of the food SMEB had increased by 728% and by December 2021 by 998% compared to prices in October 2019, while the cost of non-food basic needs was 217% higher than in 2019.<sup>11</sup> Almost 90% of refugees were living in extreme poverty by 2020, with a similar proportion in 2021 unable to afford the SMEB.<sup>12</sup>

A summary of the proportions of Syrian and Lebanese households living in poverty and the cost of food baskets is presented in the table, below.

**Table 1: Trends in cost of living and vulnerability during the Joint Action 2018–2021**

Indicator	2018	2019	2020	2021
Proportion of Syrian refugee households in poverty <sup>13</sup> (VASyR)	69% in poverty; extreme poverty n/a	73.5% in poverty; 55% in extreme poverty	88.7% in extreme poverty, 91% in poverty	91% in poverty; 88% in extreme poverty (1.3m people)
Proportion of Lebanese households living in poverty (various sources) <sup>14</sup>	The 2011 Household Budget Survey put the poverty rate at 27% (1m people).	Poverty rate 53.1%. (World Bank Multidimensional Poverty Index)	45% in poverty (356,000 households (HH) or 1.7m people), 22% in extreme poverty (155,000 HH or 850,000 people) <sup>15</sup>	75% in poverty, 36% in extreme poverty (OCHA Emergency Response Plan for Lebanon, 2021-2022)
Cost of SMEB for average HH of 5 (LBP)	USD\$435 (approx. LBP 660,000) <sup>16</sup> (VASyR, 2018)	USD\$435 (approx. LBP 660,000) (VASyR, 2019)	LBP 1,488,273 Nonfood <sup>17</sup> : 897,237 Food: 591,037 (Average Jun-Dec 2020, from BAWG Monitoring sheet 2021)	LBP 3,025,767 Nonfood: 1,419,874 Food: 1,605,893 (Average Jan-Dec 2021, from BAWG Monitoring sheet 2021)

Prior to the triple crisis, gender inequalities were strongly present in refugee communities. These contributed to gender disparities in the workforce across both the formal and the informal labour markets. Men constitute the main income earners with women being primarily responsible for unpaid home care and domestic work.

10 The Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) is defined as the survival-essential needs which a household requires in order to meet their critical essential needs, on a regular or seasonal basis, and on its average cost. The ‘survival-essential needs’ are defined as the critical goods and commodities, utilities and services required by households to ensure survival minimum living standard. Much of the price rise in 2019-2020 was as a result of loss of value of the currency, subsidy removal and consequent inflation in prices.

11 WFP (2020) ACR 2020; WFP (2021) ACR 2021; WFP (2021) Lebanon CSP Evaluation.

12 Ibid, also VASyR 2021.

13 "Extreme poverty" is below the SMEB, "poverty" is below the MEB.

14 As poverty rates for Syrians and for Lebanese in this table are drawn from different sources, they are not necessarily defined the same, but are included for the purposes of illustration. Sources are shown.

15 Targeting Poor Households in Lebanon, World Bank Factsheet, 2020, available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2020/04/21/targeting-poor-households-in-lebanon>

16 SMEB values in the 2018 and 2019 VASyR reports are presented per capita to control for household size, but per household in subsequent reports. The figures presented here are extrapolated from the per capita SMEB values (USD\$87).

17 Food/nonfood breakdown only available for 2020 and 2021. Nonfood costs are after deduction of refugee income.

According to 2019 data, Syrian refugee women were six times less likely to be working compared to Syrian refugee men and faced an estimated gender wage gap of 0.44.<sup>18</sup> This gender-based division of labour restricts women's opportunities for economic participation and empowerment. As the economic challenges and political instability intensified, vulnerability along gender lines has been exacerbated. The COVID-19 crisis resulted in more women losing their jobs or facing salary reductions, as well as an increase in domestic violence. In March 2020, organisations reported increased cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against refugee (and Lebanese) women and girls by as much as 100 percent. Meanwhile the rate of early, forced and child marriages among Syrian refugee girls 15–17 years is estimated at 27 percent – a fourfold increase on pre-Syrian crisis statistics.

**These events have implications for the Joint Action, with potential to impact on the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the intervention due to:**

- An increase in the number of refugees that are severely vulnerable and in need of assistance through multipurpose cash assistance.<sup>19</sup>
- A deterioration in the purchasing power of Joint Action beneficiaries.
- An increase in the costs that beneficiaries incur to access assistance under the Joint Action.<sup>20</sup>
- Fluctuating exchange rates (although, conversely, potentially increased purchasing in the USD-denominated budget at the disposal of the Joint Action implementers on account of this exchange rate fluctuation).
- Liquidity challenges at banks (notable in 2019, but ongoing through 2021 related to conversion of Lebanese pounds to US dollars).
- Restrictions imposed by banks, meaning Joint Action beneficiaries could only withdraw cash at Banque Libano-Française (BLF) automatic teller machines (ATMs) – although entitlements could be redeemed for goods at point-of-sale equipped shops and/or WFP contracted shops.
- Social distancing measures impacting on the capacity of BLF and WFP-contracted shops to serve Joint Action beneficiaries.
- Risks of overcrowding and protection risks at ATMs.
- An increase in protection vulnerabilities for Joint Action beneficiaries, particularly for women and girls.
- A risk of increased tensions between Lebanese and refugees, with the crises contributing further to perceptions of the refugee burden on the country as well as resentment that refugees receive cash assistance when so many Lebanese were in need – thus impacting the ability to increase transfer values in line with price inflation.<sup>21</sup>
- Electricity outages and restrictions on movement impacting on the operational capacity of partners and retailers, including consequences for the functioning/operating time of ATMs.

### 1.3. SUBJECT BEING EVALUATED

With funding from the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) and other donors, the Joint Action between the WFP and UNHCR works to provide cash assistance to refugees from Syria in Lebanon.

Cash and voucher assistance (CVA) is transforming the way that humanitarian assistance is implemented, as it becomes an increasingly common modality to deliver relief across sectors. In recent years major commitments to scale up the use of and increase efficiency and effectiveness of CVA have been made by donors and implementers globally. In 2016, humanitarian actors agreed major collective commitments to

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18 WFP (2021) Lebanon CSP Evaluation.

19 Multi-purpose cash assistance – MPCA - consists of unrestricted cash transfers that people affected by crises can use to cover their basic needs.

20 Transport costs - according to WFP, the average cost of reaching an ATM was LBP 47,000 in October 2021, a tripling from the January 2021 value.

21 The government did implement a widespread one-off emergency cash assistance for vulnerable Lebanese households in response to COVID-19. However, the World Bank-funded Emergency Social Safety Net programme to support vulnerable Lebanese households impacted by the triple crisis that was intended to begin in 2020 did not begin registration until December 2021.

increase investment in, and the scale, volume and quality of humanitarian CVA at the Grand Bargain.<sup>22</sup> In a context of the increasing frequency, complexity and protracted nature of humanitarian crises, where needs are outstripping available funding, and agencies are increasingly required to ‘do more with less’, this has led to the promotion of new ways to deliver CVA at scale, including consolidation of sectoral assistance through ‘multipurpose cash assistance’ (MPCA) grants and new operational models to improve value for money of programmes. An example of this commitment is illustrated in ECHO’s ten principles for increasing the adoption of multipurpose grants. In the past five years, use of CVA and MPCA has grown exponentially and is expected to account for some 40% of humanitarian assistance globally in the coming years.<sup>23</sup> Humanitarian cash assistance is a priority component of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP).

There is also increasing recognition of the important role that humanitarian cash transfers can play in strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus – specifically in terms of social protection. Social protection is recognised as a fundamental human right<sup>24</sup> and a global commitment for governments and partners set out in the SDGs. Global interest and donor support for linking CVA to enhancing social protection approaches and systems in fragile contexts continues to grow. The Grand Bargain recommended that cash assistance provided through the humanitarian system should consciously align with, build on, complement, and fill gaps in national social protection programmes and systems, where appropriate, taking into account humanitarian principles.<sup>25</sup> Access for refugees to social protection is a commitment of the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants in 2016. The concept of linking humanitarian aid to social protection was further endorsed by humanitarian donors in 2019 under the Humanitarian Donor Cash Forum which states that “Donors expect to see cash programmes use, link to or align with local and national mechanisms such as social protection systems, where possible and appropriate”.<sup>26</sup>

Refugee cash assistance for food and other basic needs has been gradually more harmonised and consolidated over the past seven years in an effort to reduce fragmentation and improve efficiency and effectiveness of assistance. MPCA has been increasingly adopted and makes up the majority of the CVA distributed to refugees since 2016. Operationally, there has been a trend in movement towards joint programming approaches which has taken advantage of increasingly sophisticated banking and telecoms sectors to leverage digital solutions. A common card facility with BLF was introduced in 2015, for use on all cash programmes managed by WFP, and a joint ‘data driven’ targeting approach was initiated by UNHCR and WFP in 2016 (related to the joint global targeting MoU) for targeting of food and basic assistance. In 2016, a broader collaborative model for harmonising CVA operations was devised by WFP and UNHCR in collaboration with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in addition to the Lebanon Cash Consortium (LCC) made of 6 NGOs led by Save the Children. The LCC stopped its operations in May 2017. The Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organisation System for E-cards (LOUISE) built on the abovementioned joint processes with the objective of creating common systems for CVA programmes, managed according to the comparative advantages of each agency, whilst maintaining separate programmes.

The Joint Action represents another step in the evolution of this trend towards harmonisation and joint means of working in the refugee cash response in Lebanon. This Joint Action between UNHCR and WFP began in 2018, seven years into the Syria crisis. After a first ECHO action of 34 months (July 2018 to April 2021), UNHCR and WFP are currently implementing a second joint cash action (May 2021 – April 2023). It was funded by multiple donors, including ECHO. The Joint Action provides monthly assistance in the form of unrestricted cash transfers to severely vulnerable Syrian refugees living below the extreme poverty line, for food and essential basic needs. It is made up of three complementary transfers.<sup>27</sup> Two of the transfers – WFP’s Cash for Food (CFF) and UNHCR’s Multipurpose Cash Assistance Programme (MCAP) – purposefully overlap and

22 The Grand Bargain is an agreement between more than 30 of the biggest donors and aid providers, which aims to get more means into the hands of people in need. It was first proposed by the former UN Secretary General’s High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing in its report “Too Important to Fail: addressing the humanitarian financing gap”, as one of the solutions to address the humanitarian financing gap. The Grand Bargain includes a series of changes in the working practices of donors and aid organisations that would deliver an extra billion dollars over five years for people in need of humanitarian aid. These changes include gearing up cash programming, greater funding for national and local responders and cutting bureaucracy through harmonised reporting requirements. Other global policy commitments of relevance include the High-Level Panel’s report on HCT; the call for action from the Agenda for Humanity; and the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants 2016.

23 CALP (2020) State of the World’s Cash Report II.

24 United Nations General Assembly *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

25 <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain>

26 The Common Donor Approach for Humanitarian Cash Programming, 2019

27 These consisted of 500,000 LBP for food needs and 1,000,000 LBP for non food needs as of April 2022



are delivered to the same beneficiaries. WFP's CFF provides funds to purchase food and UNHCR's MCAP provides funds for any needs. The third transfer is WFP's MPC. This provides other severely vulnerable refugee households not receiving MCAP and CFF with equal food-specific and unrestricted amounts as provided via CFF and MCAP (both WFP MPC and UNHCR MCAP can be used by beneficiaries based on their needs either fully for food or fully other needs).<sup>28</sup>

The Joint Action programme logic is intended to result in the outcome of **improved living conditions of the most severely vulnerable refugees in Lebanon through predictable and dignified support addressing food and other basic needs**.<sup>29</sup>

This outcome is designed to contribute to the overall impact of **improved living conditions for the most vulnerable and reduced susceptibility of vulnerable families to exploitation and other protection risks such as child labour, survival sex, evictions, and premature returns**.<sup>30</sup>

This Joint Action is not a standalone activity but is part of the wider humanitarian response in Lebanon. While it represents the largest part of WFP and UNHCR cash assistance for refugees; both agencies also implement other cash programmes. Some, such as WFP's food e-cards and part of UNHCR's Protection Cash Assistance Programme (PCAP) are exclusive of the Joint Action while others, such as UNHCR's Winterisation Cash Assistance (WinCAP) intentionally partially overlap with the Joint Action initiatives. While the Joint Action represents the largest component of the wider refugee cash response in Lebanon, several other small cash programmes are implemented by other organisations.

WFP's cash transfers under the Joint Action, alongside its food e-cards (a cash transfer restricted to purchase of food), are the primary activity (Activity 1) in WFP's Country Strategic Plan 2018-22, alongside wider efforts to improve livelihoods and contribute to national systems and capacity development. In UNHCR, cash transfers constitute a key element of the basic needs objective, which constitutes the majority of UNHCR's annual budget (in 2018, basic needs constituted approximately 75% of UNHCR's annual expenditure).

Within the LOUISE platform, WFP and UNHCR share the costs of card management, distribution, and tracking and the costs of the joint call centre (up until October 2021, when WFP established its own call centre). Inter-agency coordination is managed through a series of technical working groups. In September 2018, UNHCR and WFP globally signed an addendum on data sharing to enhance joint ways of working. This includes data sharing around the Joint Action activities.

## Implementation features

The Joint Action is implemented in annual cycles, with beneficiaries enrolled to receive monthly assistance based on an annual retargeting exercise carried out towards the end of the previous years' cycle. Each administrative stage of the Joint Action programme cycle is implemented through the shared operational processes established under LOUISE. During the evaluation period, various changes have been made to these processes in response to changes in the enabling environment and in attempts to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the Joint Action based on evidence and learning.

### Targeting

Since 2016, WFP and UNHCR have harmonised their targeting approach for all cash transfer activities and adopted a vulnerability-based model based on proxy means test (PMT). This has continued under the Joint Action. The formula is derived from econometric analysis of household socioeconomic data and demographic data in the annual Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees (VASyR) and in the UNHCR database which estimates the strength of a household's observable characteristics as predictors, or proxy measures, of poverty (which characteristics are statistically associated with low relative per capita expenditure). The formula is applied to the basic socio-demographic data held on refugees known to UNHCR to generate a welfare (per capita expenditure) score for each household, without the need for household visits of the entire potentially

28 For both MCAP/CFF households and MPC households, food-specific transfers were LBP 300,000 per household member per month and unrestricted transfers were LBP 800,000 per household per month as of March 2022. Amounts have changed at several points over the 2018-2021 period to account for price increases due to inflation and thus the change in the S/MEB.

29 Evaluation terms of reference, Annex 2

30 Ibid

eligible population, and this score is used to rank the Syrian population. All households with a score under the SMEB are classified as severely vulnerable and are considered eligible for support for food and basic needs.

Since 2018, the Joint Targeting Working Group has made considerable efforts to improve accuracy of this targeting approach. UNHCR and WFP work with a consultancy firm, Development Analytics, to re-calibrate the targeting formula and criteria on a yearly basis.<sup>31</sup> Development Analytics has also led analyses of the model from 2018–2022,<sup>32</sup> which highlighted that some households risk being erroneously categorised based on the desk formula. For example:

- The vulnerability of households who are engaging in coping strategies, such as borrowing money, will be underestimated by the desk formula. Such households appear to have higher consumption and living standards than what, in reality, they can afford.<sup>33</sup>
- Similarly with smaller households – they are disproportionately at risk versus larger ones due to the expenditure per capita measure being targeted.
- Certain households are particularly prone to exclusion errors on account of their characteristics, with specific vulnerabilities such as presence of disability in the household, old age, or gender not being powerful predictors of low expenditure per capita.<sup>34</sup>

Complementary mechanisms have been introduced to try to compensate for this risk of errors based on the desk formula (see Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM), below).

In the targeting exercises from 2018-2020, WFP and UNHCR, in summary, applied a ‘bottom-up’ nationwide approach to targeting the Joint Action assistance starting from those with the lowest score, with an additional geographic quota approach at regional level for UNHCR. In 2021, a new approach was piloted in an effort to harmonise the geographical targeting of the Joint Action across agencies. In this approach, instead of a regional geographical quota, new district-level geo-quotas were applied based on vulnerability data to optimise a balanced proportion of assistance going to each district. Within a given district, households are ranked according to their predicted expenditure per capita, and the final vulnerability score is an “adjusted” score. Adjustments are then made to equalise the number of eligible households across the quota systems in a single unique ranking (“unified score”). Four quota systems, each with an approximately equal number of households and of beneficiaries, prioritise assistance to HHs in different vulnerability brackets.

Development Analytics was (as of mid-2022) conducting a study to review the effectiveness of these new measures, which were to be available in August 2022 and will inform the 2022 targeting exercise.

Various studies<sup>35</sup> carried out during the Joint Action period have questioned the appropriateness of the PMT targeting approach in a context where a large proportion of the population is all classed as severely vulnerable. While there can be differences in wellbeing and vulnerability noticeable between households at the different ends of the distribution, there is little variation along the distribution. In effect many thousands and thousands of households that are ranked in the model are separated by only a fraction of a dollar with no difference in real terms. The studies also noted challenges from an ‘accountability to affected people’

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31 Development Analytics estimate that errors for the “severely vulnerable” (SMEB) threshold were 25 percent and 23 percent respectively for the 2019 targeting model against 30.6 percent and 31.2 percent in 2018, and 25.6 percent and 55.2 percent in 2017 (WFP 2021 Lebanon CSP Evaluation).

32 In WFP (2021) Lebanon CSP Evaluation; and Development Analytics (2019) Annual Update of the Targeting System for Multipurpose Cash and Food Assistance in Lebanon: Technical Report 2019 Proxy Means Testing Targeting Model: Assessment, Design, Validation, and Recommendations.

33 This held true until 2021, due to the fact that the VASyR questionnaire mixed cash and credit expenditures. Starting 2022, UNHCR reports that credit could be isolated, eliminating this potential source of error.

34 Development Analytics notes a limitation that indicators used for modelling (disability, old age, size) can have divergent effects on expenditure levels – for some households, they cause low expenditure, for others, they necessitate higher expenditure to address the vulnerabilities. This makes these types of households difficult to model using only the features available in the UNHCR database. Similar to findings in WFP’s 2019 study on protection risks and barriers to inclusion, which highlights the limitations of focusing on quantitative data collected for the VASyR, which does not sufficiently identify persons at greater risk, such as elderly people and people with disabilities, who have very different impairments (McMichael, G. WFP Lebanon Protection Risks & Barriers to Gender, Age & Disability Inclusion in Cash & Basic Needs Assistance & Livelihoods Programmes. Internal report for WFP, 2019).

35 WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021; McMichael, G. WFP Lebanon Protection Risks & Barriers to Gender, Age & Disability Inclusion in Cash & Basic Needs Assistance & Livelihoods Programmes. Internal report for WFP, 2019; Research Report on AAP in the World Food Programme’s MPC Programme, CAMEALEON, 2019; User journeys of Syrian refugees receiving multi-purpose cash from WFP in Lebanon, CAMEALEON/Ground Truth Solutions, 2021; Briefing Paper: *How Much Does it Cost a Syrian Refugee Household to Access their Cash Assistance?*, CAMEALEON/Key Aid Consulting, 2019

(AAP) perspective, wherein the rationale behind PMT is complex to communicate and understand to/by recipients of the cash transfers. These studies have recommended that the targeting model be reviewed. While adjustments have been made, the model has not been critically compared to other, alternative models.

## Payment

The payment service is provided by BLF. WFP manages the contractual relationship with BLF and handles card and personal identification number (PIN) distribution, with contributions from UNHCR. Beneficiaries attend partner-managed sites where their identity is verified, and the Common Card and PIN are given out. Assistance is transferred through the LOUISE Common Card, with all cash assistance included in a common wallet.<sup>36</sup> Assistance for WFP MPC beneficiaries is uploaded by WFP. Assistance for CFF+MCAP beneficiaries is uploaded by WFP (the food component) and UNHCR (basic needs component). Assistance is provided to refugees in LBP (and can only be withdrawn in LBP since December 2019), at a negotiated preferential humanitarian exchange rate on behalf of LOUISE agencies. This exchange rate, close to the informal rate, is negotiated on a weekly and monthly basis and is aimed at making sure all recipients receive the exact same set amount of assistance in LBP, no matter the daily market exchange rate. In response to the challenges in the context that evolved since 2019 (see 1.2. Context), all LOUISE agencies implemented modifications to the payment system.

## Validation

Since 2013, UNHCR Lebanon has been using a biometric iris scanning system as part of the refugee registration and identity management process. This same process is used for regular validation of Joint Action beneficiaries. During validation, a beneficiary household member that is nominated as an official cardholder attends a validation session, presents the Common Card, and has their identity confirmed. This permits a level of oversight by UNHCR and WFP to make sure the card remains within the household to whom it belongs. Failure to undergo validation leads to the suspension of assistance. For WFP, any member of family above 18 years old in possession of the card can validate. WFP established a partnership with an international company, Iris Guard, which in turn sub-contracted Liban Post and Cash United that has 140 locations across Lebanon.

Validation sessions take place in dedicated sites managed by UNHCR and partners. In 2019, donors requested that validation sessions for cash-transfer beneficiaries be increased from two to four times a year. In response, WFP established a new partnership with Liban Post, which has many more outlets and situated closer to communities, in an effort to minimise costs and time burden for beneficiaries.<sup>37</sup>

## Accountability to Affected Populations

For the period covered by the scope of this evaluation AAP was operationalised in three core areas: information provision, consultations, and complaints and feedback mechanisms. Since 2018, WFP Lebanon has had a dedicated AAP unit which oversees and manages those aspects of the Joint Action that are WFP's responsibility. UNHCR's AAP approach was a core element of the organisation's 2018 Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, further defined in UNHCR's Operational Guidance on AAP (2020). An AAP/gender self-assessment conducted in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon in 2019 identified the need to enhance analysis and integration of AAP in the region as a priority, with a particular focus on persons with specific needs. In 2021, the AAP framework changed with the introduction of the corporate *Community Engagement for AAP Strategy*. The three slightly modified core areas are: Inclusion; Community feedback and Response; Information and Knowledge Management.

## Information provision

The Joint Action provides key programme information as SMS' (notification of eligibility/discontinuation from assistance; the right to appeal and details of how to appeal; notification of payment upload and value of

36 There are three different wallets, which can be used for transfer of assistance, based on each agency and assistance type requirements: Cash wallet (all assistance on this wallet can be redeemed at ATMs only), Combo wallet (assistance can be redeemed at ATMs and/or in shops accepting VISA/Master Cards payments), Food wallet (assistance can be redeemed in WFP contracted shops only, used only for WFP Food E-Card).

37 WFP, Lebanon 2019 Annual Country Report

assistance).<sup>38</sup> WFP MPC beneficiaries receive a single SMS notifying them of the cash upload (just the upload itself, not the amount, which varies depending on the number of household members) whereas MCAP/CFF beneficiaries receive two (one on CFF and one on MCAP). In response to the staggering of card distributions during COVID-19, an additional message was introduced giving beneficiaries pre-notice of payment two days to two weeks in advance. For UNHCR, detailed information on key aspects of the programme is prepared as Q&A sheets. Outreach volunteers are briefed on key updates to the Q&A on a monthly basis through online virtual information sharing sessions aimed at capacitating them to spread the information in their community. Refugees can also access this information through approaching implementing partners during card distribution and validation and through the consultation processes and call centres.

### *Consultation*

Both organisations have involved refugee communities in focus group discussions (FGDs) to seek inputs on Joint Action programme design, and quarterly FGDs as part of programme monitoring aim to gather perspectives on some programme processes. FGDs with communities engage approximately 180 MPCA or food assistance beneficiaries every quarter. In 2018, UNHCR also established community reference groups<sup>39</sup> to capture opinions of the target population on how certain activities are best designed or managed (such as phrasing of the Q&A messages, and design of the GRM). As part of the targeting process, UNHCR and WFP also organise yearly targeting workshops with outreach volunteers to share views on the selection process, GRM and messaging.

### *Complaints and feedback*

From 2018 to October 2021, the main channel for two-way communication with beneficiaries was the joint call centre. UNHCR and WFP contracted the services of a commercial call centre operator to manage the service using a UNICEF tender. Refugees calling the hotline entered a 'call waiting' system before being connected to an operator. The nature of the call (whether information request or complaint) was recorded in the management information system and issues or queries that could not be addressed by the operator were escalated to the appropriate organisation. WFP manages all card and PIN and payment related issues across the Joint Action and is responsible for responding to other issues relating to WFP beneficiaries. UNHCR is responsible for handling issues relating to refugee registration and protection and other issues relating to UNHCR beneficiaries. For callers who enter the line but then abandon the call or get cut off, the system is able to retrieve caller ID and staff make outbound calls to reach these cases.

WFP launched its own call centre in July 2021, the sensitization of refugee beneficiaries around the call centre expanded in October 2021. This was reportedly due to continued issues in accessing the data WFP requires through the joint call centre, as well as the need for WFP to also include Lebanese citizens (to whom WFP is providing assistance).

### *Grievance Redress Mechanism*

Based on recommendations from Development Analytics, a GRM aimed at mitigating targeting errors from the desk formula and enhancing accountability to affected populations was introduced in the 2018 targeting cycle. While having an option to appeal decisions is recognised good practice, the initial GRM design was shown to have certain limitations<sup>40</sup> and was redesigned for 2019.

To be reconsidered for assistance, a non-assisted/discontinued household must first lodge an application. In 2019 and 2020 this was primarily managed through the call centre. In 2021, based on feedback from refugees in 2020, an online portal to lodge appeals was also created to ease the burden on the call centre. In addition, UNHCR frontliners and WFP call centre operators are equipped with the same question tool as the online portal and can log the claim of refugees approaching registration centres or calling WFP call centre. The criteria, or 'profiles' for re-inclusion through the appeal mechanism are set by the GRM Taskforce, based on consultations with field offices. These profiles indicate specific protection needs in the household which,

38 WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021; Research Report on AAP in the World Food Programme's Multi-Purpose Cash Programme, CAMEALEON, 2019

39 Their membership includes representation of different groups within the refugee population.

40 The GRM was not communicated to refugees; it did not mitigate exclusion errors due to the targeting formula, instead only -reincluding those households that were already classed as falling under the SMEB based on the PMT, or inclusion errors, while re-inclusion was not based on a clear rationale (see CALP (2019) Cash Assistance in Lebanon: Accountability to Affected Populations).

being statistically rare in the population, may not be adequately captured by the formula. Example of such groups with needs are: elderly without support, single female parents caring for children with special needs, families with multiple family members with disabilities or medical conditions. A total of 19 such profiles were identified in 2021. Households applying to the GRM are then screened against these profiles (a household can fit more than one profile). Each organisation sets a quota for inclusion under the GRM. In the event that resources are not sufficient to cover the cases identified, WFP and UNHCR have set out some rules guiding prioritisation of cases, although this had not happened between 2019 and 2021.

Additionally, in 2019, UNHCR and WFP also piloted a third pillar, the so-called 'score-improving household visits' (SIHV) as another mechanism to address targeting errors from the formula. The research team took the PMT scores and calculated the expected targeting error for specific subpopulations based on vulnerabilities in the registration data. For profiles that were shown as likely to face above average exclusion error, households fitting these profiles were visited in order to confirm their situation and the accuracy of the score assigned. This was considered a useful validation mechanism though was not repeated in 2020-21 cycles due to COVID-19-related travel restrictions and subsequently the scale of the assistance being provided. There are ongoing discussions on whether to reinstate this as a means to mitigate exclusion error and identify inclusion error.

### **Joint Action Beneficiaries Reached**

The total planned number of beneficiaries to be supported was 336,000 severely vulnerable refugees with a full package of assistance covering food and non-food basic needs. The final number of beneficiaries of the Joint Action reported to ECHO in 2021 was 624,212. A detailed analysis of beneficiary numbers, including any discrepancies between planned and reported numbers, is presented in Appendix 11.

# EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

## 2.1. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

UNHCR and WFP decentralised evaluations must conform to UNHCR, WFP and United Nations Evaluation Group ethical standards and norms. The contractors undertaking the evaluations are responsible for safeguarding and ensuring ethics at all stages of the evaluation cycle. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring informed consent, protecting privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of participants, ensuring cultural sensitivity, respecting the autonomy of participants, ensuring fair recruitment of participants (including women and socially excluded groups) and ensuring that the evaluation results in no harm to participants or their communities. The evaluation was conducted in line with UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluations and Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. It adheres to principles of independence, impartiality, credibility and utility.

The methodological design (see Appendix 3) is a mixed-methods approach that was developed based on an evaluation matrix (see Appendix 4) used to outline what the evaluation should look at and how that would be done. This matrix linked the evaluation criteria and questions set out in the Terms of Reference with measurable information benchmarks/indicators that were allocated to data collection tools. An evaluability assessment (in the Inception Report) provided further insight into the robustness of the Joint Action, its objectives, intervention logic, available data and that the systems already in place to measure and verify results and the evaluation tools were adequate to answer the evaluation questions. The evaluation is intended to serve an accountability function, meaning that it is primarily summative, i.e. focused on results achieved for the period 2019–2021 although with a formative element that provides recommendations that are relevant for the next phase of the Joint Action.

As part of the initial scoping and inception process of the evaluation, the research team, with iterative consultation from members of the evaluation steering committee and evaluation reference group (ERG), derived its approach based on the standard Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Evaluation Criteria<sup>41</sup> and the agreed **evaluation questions**, which set out the key areas of research that were tested by the evaluators. Each of these questions has associated **sub-questions**, which were tested by the evaluators via **indicators** for which primary and secondary data were collected and analysed via the **research tools**. A representation of the analytical process is presented below:

Figure 2: Evaluation design and analytical process



The evaluation methodology, inasmuch as possible, adhered to the purpose, objectives, and provisions of the original TOR for the evaluation. On development of the analytical approach to the evaluation, the evaluation team and SC/ERG agreed some (minor) changes to the evaluation questions to better adhere to best evaluation practice and eliminate data collection duplication, as follows:

- Criteria of ‘appropriateness’, ‘adaptability’ and ‘shock-responsiveness’ noted under the TOR were folded into the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency.
- Sub-question 3.d ‘What are the implications of separate multi-donor financing on the overall coherence of the joint action?’ was folded into Question 4 (coherence).

41 <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm#:~:text=The%20OECD%20DAC%20Network%20on,two%20principles%20for%20their%20use.>

## Reconstructed Theory of Change

The reconstructed theory of change is presented in Appendix 10. It outlines the causal chain between the problem statement and the Joint Action impact goal, showing specific inputs, outputs and outcomes between the two. The final evaluation questions and associated assumptions to be assessed are presented in the evaluation matrix (see Appendix 4).

## Evaluation Methods

Specific research tools utilised were:

- Desk review of secondary documents and data (bibliography/sources in Appendix 7)
- Collection of primary data via:
  - Key informant interviews (interview questionnaire in Appendix 5a)
  - Focus group discussions (methodology in Appendix 5b and details of stakeholder consultation process in Appendix 5c)
  - A remote (telephone) household survey conducted by a specialist data collection firm (The survey questionnaire is included in Appendix 5d)
  - Site visits/direct observation of UNHCR and WFP refugee registration/validation locations, field offices and financial service providers.

Guided by the evaluation matrix throughout data collection, the evaluation team engaged with a broad range of stakeholders, including implementing partner staff, UNHCR and WFP staff at regional and country office levels, other United Nations agencies (notably UNICEF), donors and the IASC cluster/sector/working group leads and coordinators, as well as additional duty bearers (both state and non-state actors), beneficiaries and service providers. Importantly, the evaluation team emphasised obtaining the views and understanding the experiences of community members and especially women to ensure the findings were contextually grounded and the recommendations for future programming relevant.

A total of 69 key informants and 150 current or discontinued beneficiaries of the Joint Action were interviewed across all regions of Lebanon and UNHCR/WFP Lebanon country offices. A further 1063 households were contacted via telephone to participate in a survey of knowledge, attitudes and practices around their household economy and use of cash transfers to explore the context, outcomes and perceptions of the modalities of the Joint Action among community-based beneficiaries. A full list of interviewees (positions only) are presented in Appendix 8.

## Data sources and sampling plan

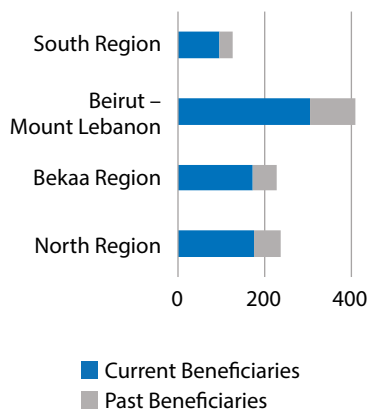
Table 2, below, provides a brief overview of the key evaluation tools and proposed sample. The sections that follow provide a more detailed overview of the specific data sources and sampling plan for the evaluation.

**Table 2: Evaluation primary data tools and sampling plan**

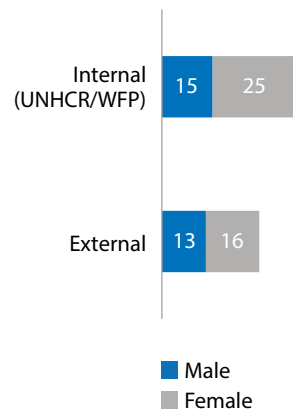
Primary data tool	Sample	Final Number
<b>KIIs</b>	UNHCR and WFP Joint Action programme staff, implementing partners, donor, sister UN agencies, cluster/sector/WG representatives, cash transfer consortia, private sector partners, government (planned: up to 50-60 KIIs)	51 KIIs with 69 individuals
<b>FGDs</b>	Beneficiaries of one or more Joint Action cash transfers (up to 15 FGDs)	15 FGDs with 150 individuals
<b>Household telephone surveys</b>	Beneficiaries of one or more Joint Action cash transfers (up to 1,000 households)	1,000 completed, 1,063 contacted

The charts, below, provide additional detail on the primary informants to the evaluation.

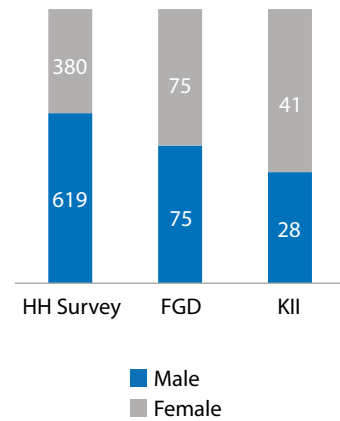
**Figure 3: Evaluation HH Survey Participants by Location & Status**



**Figure 4: Evaluation Key Informants by Organisation Type and Sex**



**Figure 5: Primary Data Respondents by Sex**



## 2.2. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Evaluations must conform to the 2020 United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines. Further, the evaluation team has reviewed and accepted the UNHCR data protection policy, disability inclusion strategy, and age, gender, and diversity (AGD) policy. Accordingly, IMC Worldwide/DT-Global was responsible for safeguarding and ensuring ethics at all stages of the evaluation cycle. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring informed consent, protecting privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of participants, ensuring cultural sensitivity, respecting the autonomy of participants, ensuring fair recruitment of participants (including women and socially excluded groups), and ensuring that the evaluation results in no harm to participants or their communities. During the evaluation, the following ethical issues, related risks, safeguards, and measures were considered:

**Table 3: Ethical considerations, risks, and safeguards**

Phases	Ethical issues	Risks	Safeguards
Inception	<p>Confidentiality of beneficiary lists</p> <p>Confidentiality of information proprietary to UNHCR and/or WFP</p>	<p>Exposure of identifiable information of all Joint Action beneficiaries for calculation of sample for primary research.</p> <p>Exposure of proprietary information on UNHCR/WFP processes or systems</p>	<p>Utilise UNHCR/WFP staff to calculate sample and provide evaluation team ONLY with the selected sample contacts</p> <p>Confidentiality agreements and ethical codes of conduct to be signed by all evaluation team members</p> <p>Sample data to be shared between relevant evaluation team members only</p>



Data collection	Contact with vulnerable women and children	Potential exploitation of vulnerable programme beneficiaries by evaluation team members	Ensure explicit informed consent from individual participants, obtained in a manner appropriate to the group included  No participants under 18 years of age  Primary data collection from community participants followed previously established and approved tools, thus no Institutional Review Board was convened.
Data analysis	None	None	None
Reporting	Confidentiality of information proprietary to UNHCR and/or WFP	Exposure of proprietary information on UNHCR/ WFP processes or systems	Review of findings of analysis specific to UNHCR and WFP by the respective representatives to ensure required confidentiality is respected
Dissemination	None	None	None

## Data security, confidentiality, and conflicts of interest

IMC Worldwide/DT-Global, its staff, and consultants have an obligation to respect the privacy of clients and their beneficiaries, employees, members, and contractors, and to protect and maintain the confidentiality of all information learned about those individuals and agencies in the course of providing services to them.

A detailed data security and privacy protection analysis is outside the scope of this work. However, the evaluation team, especially in the secondary data analysis, were provided access to information, processes or data that is proprietarily sensitive and/or contain personally identifiable information. The team undertook the following protocols to ensure that such full confidentiality and security was maintained for such information/data:

- Reviewing, signing, and adhering to UNHCR/WFP codes of conduct and confidentiality agreements on data.
- Completing UNHCR's introductory protection training module.
- Maintaining secure practices, protocols, and policies around the protection of this data (i.e., safe collection, restricted storage, etc.).
- Onward sharing only with approved third parties (i.e. data collection partner EDS) was subject to a binding contractual obligation entered into by the third party to comply with IMC Worldwide/DT-Global's obligations under this Agreement, including an obligation of EDS not to share any shared personal data to any other third party.
- Flagging any potential conflict with the protocols within UNHCR/WFP's policies on data with the respective evaluation co-managers to ensure best practice is followed.
- Minimisation: if the data could be redacted or anonymised without compromising the analysis, the evaluation team worked with the data provider to do so. For example, data transformations that required access to full databases of beneficiaries (e.g., for sample calculations) was undertaken by authorised UNHCR/WFP staff with guidance from the evaluation team and only the final dataset required for research shared.
- Safe storage: all data was stored on the DT-Global cloud server and/or shared cloud-based (SharePoint) storage provided by UNHCR/WFP, with access to only evaluation team members.
- Limited usage: the data was ONLY used for this analysis and no other purpose.
- Destruction of data: upon termination of the evaluation, the evaluation team transferred all personal data collected for the performance of the evaluation to UNHCR and deleted existing copies. Deletion of existing copies includes, but is not limited to, the destruction of the personal data in the evaluation team's possession or under its control, and in all forms, including but not limited to electronic, digital, physical form available online, offline or on backup, disaster recovery or archival systems.

- Data breach notification: IMC Worldwide/DT-Global undertook to notify UNHCR as soon as possible, or within 48 hours upon becoming aware of a potential or actual personal data breach, including by EDS. If the personal data breach is likely to result in personal injury or harm to a data subject, IMC Worldwide undertook to notify UNHCR immediately upon detection of its potential or actual occurrence. No such breaches occurred over the course of the evaluation.

## 2.3. RISKS, LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Prior to the field research visits, the evaluation team communicated with the UNHCR/WFP Lebanon team (and UNHCR/WFP in turn with relevant authorities (Government of Lebanon, World Health Organisation (WHO), Center for Disease Control (CDC) etc.)) to ensure an up-to-date assessment of risks in terms of security, communicable diseases, natural disasters, and other severe threats to the evaluation. The main risks to the evaluation were as follows:

**Table 4: Evaluation risks/limitations and mitigation strategies**

Risk/Limitation	Internal or External	Required mitigation/management strategy
Security deteriorates to the extent where travel to programme communities is proscribed	External	Did not materialise, no mitigation necessary
Communicable disease outbreak restricts travel to programme communities	External	
Natural disasters adversely affect travel to programme communities	External	
Communities/Facility staff refuse to engage with the evaluators	Internal	Did not materialise, no mitigation necessary.
Challenges in contacting community members for research – especially in light of telecommunications price rises in mid-2022	Internal	Communication challenges were small, a suitable oversampling (100%) of respondents mitigated this fully, with 1000 responses completed.
Insufficient stakeholders in each community/facility to make the research reliable	Internal	Did not materialise, no mitigation necessary.
Different members of the evaluation team (enumerators) applying tools differently leading to inconsistency in data collection	Internal	Careful recruitment and training of the enumerators and piloting of the tools ensured tools are well embedded. Further, ongoing quality control/checking of data was facilitated in real time by EDS.
Non-functioning of devices for data collection	Internal	The enumerators are experienced in the use of electronic data collection devices, and the training/piloting exercise focused on mitigating this risk.
Conceptual – breadth/depth of the Joint Action and the evaluation scope	External	A challenge to adequately represent the many aspects that the evaluation was tasked to cover in one concise analysis
Environmental – different political, social, economic perspectives on assistance to Syrians in Lebanon	External	Challenges in identifying consensus for some key issues – sought to identify constraints and opportunities and suggest ways forward.
Technical – analysing and making recommendations on highly detailed and specific processes while remaining in scope	Internal	A significant challenge – sought to propose clear ways forward, detailed recommendations/ sub-recommendations for action where possible.

## EVALUATION FINDINGS

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### 3.1. EVALUATION QUESTION 1: RELEVANCE/APPROPRIATENESS – HOW RELEVANT WAS THE JOINT ACTION TO THE NEEDS OF THE TARGET POPULATION?

*Sub-question 1.1: To what extent has the joint action (in its multiple modalities) been able to respond to the needs of the intended beneficiaries (women and men) in the context of evolving and compounding crises (refugees, COVID-19, economic collapse)?*

#### FINDINGS

1. **The Joint Action design reflects findings of rigorous and regular collection of data on the needs of refugees, and thus responds to refugee preferences and needs.**
2. **Despite opportunities for Syrians to express needs and concerns, there are perceptions amongst the Syrian population that their voices are not being heard, leading to frustration.**
3. **UNHCR and WFP were responsive to the changing context of the triple crisis in Lebanon, maintaining relevance and appropriateness of cash assistance at scale.**
4. **More could have been done to facilitate the expansion of payment delivery points beyond BLF.**
5. **The decision on whether or not to dollarise the Joint Action is not straightforward - there are particular risks and sensitivities involved.**

#### 1. The Joint Action design reflects findings of rigorous and regular collection of data on the needs of refugees, and thus responds to refugee preferences and needs.

The annual Vulnerability Analysis of Syrian Refugees (VASyR), which collects data on the needs and vulnerabilities of the refugee population, has informed the annual calibration of the severely vulnerable cohort and the coverage targets of the Joint Action. The Joint Action was designed amid greater optimism that, over its period, the situation in Lebanon for refugees would stabilise and improve and that returns to Syria would increase. It envisaged a gradual scaling down of assistance. With the deterioration in the enabling environment, these assumptions no longer held. Robust, well-designed and consistent annual data from the VASyR on needs and vulnerabilities has been an appropriate conduit for amendments to the Joint Action's coverage targets. Data also (re)confirms refugees' need for and preferences for cash to meet food and basic needs<sup>42</sup>, while data from VASyR and from regular price monitoring exercises have informed calibration of the SMEB and transfer value.

Both organisations aim to involve refugee communities and seek their perspectives on aspects of programme design or programme processes. FGDs with communities engage approximately 180 cash or food assistance beneficiaries in monitoring every quarter. UNHCR's Outreach Volunteers are also used to capture opinions of the target population on how certain activities are best designed or managed. Meanwhile there is the call centre which was reported by key informants and in FGDs as the main channel through which refugees can raise issues and concerns (though see EQ2.3 for more on issues with the call centre). The extent to which refugees' concerns have informed changes to the design of the Joint Action has varied. There is evidence that some of the self-reported access constraints facing refugees have been acted on. For example, refugees highlighted that they had difficulties in applying to the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) through the call centre, and in response the Joint Action agencies introduced the online GRM application. In 2021, some 70 per cent of the appeals lodged were received through this new channel.<sup>43</sup> Further, in response to calls from refugees for greater inclusion, for the 2021/2022 cycle, UNHCR took the decision to maximise coverage of the severely vulnerable with cash assistance (at the expense of depth of assistance).<sup>44</sup>

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42 Evaluation of Lebanon WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018–2021, VASyR 2021

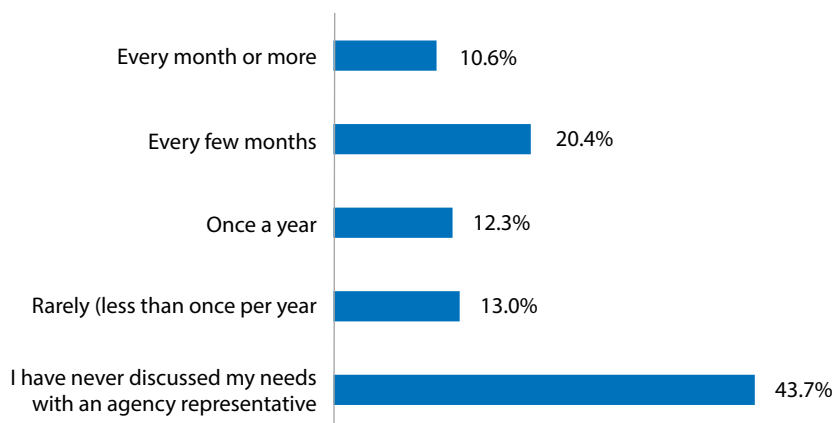
43 UN key informant

44 UN key informants

## 2. Despite opportunities for Syrians to express needs and concerns, there are perceptions amongst the Syrian population that their voices are not being heard, leading to frustration.

The primary data collected by the evaluation provides some insight into perceived frustrations experienced by many refugees. As presented in the chart, right, the telephone survey found that almost half of respondents (43.7 per cent) claimed to have never met with or spoken to a representative of the cash transfer agencies, with almost the same proportion (43.3 per cent) speaking to a representative once per year or more. There were no significant differences between female/male respondents, female/male headed households or if a respondent was active or discontinued.

**Figure 6: Reported Frequency of Needs Discussions with Agency Representatives (source: HH survey)**



*How Often Needs are Discussed with Cash Distribution Agency Representative(s) (n=991)*

It is important to note, however, that the Joint Action supports almost 100,000 households (with a similar number outside the programme being supported), thus frequent direct contact with households is not a practical aspiration. The results indicate a degree of Joint Action responsiveness to the Syrian population, particularly given the size of the targeted population, despite a significant proportion feeling that their voices were not being solicited or listened to. Part of this frustration (echoed amongst participants in the evaluation focus group discussions) stems from certain Joint Action design features that may require a fundamental rethink to be addressed. For example, the majority of complaints received through the call centre (and reason why most FGD participants reported that they had used the call centre), was to lodge a complaint about targeting. However, such concerns are driven in large part by the targeting method chosen and addressing them would require fundamental redesign (see also EQ1.3 and EQ2.3). Another constraining factor is limited funds. While some refugees (both discontinued and existing cash recipients) raised issues about limited coverage, others (primarily current recipients) raised concerns about the inadequacy of the transfer value. Previous studies in 2019 and 2020 capturing community perspectives presented consistent findings that refugees themselves express a preference for greater inclusion, even if this means smaller transfers per household, the changes in cost of living and transfer adequacy as a result of the changes in the context have seen changes in refugees stance on this.<sup>45</sup> Both these concerns are valid, but without additional funding it is not possible to address both issues simultaneously (see EQ 2).

## 3. UNHCR and WFP were responsive to the changing context of the triple crisis in Lebanon, maintaining relevance and appropriateness of cash assistance at scale.

In response to the challenges in the context that evolved since 2019 there is a great deal of documentation, data and reporting that demonstrates how UNHCR and WFP monitored the evolving situation and implemented a series of modifications to the Joint Action. There is good evidence from a range of internal and external key informants to this evaluation that UNHCR and WFP had, in general, done a good job and the changes made had been adequate to maintain the feasibility and appropriateness of a cash response at scale for refugees in the face of these multiple challenges, despite the highly politicised context. Documented studies reach similar conclusions.<sup>46</sup> These views were also shared by Syrians participating in evaluation FGDs.

<sup>45</sup> Development Analytics reported that in 2021, while most refugees agreed that coverage should increase, those same refugees did NOT agree that this should come at the expense of a reduction in their own assistance (source: key informant)

<sup>46</sup> The CAMEALEON research paper reviewed cash adaptations of 2018-2020 cash progs including the Joint Action. It found that they had managed to remain relevant and resilient to the changing context: WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021.

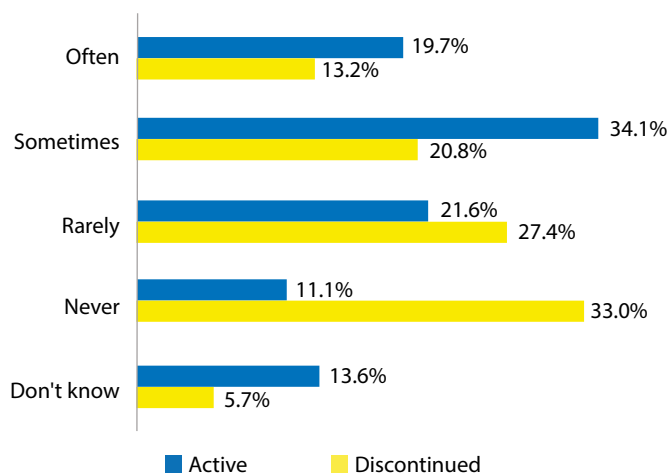
Results from the telephone household survey question on whether respondents perceived their interactions with representatives led to changes in programming (see chart, right) had mixed results, with a perhaps unsurprising divergence between active and discontinued recipients. Of active recipients, approximately 55 per cent expressed that their consultations ‘often’ (19.7 per cent) or ‘sometimes’ (34.1 per cent) led to changes and 32.7 per cent perceiving change to happen ‘rarely’ or ‘never’. Discontinued recipients, who would likely not agree with the programme decision to cease their cash transfer, were less likely to feel their concerns were responded to, with over 60 per cent of them expressing that their discussions ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ led to changes.

A survey question around the perception that the cash transfer agencies are working to resolve problems faced by (and raised by) cash recipients saw positive results, with almost half of respondents believing they are ‘definitely’ undertaking this, and 38.5 per cent stating ‘somewhat’. Less than 10 per cent of respondents scored the agencies unambiguously poorly in this regard.

Some of the specific actions that the Joint Action has undertaken over the course of the evaluation period highlighted by both programme reporting and corroborated by key informants to the evaluation are as follows:

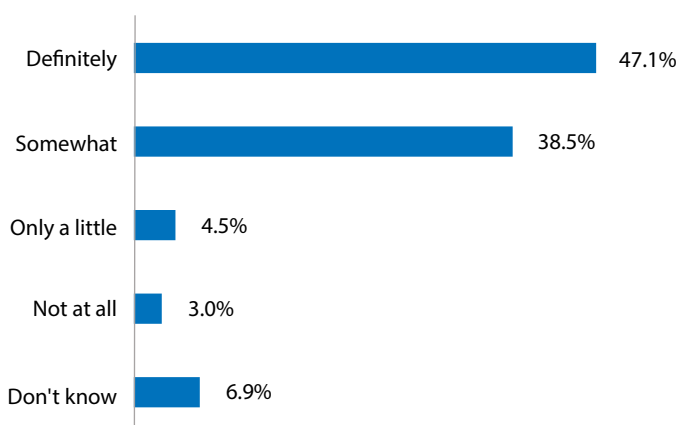
- Negotiated for new BLF ATMs to be installed in areas with low coverage, to reduce crowding and where electricity outages limited ATM working hours.
- Expanded the number of WFP-contracted shops (where Joint Action beneficiaries could also redeem their assistance).
- Staggered the uploading of e-cards to allow for ATM replenishment, avoid ATM overcrowding and maintain social distancing during COVID-19.
- Negotiated for change to ATM functionality to allow refugees to withdraw their cash as a single transaction.<sup>47</sup>
- Deployed monitors to hotspot ATMs to organise crowds, mitigate protection risks, support refugees to manage their transaction and ensure social distancing.
- Monitored ATM usage and worked with BLF to ensure timely replenishment.
- Negotiated preferential exchange rates on behalf of the LOUISE agencies which are close to the market rate.
- Undertook contingency planning to prepare for worst-case scenarios, including a collapse of the banking system – including piloting other means to deliver cash payments such as through Western Union (trialled in the Port emergency response) and measures to enable a switch to in-kind food assistance in case of a collapse of banking services.
- Negotiated increases to the transfer value (though with some limitations – for more on this see EQ2).
- Expanded coverage of the Joint Action (though for more on this see EQ1.3).

**Figure 7: Perceptions of Whether Discussions Lead to Changes in Programme (Source: HH survey)**



*Perception of whether Discussions Result in Changes to the Cash Programme (n=925)*

**Figure 8: Perception that Joint Action Agencies are Working to Resolve Problems (Source: HH survey)**



*Perception that JA Agencies are Working to Resolve Problems (n=890)*

<sup>47</sup> Previously the ATMs only provided a predefined menu of options for withdrawal amounts, meaning beneficiaries had to do several transactions to withdraw the full amount, adding to transaction time and queuing.

#### 4. More could have been done to facilitate the expansion of payment delivery points beyond BLF.

The contraction of the banking sector meant that ATM access for Joint Action beneficiaries went from approximately 1,000 to only 200. While key informants acknowledged that LOUISE agencies had negotiated for an increase to the number of BLF ATMs (by 35 at the time of research), this was not considered sufficient. Many external key informants and some internal key informants queried the decision of the Joint Action implementers to continue delivering the largest cash programme in the country through the banking sector (and specifically through BLF only) for so long. They cited the overcrowding of ATMs and the protection risks visible at these<sup>48</sup> (see EQ2), the costs refugees faces to travel to ATMs (also highlighted by refugees in FGDs), the fact that the general public switched to using MTOs in 2019, and evidence from the Beirut Port response and UNICEF's Haddi programme, where the switch was made over 12 months earlier and where no protection risks at MTOs had been reported.<sup>49</sup> The option for LOUISE recipients to redeem MPCA at an MTO location, using their red LOUISE card was still only being piloted for the first time in July 2022, and not at scale – 50 outlets were being considered out of a possible 1,300. See EQ3.3 for more on factors influencing timeliness).

#### 5. The decision on whether or not to dollarise the Joint Action is not straightforward - there are particular risks and sensitivities involved.

Since 2020 donors have encouraged examination of dollarisation of humanitarian assistance.<sup>50</sup> Decision makers in the Joint Action agencies have been reluctant to dollarise the Joint Action, primarily on the basis that this risked heightening social tensions between refugees and Lebanese populations, based on risk assessments carried out at the sector and inter-sector level. Some external key informants agreed with this view. Phase 1 of dollarisation<sup>51</sup> began in 2021 and in 2022 the Cash Taskforce Evaluation looked specifically at the dollarisation issue, taking into account the evidence from Phase 1. It concluded that some of the perceived risks did not materialise in practice, or that they were successfully mitigated.<sup>52</sup> The Joint Action agencies (and especially WFP) remain critical of the robustness of the methodology and the conclusions. External key informants were more positive regarding the analysis but acknowledged that there was not the same level of analysis given to the possible impacts on social stability compared to the macroeconomic analysis. Some external, and a few internal key informants, while agreeing that it is important to proceed cautiously, given the scale of the refugee cash programme, maintained the view that this alone should not be a reason NOT to proceed, rather that these potential risks have been known for some years and that more effort was needed to understand the drivers of these risks and develop mitigation measures. The evaluation and several key informants (internal and external) considered that this risk does not stem from the currency change per se but from the perceived lack of assistance for Lebanese from the international community, in a context of deteriorating wellbeing and spiralling poverty.

Efforts to negotiate the preferential exchange rate have mitigated some of the risk associated with use of LBP. This is now comparable to the open (informal) market rate<sup>53</sup>, and was considered by internal key informants to be an effective solution; indeed some key informants queried why dollarisation was still needed given this fact. Some external key informants considered that dollarisation would still be beneficial to avoid the need to constantly update the negotiated rate. Others highlighted that the value for money aspect was only one part of the argument for dollarisation and that the macroeconomic implications of continuing with LBP (its contribution to the high inflation being seen) were either not understood or were being ignored. However, it does appear that the main donor concerns which initiated the discussion in the first place, were around the effective utilisation of humanitarian aid budgets (rather than these more macroeconomic arguments). If this is the case, then the mitigation measures put in place by the Joint Action implementing agencies have been appropriate. Further, the (Lebanese) public perception aspects of dollarisation of assistance for Syrians (discussed further under Finding 22) have a significant bearing on such a decision, and are well recognised by the implementing agencies and other informed stakeholders.

48 Also highlighted in the 2022 Independent Evaluation of the Phase I Dollarisation Process of Direct Cash Assistance which calculated the number of beneficiaries/distribution point/day and found that MPCA programming experienced the highest numbers and that this contributed to protection risks and tensions.

49 UN key informant

50 UN, donor key informants

51 Dollarisation of assistance to Lebanese and to programmes reaching both population groups occurred in Phase 1 (2021).

52 Cash Taskforce, Independent Evaluation of Phase I Dollarization Process of Direct Cash Assistance to Lebanon, 2022.

53 The negotiated rate for 2022 is 98% of the open market rate, source: UN key informant.

## Sub-question 1.2 Has it been able to integrate gender and equity issues in its modality?

### FINDINGS

6. The Joint Action follows a single common design, with good diversification/modification of program processes to accommodate constraints of different population groups.
7. The targeting design is increasingly integrating gender and equity issues but the project is more gender sensitive, rather than attempting to be responsive or transformative.
8. WFP Lebanon has invested over the Joint Action period in its capacity around gender and inclusion, thus creating an opportunity to deepen the gender responsiveness of the programme.

### 6. The Joint Action follows a single common design, with good diversification/modification of program processes to accommodate constraints of different population groups.

The Joint Action proposal to DG-ECHO in 2018 made particular reference to gender and vulnerability and would include, among others, female headed households, single parents, and women at risk.<sup>54</sup> The proposal highlighted data collection measures to enable tracking of gender/vulnerability-related outcomes/outputs: “In 2018, WFP Lebanon CO will be shifted to a new measurement of gender by adopting the new Gender and Age Marker (GAM)”.<sup>55</sup> Further, UNHCR noted in the same proposal its adoption of an age, gender and diversity sensitive approach (AGD).

The specific actions noted on foot of the GAM and the AGD was the disaggregation of all outcome and output monitoring data by gender, as well as referring to a variety of actions to be taken to ensure responsiveness to gender considerations, e.g.

- Organisation of sites, locations and event in line with cultural gender preferences of Syrians,
- Mixed teams of male and female monitors for household visits,
- Monitoring of risks particularly vulnerable groups face related to UNHCR/WFP programmes,
- Encouragement of reporting through the hotlines, helpdesks or to field staff.
- Targeted actions to address protection gaps and promote gender equality and the rights of all persons of concern (POCs)

An assessment on protection risk within the context of Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) in 2019 (and updated in 2020) highlighted the need to enhance the information provision to groups at risk or vulnerable (elderly, disabled, female headed households), as well as ensuring safe identification and referrals to mitigate social tensions.<sup>56</sup> The same study stressed the need for sex, age and disability-disaggregated data (SADD) whilst monitoring access to assistance, distribution methods and inclusion of such vulnerable groups in basic assistance programming (including via redress mechanisms).

There is good evidence that the Joint Action has integrated these considerations by increasing accessibility as well as working on re-inclusion of vulnerable groups via the GRM. Joint Action outcome and output monitoring reports provide further evidence of how UNHCR and WFP seek to integrate the needs of vulnerable groups in line with the LCRP, by ensuring that implementation activities such as distributions, meeting locations, information and awareness raising sessions with beneficiaries are gender sensitive and considerate to cultural preferences.<sup>57</sup> For the elderly and people with disability, LOUISE cards are delivered to mitigate their inability to be present at distribution sites.

There is also evidence of adjustments to the programme to accommodate the rising needs of vulnerable beneficiaries, such as including more criteria in the targeting process by Development Analytics which has recalibrated and incorporated new variables and vulnerability scores in the GRM related to protection, as well as including profiles at increased risk of Covid-19.<sup>58</sup>

Notwithstanding these measures, the primary objective of the programme is not to just support refugees in meeting their basic needs, but also to reduce their susceptibility to exploitation and protect risks such as child

54 Joint Action Proposal: eSINGLE FORM FOR HUMANITARIAN AID ACTIONS 2018/00890/RQ/01/01, Section 3.2.6

55 eSINGLE FORM FOR HUMANITARIAN AID ACTIONS, 2018/00890/RQ/01/01), Section 5

56 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2021; p.61

57 Joint Action Final Report to ECHO , submitted 30 Sept2021

58 Ibid.

labour, early marriage, gender violence, among others. When it comes to particular adjustments related to protection and sexual gender-based violence (sGBV), the evaluation found limited evidence to indicate the extent to which responses and referrals have been made or how adjustments were adopted to factor for the increased vulnerability of such groups.

Research conducted for UNHCR in Lebanon between 2017 and 2018 on how cash assistance might mitigate and/or address sGBV risks found that the use of complementary cash modalities such as ECA or PCAP had a more direct impact on the mitigation of GBV/sGBV risks than general multi-purpose cash assistance, but complemented the other modalities and limited potentially harmful coping mechanisms. Notably, the study highlighted that a lack of understanding by recipients of the different cash programmes (discussed further below) inhibited the capacity of respondents at risk of or experiencing GBV/sGBV to plan mitigation actions accordingly, including exit strategies.<sup>59</sup>

## **7. The targeting design is increasingly integrating gender and equity issues but the project is more gender sensitive, rather than attempting to be responsive or transformative.**

Beyond inclusion measures on the cash distribution mechanics and SADD data collection, a review of programme documentation and reporting saw little evidence of substantive programmatic gender responsiveness of the Joint Action, and little direct evidence of any direct efforts to transform discriminatory gender norms that prevail among the Syrian community in Lebanon.

Although Syrian women in Lebanon face widespread and systemic gender inequality, which manifests in less access to resources, services, and opportunities, as well as higher risks of violence, abuse, and exploitation<sup>60</sup>, few evaluation interviewees were able to present any information on how the Joint Action might directly address fundamental gender issues.<sup>61</sup> Although the Joint Action proposal notes the promotion of gender equality and the programme goal highlights “survival sex”<sup>62</sup> as a key protection risk to be addressed, post-distribution monitoring reports, on-site monitoring reports mainly focus on the accessibility of refugees to ATM and E-cards (disaggregated by gender)<sup>63</sup> and expenditure mechanisms for different food and non-food items, including decision-making processes.<sup>64</sup> There is little exploration beyond that, as the focus is mostly on quantitative data, rather than qualitative analysis that can reveal insights into gender differences, nor of ways to address identified issues more effectively.

This evidence triangulates well with a 2019 analysis of cash interventions and sGBV conducted for UNHCR in Lebanon<sup>65</sup>, which found limited effectiveness of cash based programmes in mitigating negative psychosocial outcomes for sGBV survivors. It did, however, note greater effectiveness of cash on physical measures, such as facilitating the ability to move accommodation, and (echoing the findings of the 2017/2018 report cited above) recommend ensuring complementarity between case management and cash assistance to optimise the outcomes on survivors.<sup>66</sup>

## **8. WFP Lebanon has invested over the Joint Action period in its capacity around gender and inclusion, thus creating an opportunity to deepen the gender responsiveness of the programme.**

Both WFP and UNHCR invested in developing a well-established communication and feedback mechanisms for the Joint Action. Field monitoring, homes visits, participatory assessments, quarterly focus group discussions all have been used to obtain feedback and adjust programming for the following year, whilst following the Age-Gender-Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) approach so as to ensure all needs are factored with regards to gender. In 2022, WFP appointed a gender advisor to focus on improvements in gender inclusivity of programmes. The advisor will work on developing WFP’s globally-led Gender Transformative

59 Cash Assistance and the Prevention, Mitigation and Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (sGBV), Findings from Research in Lebanon, Ecuador, and Morocco.

60 Research Brief: Addressing Gender Amongst Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, UN Women, 2019

61 UN key informants

62 2017 research indicates that 94% of sex-trafficking survivors in Lebanon were Syrian women: “Prostitution and Trafficking in Women in the Eastern Suburbs of Beirut,” Euro-Mediterranean Women’s Foundation, 2017.

63 UNHCR MCAP Post Distribution Monitoring Reports, 2019, 2020.

64 See WFP Basic Needs Outcome Monitoring for Vulnerable Syrian Refugees Assisted by WFP Lebanon, February 2020 p.18.

65 Duhaut S., Wakim G., De Mercey G., Burnard M., UNHCR Lebanon’s Cash Based Interventions and contribution to SGBV Prevention, mitigation and response, UNHCR 2019.

66 Ibid



Programme (planned for 2022), as well as supporting the Ministry of Social Affairs to strengthen gender within Lebanon’s social protection system.<sup>67</sup> While laudable, this has been a recent development towards the conclusion of the Joint Action programme cycle under evaluation.

Nonetheless, the evaluation notes evidence of some programmatic activities related to gender and inclusion, specifically awareness sessions on gender and protection during field activities/home visits for monitoring (pre-COVID-19 travel restrictions).<sup>68</sup> However, protection colleagues noted concerns and information gaps regarding the effectiveness of remote sGBV services.<sup>69</sup> This was also noted by Syrians themselves during focus group discussions, with many relating how home visits had halted due to COVID-19 severely limiting their capacity to benefit from any complementary activities (nor, indeed, provide updates on their personal data).

Other leading organisations such as UNICEF have changed their approach in service provision and transitioned from a humanitarian/emergency to a more development focused approach and conceptualisation of the issues<sup>70</sup>, and maybe this is one way to look at in terms of coupling the cash provision with more tangible long term complementary services that can mitigate the growing negative impact of the crises.

### *Sub-question 1.3 How adequate was the targeting process, i.e., transparent, predictable, independent, impartial, gender-sensitive, and inclusive for reaching the most vulnerable?*

#### **FINDINGS**

- 9. The Joint Action targeting approach has helped manage the challenge of meeting needs at scale, but with trade-offs in key areas such as transparency and inclusion.**
- 10. The Joint Action agencies are strongly committed to enhancing accuracy and have been successful in overcoming some limitations in the targeting formula**
- 11. The GRM design has improved year on year and is currently a useful mechanism for overcoming specific exclusion errors in the formula, though some limitations remain.**
- 12. Refugees are concerned with the transparency of the targeting approach. However, little has changed during the Joint Action period to address this concern.**

#### **9. The Joint Action targeting approach has helped manage the challenge of meeting needs at scale, but with trade-offs in key areas such as transparency and inclusion.**

Under the Joint Action period, WFP and UNHCR have followed a harmonised targeting approach for all cash transfer activities including the Joint Action, adopting a vulnerability-based model based on proxy means test. Joint Action cash transfer eligibility is governed by a formula (comprising a range of indicators and their respective weightings) derived from analysis of household socioeconomic and demographic data in the annual VASyR and UNHCR database which estimates the strength of a household’s observable characteristics as predictors, or proxy measures, of poverty (which characteristics are statistically associated with low per capita expenditure).

This Proxy Means Test (PMT) “desk formula” (as it is widely-termed, although “econometric targeting model” is more preferred by UNHCR/WFP) is applied to the basic socio-demographic data held on registered refugees in UNHCR’s PROGRES database to generate a welfare (expenditure) score for each household, without the need for visits to every household, and this score is used to rank the Syrian population. Households with a score under the SMEB are classified as severely vulnerable and are considered eligible for support for food and basic needs. This ranking exercise is repeated annually meaning some households continue with cash assistance each year, some are discontinued and other “new” severely vulnerable households are added.

No targeting method is perfect, and all will have limitations. Key informants – particularly internal key informants – highlighted several benefits of targeting the Joint Action in this manner. On the other hand, there was widespread recognition among both internal and external stakeholders of constraints and limitations inherent in the approach. Overall, and noting these difficulties, the general consensus among key informants is that it is “adequate in the circumstances” – and also noting that other alternatives would also face constraints.

67 UN key informant

68 UN key informant

69 CAMELEON *Pinning Down Moving Targets*, Research Report, December 2020, p.33

70 WFP/UNHCR Partners’ Key Interviews;

**Efficiency:** the main highlighted advantage with the targeting approach is that it is a timely and cost-efficient way of targeting support to a population of some 1.5 million Syrians in Lebanon. A variety of key informants noted that this was far easier to manage compared to the previous approach of door-to-door assessments, where data collection was a huge and costly logistical challenge, and which also did not reach (and thus excluded) up to 30 per cent of the population.

**Accuracy:** On the one hand several key informants highlighted that the method appeared to perform to a satisfactory level at identifying the vulnerable. For example, the PMT exclusion error rate is reportedly compares to typical error rates for PMTs globally<sup>71</sup>, and the use of expenditure data as a proxy for poverty was considered by technical specialists to make sense in this context.

On the other hand, several constraints to accuracy were noted by a range of key informants to the evaluation, as follows:

- i) **Out of date foundational data:** the efficacy of the model relies on refugees' personal data in UNHCR registration records being accurate and up to date. Registration data should be periodically updated every two years (with a one year grace period) and refugees should be able to update any changes in key family data (births, deaths etc) more frequently as needed. However, because of the triple crisis as well as given the size of the refugee population combined with the out-of-camp settlement type, by the beginning of 2022 key informants attested to the backlog in verification and ongoing updating of the refugee data. To address it, in 2022 UNHCR embarked on a surge project to ensure a standard data-age for all personal information, a maximum of 3 months waiting period for new arrival registration and a renewal of personal documentation. By the end of the year, UNHCR reported that the surge project was reaching its targets. In addition, UNHCR reported a lighter and more dynamic system of validating available data being put in place to ensure continuous registration in the coming years.<sup>72</sup> The use of outdated and incorrect data risks impacting on the accuracy of a targeting exercise that is solely data driven. UNHCR reported that Development Analytics modelled the potential impact of this using 2020-21 VASyR data and did not conclude that this generated a substantive risk<sup>73</sup>, however many other key informants saw it as a cause for concern.<sup>74</sup> Increasing costs of transportation to registration centres and costs of phone calls are likely to further compound this issue.

Meanwhile, external key informants highlighted that there had been no systematic 'on site' verification of information through household visits for almost a decade. Although no information on the key registration data included in the targeting formula is shared with refugees (see more below) key informants that were asked agreed that refugees will have some inferences about what information may typically enhance, or reduce, their vulnerability status. While families may be keen to update certain data in their registration (births, deaths, etc.) there may be other data points that, if updated, could reduce their likelihood of receiving assistance. A UNHCR stakeholder highlighted an example being an improvement to a household members' disability/severe medical condition status, with another being location. There appears little incentive for a household who is benefiting from assistance to proactively make changes to certain data fields during the registration period. There was no data available to the evaluation to examine this further to understand what sort of scale such an issue may be manifesting. A key informant, however, did report that WFP data from validation sites and ATM withdrawals suggests the location information in PROGRES may be out of date (i.e. people are validating or withdrawing cash in locations that are far away from their registered address).<sup>75</sup>

71 Onur Altındağ, Stephen D. O'Connell, Aytuğ Şaşmaz, Zeynep Balcıoğlu, Paola Cadoni, Matilda Jerneck, Aimee Kunze Foong, Targeting humanitarian aid using administrative data: Model design and validation, *Journal of Development Economics*, Volume 148, 2021, 102564, ISSN 0304-3878, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2020.102564>.

72 Assistance from 71 surge deployees for registration/reception centres (local hires) to bring data integrity up to speed started in beginning 2022 and will finish by end of the year.

73 Annual Update of the Targeting System for Multipurpose Cash and Food Assistance in Lebanon, Development Analytics, 2021.

74 One interviewee cited that according to registration colleagues in UNHCR, data in 2022 was only 58.1% valid (meaning not more than 2 years old). Refugees and WFP highlighted cases of children not being registered for over 3 years, and still delays of up to 2 years for refugees to get an appointment. WFP reported extensive complaints about this being received to their call centre. Furthermore once a household becomes undocumented, this impacts on their in freedom of movement, which can further limit their ability to update this information.

75 UN key informant – the evaluators note that this is a single source of information, and was not triangulated.

- ii) **Challenge to construct an econometric model that recognises the diverse indications of economic vulnerability:** the primary basis for targeting has been estimating per capita expenditures, which is a frequent proxy for income, as a proxy for vulnerability: however, this approach can overlook important characteristics and circumstances related to vulnerability.<sup>76</sup> Poor but small households, families with elderly members, and urban poor households were underrepresented in past estimation models<sup>77</sup>. When measuring labour capacity, the model was not sufficiently taking into account the health burden of refugees which increases with age more steeply than in typical populations. The vulnerability of households who were already engaging in negative coping strategies, such as borrowing money, to meet their basic needs was also underestimated by the desk formula (appearing to have higher consumption and thus living standards than what, in reality, they can afford). Similarly, the model did not take into account regional variation in cost of living, resulting in those underestimation of need where the cost of living is higher, such as Beirut/Mount Lebanon. Experimentation with different models took place during the 2021/2022 targeting period, and improvements have been incorporated for future targeting periods.
- iii) **Primary reliance on an econometric model minimises human checks and balances:** many key informants considered that an econometric targeting formula should not be designed to work alone and that a 100 per cent data-driven approach with no validation of circumstances, or ability of partners to propose inclusion of key vulnerable cases, (or referrals from other programme streams), was problematic.<sup>78</sup> It contributes to perceptions among refugees, and partners, that the targeting is not accurate at identifying those most in need. Since its inception, the GRM has grown from a human-driven corrective measure that takes place after targeting to also being a learning mechanism to improve targeting. In 2022–2023, the targeting plan is expected to incorporate household profiles into its initial targeting period: these profiles were constructed based on experiences during the GRM. This could be seen as institutional feedback being incorporated back into the targeting model.

**Objectivity:** In a context of huge need and limited resources, some key informants considered that the PMT’s ranking exercise is useful as it removes the human element and provides a standard, systematic, impartial way of making difficult decisions on resource allocations, and a way to (quickly) scale up or down depending on funding or to fill spaces that become available due to no shows. However, others (including technical experts in WFP, UNHCR and Development Analytics) acknowledged limitations to this ranking in practice. With some 90% of the registered refugee population, numbering some hundreds of thousands of households, all sitting under the ‘severely vulnerable’ threshold it is inevitable that there will be little discernible difference in the distribution of expenditure across a large portion of the ranking (many thousands of households) and while there are clear differences in vulnerability seen at the ends of the distribution there is little discernible difference along the ranking to recipients. The ranking provides only notional objectivity, which is not meaningful in practice to those in receipt – or not – of assistance. This makes basing targeting decisions on the ranking ethically challenging – where the line is drawn is not meaningful in any real sense to affected populations.<sup>79</sup> A factor compounding this is that while the households are ranked across the hundreds of thousands, in contrast the assistance packages are graduated very coarsely. Scores that are only a few per cent difference in real terms are informing decisions on whether a household receives a full Joint Action package, or just MCAP, or just food assistance. Several stakeholders considered this to be highly problematic. Changes in the package being received are not fully commensurate with changes in vulnerability.<sup>80</sup>

**Transparency:** A well-known challenge of the PMT targeting methodology is its complexity. It is difficult for those without an econometric background to understand it and many key informants to the evaluation (both

76 Development Analytics (2022) 2021 Annual Update of the Targeting System for Multipurpose Cash and Food Assistance in Lebanon. Draft submitted 25 August 2022.

77 Similar to findings in WFP’s 2019 study on protection risks and barriers to inclusion, which highlights the limitations of focusing on quantitative data collected for the VASyR, which does not sufficiently identify persons at greater risk, such as elderly people and people with disabilities, who have very different impairments. Also see UNHCR Presentation “2022/2023 Targeting Approach” and Development Analytics (2022) 2021 Annual Update of the Targeting System for Multipurpose Cash and Food Assistance in Lebanon. Draft submitted 25 August 2022.

78 Outside the Joint Action, some part of UNHCR’s PCAP modality was designed to include beneficiaries identified as severely vulnerable during the assistance cycle through a referral process, complementing the PMT selection.

79 Other reports have also pointed this out (Research Report on AAP in the World Food Programme’s Multi-Purpose Cash Programme, CAMEALEON, 2019; WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021).

80 Known as ‘regression discontinuity’ - the allocation of assistance between households does not meaningfully relate to the vulnerability relationship between households (Development Analytics key informant).

internal and external to the implementing agencies) noted having a limited understanding of the method themselves. There is extensive reliance on a small number of key staff and external consultants to provide this expertise and little if any wider capability to critique the approach. Internal key informants in UNHCR saw this as problematic, for example one interviewee attested that they had no visibility of the extent to which data points suggested by the econometric science make sense in real terms and no visibility of how nuanced the technical experts' local understanding of vulnerability is.<sup>81</sup> Implementing partners also expressed frustrations. One partner explained that the complexity makes it impossible for them to report cases of inclusion error or misrepresentation, which they considered to be a major flaw. It is even more difficult for communities to understand the approach. Internal key informants, as well as partners and other external stakeholders highlighted that communities do not understand why households are selected or discontinued. This, plus the above-mentioned issues with the ranking impact on communities' perceptions of fairness in targeting<sup>82</sup>. It is further compounded by the fact that not all households who are classified as severely vulnerable are able to be included because of funding constraints.<sup>83</sup> This adds to confusion - households equally vulnerable to their neighbours and eligible for general multi-purpose cash assistance often cannot receive it.

**Regularity:** on the one hand, the annual re-targeting exercise was perceived as helpful for managing the practicalities of operationalising cash assistance at this scale. On the other, implementing partners and other external actors criticised the lack of agility, meaning the Joint Action was unable to respond to changing vulnerabilities between cycles. Some protection sector partners noted that this undermined the effectiveness of their own protection cash. Protection cases that need special assistance in addition to sustained support to meet basic needs for the medium and longer term (e.g. via MPCA) are stymied by a lack of referral pathways – or at least referrals with a sustained funding stream. Thus, protection cash is simply used for basic needs in cases of severe economic vulnerability, rather than its intended purpose.

#### **10. The Joint Action agencies are strongly committed to enhancing accuracy and have been successful in overcoming some limitations in the targeting formula.**

Since 2018, the Joint Targeting Working Group has made considerable and commendable efforts to improve accuracy of targeting on the Joint Action. UNHCR and WFP work with Development Analytics to re-calibrate the targeting formula and weightings on a yearly basis, Development Analytics has also led analyses of weaknesses in the model, which highlighted that some households risk being erroneously categorised based on the desk formula. Various changes and corrective measures have been tested or introduced, including for example:

- Changing the model's labour supply indicator from 65 (the standard global indicator) to 50 years, to better capture the disproportionate refugee health burden and its impact on ability to work.
- Correcting the labour supply indicator to better account for presence of disabilities.
- Introducing complementary mechanisms to try to compensate for the risk that the desk formula erroneously excludes for certain severely vulnerable profiles (see more in section on GRM below).
- Piloting the introduction of regional quotas (district quotas from 2021) to account for limitations in the expenditure-based model at capturing geographical variation in cost of living.
- In the current cycle, using VASyR data to test the feasibility of using alternative predictors of vulnerability to a purely expenditure-based model, including the multi-dimensional deprivation index and reduced coping strategies index. Development Analytics is currently conducting a study to review the effectiveness of targeting these new measures.
- Simulation of which variables should be included in the UNHCR database (assuming no frictions to doing so) to improve targeting accuracy.
- Regular solicitation from UNHCR for new relevant and available variables to incorporate them into modelling, e.g., disability categories (shared); additional protection flags as revised/expanded over time (shared)<sup>84</sup>.

81 UN key informants.

82 Other reports have also pointed this out (Research Report on AAP in the World Food Programme's Multi-Purpose Cash Programme, CAMEALEON, 2019; WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021). Development Analytics ask people whether they found it fair or not – 50% of people found it quite fair, 20% unfair, 30% in between.

83 In June 2022, of the 264,000 households that were Severely Vulnerable and eligible for MPCA, only 176,000 received it (Source: Basic Assistance Working Group).

84 Development Analytics key informant

Those key informants with econometric technical expertise and/or visibility of the GRM concurred that these efforts have helped to enhance the accuracy of targeting<sup>85</sup>. At the same time, Development Analytics acknowledged that the changes that are possible to make within the context (and confines) of the existing targeting model (i.e. a PMT based on the data field within PROGRES) are somewhat limited.<sup>86</sup> Some key informants also noted that the more recent pilot studies to improve accuracy are further complicating an already complex targeting approach (increasing the trade-off between accuracy and transparency).<sup>87</sup>

#### **11. The GRM design has improved year on year and is currently a useful mechanism for overcoming specific exclusion errors in the formula, though some limitations remain.**

The first iteration of the GRM was in the 2018-19 cycle and studies were critical of this early design.<sup>88</sup> In effect it was only reincluding severely vulnerable cases that were excluded because of a lack of funding (not true exclusion errors) and going through a laborious process to reinclude a small number of households (3,000 from some 90,000 complaints). A review concluded that it would be more cost-efficient and equitable to just expand the original caseload allocation by 3,000.<sup>89</sup> Evidence from evaluation key informants corroborates this finding. The GRM was subsequently redesigned in 2019-20 and further changes have been made in each subsequent targeting cycle under the Joint Action. This new design has significant improvements, namely:

- i. Shift in focus to identify true exclusion errors (i.e. excluded by methodology and not low coverage).
- ii. An evidence-based approach to identifying and reincluding those profiles that are systematically excluded by the targeting formula<sup>90</sup>.
- iii. Sensitising discontinued refugees on the existence of the GRM and right to appeal.
- iv. Introducing a new appeals channel (via a mobile app) to overcome the challenges refugees faced in lodging appeals through the hotline (See EQ2).
- v. In the 2021-22 cycle, going beyond those households that lodged an appeal, to pro-actively identify and include other households fitting eight of the most severe vulnerability profiles - to try to capture those who are least likely to be aware of or be able to exercise their right to appeal.

Development Analytics reported that the vulnerability profiles being included in the GRM have been relatively stable over time and that these tend to be systematically excluded by the formula. With this in mind, the decision to focus the GRM on re-inclusion on these specific profiles is sensible. It provides a standard and relatively objective approach to address certain errors of exclusion, within the confines of limited resources, and without undermining legitimacy of the overall data-driven targeting method.

Some limitations with this GRM design remain. Refugees who are already discontinued and thus not receiving the 'discontinuation' SMS will not be made aware of the GRM or right to appeal. Just as the targeting process is perceived as not transparent, there is no information provided to refugees on what will determine eligibility for any re-inclusion under the GRM. This results in huge numbers of appeals being lodged<sup>91</sup>, with the majority being from households that will never have a chance of re-inclusion. Some key informants considered this to be an inefficient use of resources while others talked about this contributing to false hope, and only giving the 'notion' of refugees being able to exercise agency in the process.<sup>92</sup> This is exacerbated by the continued lack

85 There have been small improvements to the error rates noted year on year.

86 Onur Altındağ, Stephen D. O'Connell, Aytuğ Şaşmaz, Zeynep Balcioğlu, Paola Cadoni, Matilda Jerneck, Aimee Kunze Foong, "Targeting humanitarian aid using administrative data: Model design and validation," *Journal of Development Economics*, Volume 148, 2021, 102564, ISSN 0304-3878, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2020.102564>.

87 Protection Sector key informants.

88 This includes: refugees not sensitised about the existence of or their right to apply to a GRM, limiting AAP; only those which lodged a complaint through the hotline were reassessed which was not equitable; unclear objective (reassessing only those cases that were already scored as severely vulnerable by the DF but who were unassisted because of lack of funds, so not addressing errors of exclusion due to the targeting model i.e. who were wrongly scored); unclear selection process for re-inclusion, making use of a range of qualitative criteria and that varies between agencies; labour intensive.

89 Research Report on AAP in the World Food Programme's Multi-Purpose Cash Programme, CAMEALEON, 2019.

90 18 'profiles' of household demographic characteristics have been identified. While inclusion processes appear sound, a caveat is limited data to substantiate accuracy. There is limited transparency in the approach to determining, or rescreening against, the profiles, which are arrived at by UNHCR and DA. The profiles were not shared with the evaluation team and the data behind the prioritisation and re-inclusion process is not visible to others (WFP/partners). However, WFP field offices have participated in highlighting vulnerable and excluded households expressed satisfaction with the process.

91 2021 92,479 HH did a claim, of which 77% used the online link "I don't know the GRM process". Only around 10,000 were re-included.

92 UN key informants.

of communication on the appeal outcome for households who submit a claim but who are not re-included. This goes against principles of AAP. Key informants and refugees themselves highlighted that this contributes to stress and wellbeing and leads to refugees trying to call the call centre multiple times.

## **12. Refugees are concerned with the transparency of the targeting approach. However, little has changed during the Joint Action period to address this concern .**

Refugees are not concerned with the efficiency of a targeting approach or how easy it is to operationalise. Their focus is on its accessibility – is the targeting method understandable – and equity – is it fair. The Joint Action agencies have various mechanisms through which they solicit feedback and opinions of refugees on programme design (see EQ2) and through these have received feedback about the targeting approach. Key informants in the Joint Action agencies and their implementing partners confirmed that refugees' concerns are raised during programme monitoring. Furthermore, several studies have specifically documented refugees' dissatisfaction with the targeting approach – they do not understand it and are unclear on why they are (or are not) selected. This issue is partly intrinsic to the targeting model – the PMT – which is complex. Eligibility is not based on clearly visible indicators, and a number of characteristics are taken into account, and weighted differently, through a complex econometric formula. Some of the issues in understanding are fundamental to this choice of model, meaning it is inherently difficult to address these concerns. However, the issue is also partly caused by the limited information being shared with refugees. The agencies have taken the decision to restrict sharing of information on eligibility criteria. While acknowledging the complexity of the model, previous studies nevertheless recommended ways to improve transparency of targeting by providing more information on eligibility – for example on the key explanatory variables in the formula (being for the most part demographic household characteristics). While there are efforts to explain the method to refugees<sup>93</sup>, this has not been addressed. Several internal key informants gave the explanation that this was because of concerns about households manipulating targeting by falsifying information.<sup>94</sup> However, since targeting is based on UNHCR registration data, and attempts to change these records by refugees can be scrutinised by UNHCR, this should provide controls against such a risk. Many external key informants and some internal key informants saw this as a key limitation in the targeting approach since it goes against principles of accountability to affected populations. One (internal) key informant noted that UNHCR receives lots of criticism from refugees on the formula and how secretive it is. A further related issue is that due to funding constraints, households who are equally vulnerable (severely vulnerable status in the ranking) cannot be assisted with general multi-purpose cash assistance. In the evaluation FGDs, refugees voiced dissatisfaction about the lack of information on the reasons for eligibility or on how eligibility decisions are arrived at. These factors therefore undermine perceived effectiveness of the programme, among refugees.

Previous studies implemented during the Joint Action period<sup>95</sup> noted that refugees – when consulted – considered almost all families to be severely vulnerable and requested that assistance be targeted broadly to include more people (even if this meant that less assistance were provided to each household). Several key informants in this evaluation concurred that refugees (particularly those who are NOT benefiting from the Joint Action ) continue to voice preference for enhancing breadth of coverage. Several also said that a driver here was refugees' perceptions of overlaps in different cash assistance programmes.<sup>96</sup> This was also documented by Development Analytics during their field visits in 2022. In the 2021-22 cycle, UNHCR acted on these concerns by broadening coverage. Many key informants commended the principles behind UNHCR's decision – however they also noted the challenge of applying this change when resources are limited. This has resulted in the same assistance being spread thinner – with UNHCR taking the decision to de-link food assistance from the general multi-purpose cash assistance for basic needs. In a context of increasing costs of living this was considered by some key informants (in WFP as well as others) to undermine the effectiveness of assistance. Key informants pointed out that the deteriorating economic context has also somewhat changed refugee perspectives on this issue, with repeated requests received from existing Joint Action beneficiaries for increased levels of assistance. While there may still be widespread recognition of

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93 E.g. in the Outreach Volunteer sessions and in FGDs, efforts have been made to explain that there is no human element, that a computer makes the decisions based on a mathematical formula, that it is using registration data, and that it is aiming to find the 'most vulnerable'.

94 UN, Development Analytics key informants.

95 Research Report on AAP in the World Food Programme's Multi-Purpose Cash Programme, CAMEALEON, 2019; Briefing Paper: *How Much Does it Cost a Syrian Refugee Household to Access their Cash Assistance?*, CAMEALEON/Key Aid Consulting, 2019; WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021. Analysis from the WFP MPC programme in Lebanon; WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021

96 Where some households are perceived to receive the MPC as well as other cash programmes such as PCAP, ECA, UNICEF cash etc while other households receive nothing.

the importance of improving breadth of coverage, some key informants doubted that refugees would agree that this should come at the expense of a reduction in their own level of support. Anecdotal evidence from Development Analytics substantiates this.<sup>97</sup> Findings from the telephone survey and FGDs (discussed in detail under Sub-question 2.1) tentatively support this also, though results can be interpreted in different ways.

Meanwhile in the same programme cycle, WFP, noting the limitation of an annual retargeting exercise in a context of continuing vulnerability (whereby households are effectively being recycled in and out of the programme, creating considerable anxiety), took the decision not to discontinue households with the most severely vulnerable profiles.<sup>98</sup> Again, the rationale behind this decision is clear, however the decision to do this for some households and not for others was considered by some key informants to call into question the legitimacy of the whole targeting approach.<sup>99</sup> In both cases, the independent decisions of these agencies were considered problematic and to have impacted on the clarity of the Joint Action design and achievement of its objectives.

*Sub-question 1.4 Was the overall targeting approach by proxy mean testing (followed by GRM and SIHV) and the way it is implemented by both agencies and partners, the most appropriate given the nature and the size of the programme as well as the context?*

#### FINDINGS

13. **The PMT model is an impartial and impressive technical achievement that has been thoroughly studied to be optimised within its current conceptual framework, but it is opaque to many.**
14. **Further changes to the GRM that are being proposed may have implications for the legitimacy of the overall targeting approach.**
15. **While changes/improvements to current targeting approaches have been within the confines of the original framework; there is recognition that a more fundamental shift may be necessary.**

### **13. The PMT model is an impartial and impressive technical achievement that has been thoroughly studied to be optimised within its current conceptual framework, but it is opaque to many.**

The vast majority of decisions about targeting are made through the PMT model: as of January 2022, over 110,000 beneficiary households<sup>100</sup> had been identified through the PMT model, with 10,530 households<sup>101</sup> being reincluded as a result of the GRM. The PMT model is an undeniably impartial method of determining who qualifies for three reasons.

- a. The specific methodology used is kept strictly confidential, making it very challenging for any household or staff inputting data for a household to manipulate it to affect a household's chances of being eligible for assistance.
- b. Due to the number of inputs that determine a person's qualification status, it would be challenging for households or data collectors to significantly sway the likelihood of selection of an individual household.
- c. No targeting model can be wholly free from systemic bias<sup>102</sup>, but organisations can make best efforts to minimise it. WFP, UNHCR, and Development Analytics iteratively improved the PMT model through simulations, external analysis, and investigating who is included and excluded post-model application. The PMT model has made improvements through caseload analysis, piloting of multiple targeting mechanisms, and learning from both systemic information gathering from household visits (through GRM and SIHV) and feedback from staff and partners.

97 Development Analytics polled refugees on whether they agreed that all refugees should have equal access to food assistance and only target basic needs assistance. Everyone agreed, but most qualified their responses that this should not be achieved by reducing their own transfer values (source: key informant).

98 WFP did not discontinue households with scores below the 88th percentile (corresponding to % of households in need as estimated through VASyR) as the 88th percentile was the threshold for eligibility in 2021.

99 UN (multiple agency), Development Analytics key informants.

100 UNHCR Basic Assistance, "Targeting: Econometric Modeling Coverage and Discontinuation cycle." Sept 2021 Presentation.

101 Guidance Note for the Operationalization of the 2021/22 Targeting System for Multipurpose Cash Assistance Basic Assistance Unit/UNHCR Lebanon. 01 February 2022.

102 Here, systemic bias refers to the inherent tendency of an estimation model to create outputs (in this case selection for assistance) that were not the intention of its designers; it is not intended to refer to bias in the institutions or individuals involved in the models' creation.

While no model is impervious to systemic bias, the PMT model makes efforts to decrease this risk. The alternative/redress pathways for targeting (the GRM and score-improving household visits (SIHV)<sup>103</sup>) offer two benefits for the Joint Action (and related cash programming): (1) to increase the equitability of those receiving support in a given year; and (2) to provide insights into those that the current dominant pathway (the PMT) systematically excludes. The GRM (and SIHV, when conducted) involve personal interactions in a way that the PMT model does not, thus implying risk for bias/subjectivity. However, the current model of the GRM leaves very little room for partiality: qualifications are based on whether households meet one of a series of household profiles that are externally defined, and are based on past learning of inclusion and exclusion errors.

In 2019/2020, the GRM only considered households that were rejected and then requested reconsideration. However, because the GRM uses a different set of criteria for inclusion, it created a system that could have undermine impartiality: those who were systematically excluded from the PMT model had to opt-in to be considered under the criteria used by GRM. The risk of this issue was reduced in 2021/2022 by automatically considering households for inclusion under GRM if they were suspected of being unlikely to request to be considered under the GRM due to a marginalisation status.<sup>104</sup>

As the GRM has evolved from a more qualitative consideration of unmet need into its own series of qualification criteria. According to interviews with staff involved in the targeting mechanism, the criteria developed through the GRM (named profiles) are being incorporated into the initial selection process at the same time as the PMT. This can be seen as an improvement of the primary targeting model by learning over time, and will serve to reduce uncertainty and unnecessary steps to ensure inclusion of households considered by the programme to receive benefits but not necessarily qualifying under the main PMT model.

Thus, the PMT model has evolved and improved since its inception, and has been subject to ongoing rigorous statistical analysis. Its internal components – including estimating per capita expenditures for all registered refugees using a training model, making district-level geographical quotas, and experimenting with multiple algorithms for estimating vulnerability – all are statistically robust approaches to attempting to ensure equity and objectivity.

Despite the value of the PMT/GRM approach, its design is limited by the quality of the data from which it derives its model, and the complexity which poses a major challenge to UNHCR and WFP in explaining or defend the decisions made by applying the model. At the beginning of the Joint Action there was a consensus that systematic, data-driven targeting - as an activity - was a cornerstone of the programme. As such, considerable effort has been made to optimise who does receive support and how much they receive. However as of 2022, 88 per cent of the Syrian population in Lebanon (264,000 households) is living below the SMEB threshold, and data from the Basic Assistance Working Group (BAWG) shows cash assistance (in some form) is reaching 95 per cent of this population.<sup>105</sup> Many WFP and UNHCR stakeholders (including the analysts from Development Analytics) questioned the relative value or relevance of continuing with such a complex targeting approach in this context, including the logic of conducting an annual re-targeting exercise.<sup>106</sup> Even earlier in the Joint Action period, data indicated that a significant portion of discontinued general multi-purpose cash assistance recipients returned to their previous vulnerability state upon discontinuation of assistance because of limited means to achieve self-reliance.<sup>107</sup> The continuing - and deepening - economic crisis means that such constraints have become more severe. Internal stakeholders highlighted the difficulties in targeting the 'all or nothing', coarsely graduated, packages of assistance (discussed under Finding 12 above) and perceived arbitrary allocation of these packages, with no clear rationale for why households in the middle of the distribution are getting the full package, basic needs cash only, or food assistance only.<sup>108</sup>

103 SIHV were conducted during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 targeting cycles. Implementing partner staff conducted in-person visits to identify households that may have urgent and basic food needs but the quantitative model failed to include: staff focused on groups such as small households with a high percentage of elderly members.

104 Guidance Note for the Operationalization of the 2021/22 Targeting System for Multipurpose Cash Assistance Basic Assistance Unit/UNHCR Lebanon. 01 February 2022.

105 Data from BAWG information hub (accessed mid 2022), see: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/working-group/15?sv=4&geo=71>

106 Development Analytics note flagging this with UNHCR and WFP as caseloads expanded through 2020+, noting that it becomes categorically easier to target and thus relative to not targeting (blanket coverage) the value-add of the sophisticated system becomes relatively smaller (though accuracy is not compromised). Conversely, as the data used for re-targeting (VASyR and UNHCR DB) is already being collected annually for other operational purposes, the cost-benefit is reasonable.

107 Chaaban, J., Ghattas, H., Salti, N., Moussa, W., Irani, A., Jamaluddine, Z. and Al Mokdad, R. Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance in Lebanon: Impact Evaluation on the Well-Being of Syrian Refugees. AUB and CAMEALEON, 2020

108 UN key informants.



#### **14. Further changes to the GRM that are being proposed may have implications for the legitimacy of the overall targeting approach.**

The GRM currently seeks to re-include a defined set of severely vulnerable households with particular characteristics (regardless of their poverty score). To enhance efficiency, UNHCR and WFP agreed that these households would be included from the outset in the 2022-23 cycle. (i.e. as a layer in the targeting, with a quota, separate to the broader application of the PMT). UNHCR reports that this profile-based selection is implemented by UNHCR only in 2022. From an efficiency perspective this would make sense. However, both agencies still want to retain an ex-post GRM appeal mechanism in some form, on the basis that it enhances AAP. The question then is what should the GRM focus on. Any GRM must have a clear and specific focus that is understandable and considered fair. The focus on the 18 profiles, were demonstrated by Development Analytics to be at risk of exclusion by limitations in the model. There was broad agreement among KIs that these profiles are indeed the most vulnerable types of households. Thus this GRM layer to date is not considered to undermine too far the overall credibility of using a data-driven PMT model. However, going beyond this and seeking to identify and re-include other excluded households could risk undermining the legitimacy of the econometric targeting approach. Several internal stakeholders interviewed pointed to this risk of introducing subjectivity into decision-making on re-inclusion (i.e. allowing personal judgements by implementers to influence re-inclusion or exclusion) which calls into question the whole PMT rationale (being premised on a data driven econometric approach).<sup>109</sup> Another question is how eligibility for re-inclusion would be verified. The GRM as-is still uses a data-driven approach. One of UNHCR and WFP's ideas on a new GRM is to follow through with household visits for real assessment of circumstances. On the one hand the evaluation concurs that this would be a useful way to assess the situation of those appealing. On the other, this risks undermining the equity of the targeting approach, if most households are only assessed according to the desk formula but some get this more hands on approach. KIs that responded agreed that if a GRM continued then it would need to have a very clear and specific function - a particular type of exclusion that it is seeking to correct, and a clear and fair rationale for undertaking any household visit.

#### **15. While changes/improvements to current targeting approaches have been within the confines of the original framework; there is recognition that a more fundamental shift may be necessary.**

Several key informants, while acknowledging the limitations of the current targeting approach, expressed that no credible alternative exists at the current time.<sup>110</sup> It is indeed true that alternative ways of working will also have constraints, however the evaluation did not see any evidence of modelling of the costs and benefits of other approaches and comparisons with the current way of working. Various studies carried out during the Joint Action period recommended that the targeting model be reviewed, and that costs and benefits of alternative approaches be explored.<sup>111</sup> There have been considerable efforts (namely annual retargeting exercises and related detailed analyses and publications) to adjust the current targeting model, but even these have been limited to aspects of the current PMT model, not rethink its fundamentals.

As described above, the Joint Actions agencies are considering the possibility of active inclusion of households fitting the GRM profiles from the outset of targeting, which introduces for the first time the idea of a categorical 'layer' to the targeting approach – albeit still framed within the existing targeting design (data-driven approach using registration data, and still applying the PMT). Stakeholders from both UNHCR and WFP elaborated several factors that may have constrained consideration of alternative approaches (including lack of time and resources to develop and critically analyse alternatives; path dependency/vested interests; and limited vision for broader 'systems' thinking). Stakeholders from both agencies (as well as externally) agreed that it could be helpful to think through what alternative or complementary approaches there could be, and their potential benefits and limitations.

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109 UN, Development Analytics key informants.

110 UN key informants.

111 WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021; Smith, G. Cash Assistance in Lebanon: Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), Research Report on AAP in the World Food Programme's Multi-Purpose Cash Programme. CALP, 2019; Charlot, C., Smith, G. and Juillard, H. VFM Analysis: the World Food Programme's MPC Assistance Programme in Lebanon. An internal report for CAMEALEON, 2020.

## 3.2. EVALUATION QUESTION 2: EFFECTIVENESS – HOW EFFECTIVE WAS THE JOINT ACTION IN MEETING ITS OBJECTIVES?

*Sub-question 2.1: To what extent has the joint action achieved its objectives?*

### FINDINGS

16. The Joint Action has established robust outcome/output measurement mechanisms and data in line with the programme objectives.
17. The potentially catastrophic effects of the triple crises on the Syrian population are being mitigated amongst a substantially larger population than planned.
18. While Joint Action support is playing a key role in the survival of Syrians in Lebanon, the transfer value is no longer adequate, despite efforts to increase it.

### 16. The Joint Action has established robust outcome/output measurement mechanisms and data in line with the programme objectives.

These are logically linked to the programme logic and, to a lesser extent, a related theory of change. They have been revised and improved over the course of the evaluation period and capture the essential data in relation to the cash transfer activities.

The Joint Action is intended to result in the outcome of improved living conditions of the most severely vulnerable refugees in Lebanon through predictable and dignified support addressing food and other basic needs. This outcome is designed to contribute to the overall impact of improved living conditions for the most vulnerable and reduced susceptibility of vulnerable families to exploitation and other protection risks such as child labour, survival sex, evictions, and premature returns. The validity of this approach in contributing to the intended impact (albeit for as long as assistance is sustained) has been demonstrated academically in the Lebanon context by programme partner Development Analytics.<sup>112</sup>

Beyond this (somewhat cursory) programme logic, no specific theory of change (TOC) was developed for Joint Action as part of the original proposal or programme development documents. However, a considerably more detailed TOC was developed in 2019 for UNHCR basic assistance programming. However, this covers MCAP, WinCAP and ECA, the latter two of which do not fall under the remit of this evaluation, and thus misses CFF and MPC. Nonetheless, the provisions of the programme logic and the Basic Assistance TOC provide a basis for the programmatic interventions of the Joint Action. This TOC is summarised for MCAP/CFF and MPC (with relationships articulated and included by the evaluation team) and presented in Appendix 10. As part of the inception process, its provisions were validated with the evaluation questions and integrated into evaluation sub-questions.

The objectives and intended result of the Joint Action are as follows:

**Joint Action Principal Objective:** Protect livelihoods and reduce protection risks in emergencies by improving the living conditions of the most severely vulnerable refugees in Lebanon through predictable and dignified support addressing food and other basic needs.

**Joint Action Specific Objective:** Stabilise or improve access to assistance for basic needs and reduce protection risks through the provision of cash assistance.

**Joint Action Result:** Severely vulnerable Syrian refugee families in Lebanon receive multi-purpose cash assistance for their basic needs.

The Joint Action programme logic<sup>113</sup> and result is associated with a range of performance indicators. These have varied in number from beginning of the Joint Action in 2019 to the conclusion of the 2021 funding period, with the addition of two additional “objective indicators” (analogous to outcome indicators) and six new “results indicators” (analogous to output indicators). The indicators and the changes they have undergone (in nature or in terms of targets and/or baseline values) are itemised in Appendix 12.

112 Onur Altındağ, Stephen D. O’Connell, The short-lived effects of unconditional cash transfers to refugees, *Journal of Development Economics*, Volume 160, 2023, 102942, ISSN 0304-3878, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2022.102942>.

113 As articulated in the original DG-ECHO proposal for the Joint Action (eSINGLE FORM FOR HUMANITARIAN AID ACTIONS, 2018/00890/RG/01/01), Section 4.

The suite of outcome and output indicators are largely in-line with the Joint Action objectives, insofar as they are logically linked to and seek to measure the parameters set out therein, notably measurement of the following elements of the programme logic:

- Livelihoods activities
- Protection risks (including child labour and premature returns)
- Living conditions/meeting of basic needs
- Recipients of cash support

Data to measure and report against the Joint Action indicators is collected via a range of systematic and ad-hoc mechanisms (also described in Appendix 12).

In aggregate, the monitoring systems cover the majority of the range of Joint Action outcome and output indicators adequately and systematically. Further, additional measures related to inputs/outputs/quality of the Joint Action (noted in the table above) provide additional depth to the monitoring process.

Two aspects of the programme logic that are not systematically reported on in programme documentation/data are “survival sex” and evictions, prevention of which are noted as intended programme outcomes in the Joint Action proposal and reports. The Coping Strategies Index, measured as part of the Basic Needs Outcome Monitoring and VASyR, makes provision for “illegal income activities or exploitative work”<sup>114</sup>, although the VASyR itself notes that confidential interviews with individual household members are not part of the survey methodology, making incidents related to physical and sexual harassment or exploitation “likely to be underreported”.<sup>115</sup> Evictions, while not directly covered by any of the monitoring activities below (Post-Distribution Monitoring does record any “fears” of eviction from respondents, while the annual VASyR collects data on evictions in relation to movement of refugees.<sup>116</sup> Further, a 2019 evaluation of UNHCR cash transfer programming<sup>117</sup> included eviction among its investigation of reasons for household mobility among a representative sample of Syrian households assisted by UNHCR. Finally, a 2021 analysis of VASyR data included analysis of the outcome of cash transfer assistance on evictions, noting “a significant difference in the percentage of families living under an eviction notice between MCAP/MPC and non-assisted categories”(assisted families being less likely to be evicted).<sup>118</sup> Thus, this aspect of programme outcomes is adequately measured by other means.

**Sex/Age Disaggregation:** All data is disaggregated, where appropriate, by a variety of sex and age demographic characteristics (e.g. sex/age of respondents, of heads of households) and by vulnerability characteristics (pregnancy, disability, illness, elderly status) for outcome monitoring surveys. Importantly, some of the key outcome measures, i.e. the Food Consumption Score and Coping Strategies Index, are reported by WFP disaggregated by sex of head of household.

## **17. The potentially catastrophic effects of the triple crises on the Syrian population are being mitigated amongst a substantially larger population than planned .**

There is considerable primary and secondary evidence from a variety of sources (reports, datasets, institutional stakeholders and Syrians themselves) that the living situation and overall socio-economic environment for all inhabitants of Lebanon has become increasingly difficult since 2019 (mirrored by macro-level indicators that illustrate the steep deterioration in the Lebanese economy).

An analysis of VASyR data<sup>119</sup> on livelihood coping strategies from 2017 to 2021 (thus including the Joint Action period), presented in the table below, provides some, albeit slightly ambiguous, evidence to illustrate this.

Data on the proportion of respondents engaged in the various coping strategies year on year shows that certain “emergency” (per the agreed nomenclature) coping strategies, such as high-risk work or child-labour,

114 See BNOM Quarterly report, December 2021 page 17, footnote 10

115 See VASyR 2021, Protection/Safety and Security, page 37.

116 See VASyR 2021, Shelter/Mobility and Movement, page 50.

117 UNHCR/ Université Saint Joseph de Beyrouth, A Cash Transfer Assistance Program: A mixed method evaluation of outcomes for the displaced Syrians in Lebanon, 2019, Section 2.2: Household Mobility

118 UNHCR, Internal (unpublished) draft report, Analysis on Meaningful Assistance, May 2021

119 All data as reported in VASyR reports 2018–2021

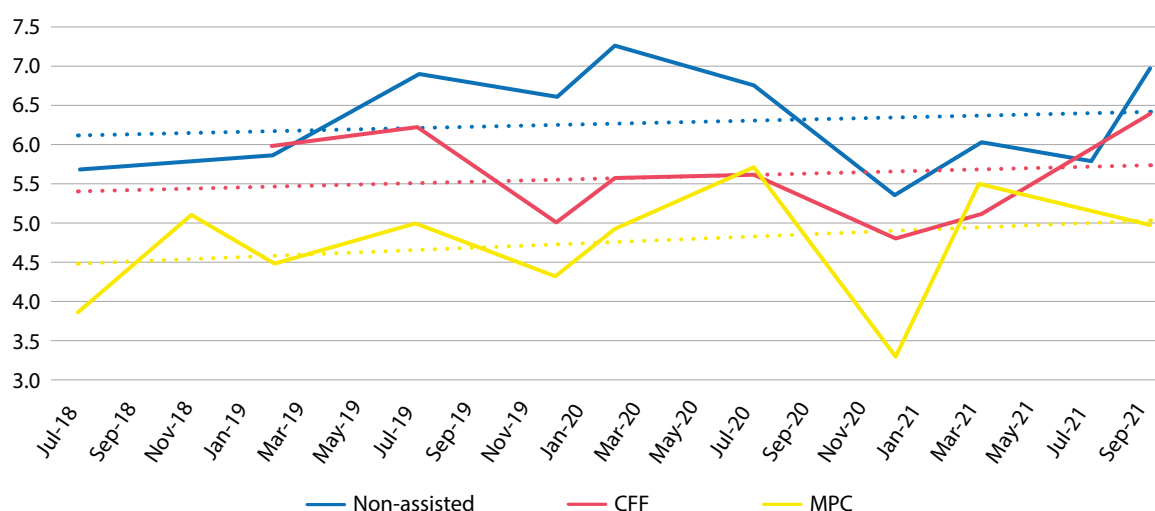
have seen increases between 2018 and 2021, with reductions in education and health expenditure increasing in the “crisis” category, and increased levels of debt and selling of household assets among the “stress” category. Other coping strategies have seen decreases in this time period, notably begging, selling of major assets, child marriage, withdrawing children from school, spending savings and buying food on credit. Some of these reductions in coping strategies, notably around savings or asset sales may be as a result of the diminishing availability of these strategies as savings and assets become exhausted.

**Table 5: VASyR Livelihoods Coping Strategies 2017–2021**

Households reporting livelihood coping strategies 2017-2021 (VASyR data)							
Category	Type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Δ '18-21
<b>Emergency</b>	Begged	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	-1%
	Sold house or land	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	-1%
	Accepted high-risk jobs	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	1%
	Involved school children in income generation	5%	5%	5%	5%	7%	2%
<b>Crisis</b>	Marriage of children under 18	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%	-2%
	Sold productive assets	8%	5%	10%	8%	7%	2%
	Withdrew children from school	11%	13%	12%	6%	7%	-6%
	Reduced education expenditures	31%	22%	30%	20%	29%	7%
	Reduced health expenditures	53%	51%	54%	49%	54%	3%
	Reduced essential non-food expenditures	53%	55%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Stress</b>	Sold household goods	25%	22%	28%	24%	26%	4%
	Spent savings	35%	30%	34%	23%	24%	-6%
	Bought food on credit	77%	79%	76%	71%	75%	-4%
	Household has debt	n/a	88%	93%	92%	92%	4%
	Moved to cheaper accommodation	9%	15%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Similar analysis of BNOM data collected by WFP between late 2018 and 2019 (roughly corresponding to the Joint Action period under evaluation) corroborates this trend. The chart below illustrates the composite livelihood coping strategy index (with a higher score indicating more use of negative coping strategies) of three groups – those receiving (WFP-provided) CFF or MPC and those unassisted.

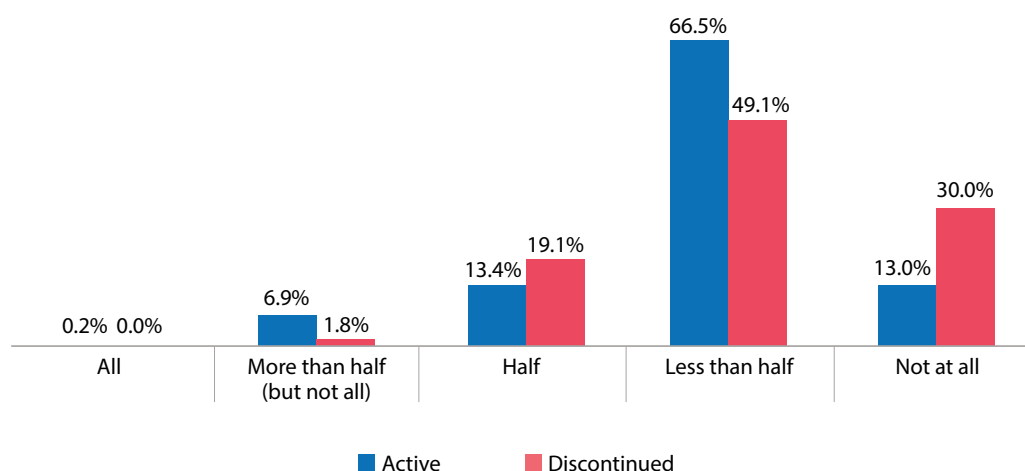
**Figure 9: Livelihood Coping Strategies Index 2018-2021, Source: WFP BNOM data**



The chart highlights a small, but distinct increase in the use of such strategies over the course of the three years. This is most notable for the unassisted group, particularly in the late-2019 to mid-2020 period (corresponding to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic). While the index saw a dip for all groups in late 2020/early 2021, the trend deteriorated for all groups as 2021 progressed.

Analysis of the household telephone survey data presents further evidence of the challenges faced by Syrians in Lebanon, and of the role that the cash transfers play in mitigating these challenges to a limited extent. The chart, below, presents analysis of households that were in receipt of Joint Action cash in 2022 vs. those that were not, with respect to their ability to meet the basic survival needs of the household (food, rent, utilities, healthcare etc.). It is evident that the clear majority of respondents consider themselves to be able to meet less than half of their basic needs. There is a clear differential between recipients of cash transfers and those not, with almost one third of those that have been discontinued stating they are almost completely unable to meet needs, although this is contradicted slightly by a higher proportion of active recipients who claim to be only able to meet less than half than discontinued recipients (66.5 per cent vs. 49.1 per cent).

**Figure 10: Household survey – current ability of respondents to meet basic household needs.**

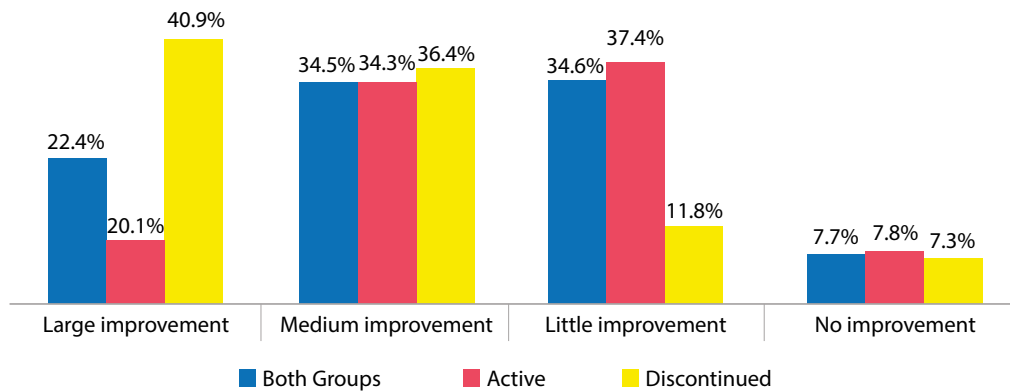


The household survey also investigated the perceptions of Syrians around the difference between those households in receipt of cash assistance and those not in receipt. The chart (below) presents the analysis of responses to this question, again for both active and discontinued recipients. There is a clear perception that the transfers are leading to benefits to peoples’ lives – more than three-quarters of respondents (78.3 per cent) believed that they led to a “large” or “medium” improvement in recipients’ lives, with less than 10 per cent believing they led to no improvement at all.

The difference between active and discontinued respondents to this question was marked, with discontinued respondents being significantly more likely to consider the transfer to have a large improvement on lives than those already in receipt. This result may reflect inherent biases in responses – those already in receipt may prefer to understate the improvements the cash transfers bring, whereas those not in receipt may have an interest in the opposite. Equally, it may be that discontinued recipients are more keenly aware of the added value that the regular transfers, however small, may bring.

This aspect of income security was noted by several key informants to the evaluation and corroborated by testimony from Syrians themselves via focus group discussions. Regardless of the locations or gender, all FGD participants stated that the priority is securing accommodation and rent, although many reported increasing rents – including demands to be paid in dollars – with threats of eviction commonplace. The second priority expressed by family members was food, although prices of basic goods are similarly rising beyond their reach, preventing them from fulfilling their needs. Women participants noted a focus on purchase of pulses, rice, sugar, tea and cooking oil, with dairy products, meat and even bread becoming too expensive. The third priority noted by Syrians was utilities (electricity, gas, and water), notably payment for private suppliers for all of these. Successive and periodic price crises for fuel and other commodities add to the pressures on Syrian households and are reported by them to increase their need to resort to negative coping strategies, particularly reductions in healthcare and education expenditures.

**Figure 11: Household Survey – Cash Transfer Impacts on Living Conditions vs Those Not in Receipt**



*Have Cash Transfers Led to More Improved Living Conditions Compared to Those Not Receiving? (n=992)*

*The basic things in life became the most essential things in life.*

*– Male FGD participant, Beirut*

Notwithstanding the challenging reality experienced by most Syrians, when asked to compare their experience with those not receiving cash transfer support, there was acknowledgement that such cash assistance represents a “stone that holds the rock”, i.e. a form of financial and psychological security provided by the awareness that they would be in receipt of cash each month. Some respondents noted that their participation in the Joint Action provided a guarantee enabling them to buy from grocery shops on credit.

*My neighbour doesn't receive support, [but] at least I know I will receive money at the end of each month.*

*– Female FGD participant, North*

*We are better off than people who don't receive assistance.*

*– Female FGD participant, South*

*Absence of the [Joint Action] cash would lead to severe consequences on basic survival and protection.*

*– Donor Representative, Beirut*

**Programme reach to a substantially higher population than originally planned:** Although the prevailing deterioration in Lebanon has led to the Joint Action not succeeding in meeting many of its originally-planned outcomes, one area where the programme has surpassed targets is in terms of the number of households provided a cash transfer (targeting is discussed in detail under sub-questions 1.3 and 1.4 above).

From a target at programme outset of 56,000 households (336,000 individuals)<sup>120</sup>, the Joint Action was reaching 99,643 households (almost 625,000 individuals) by completion of the evaluated phase of the programme in 2021 (Section 1 above provides additional detail on the reported # of beneficiaries and expenditure).

120 Joint Action Proposal: eSINGLE FORM FOR HUMANITARIAN AID ACTIONS 2018/00890/RQ/01/01, Section 3.2.1

**Table 6: Joint Action Beneficiaries by Year (for all modalities).**

Year	# HH benefiting	#individuals
2018	55,564	347,316
2019	55,440	361,916
2020	91,599	511,039
2021	99,643	624,212

This represents an almost doubling of the numbers of families reached by the Joint Action – a reflection of a deliberate strategy on the part of UNHCR and WFP<sup>121</sup> in reaching more people to make the most of the increasing value of the Joint Action funding (in USD) relative to the Lebanese Pound (also driven by the absence of a systematic process for increasing the transfer value in line with inflation – discussed under sub-questions 1.4 and 3.2). Although UNHCR and WFP stakeholders noted misgivings about adopting this approach (vs. greater efforts to increase transfer values – see next finding), part of the rationale for it was on the basis of feedback from Syrians (via periodic FGDs conducted by implementing partners) who expressed a preference for reaching more people with less resources.

*Refugees say they'd prefer smaller amount spread more widely. But it's getting to the point of where the amount given is less and less useful. We have reached the end of spreading it as thinly as possible.*

– UN key informant

The use of this strategy was explored directly by the evaluation with Syrians via both FGDs and the household telephone survey. Most participants in the FGDs stated a preference for larger numbers of households to receive support as they witness vulnerable families being discontinued and unable to cope. However, most were in agreement that the purchasing power of the transfer value should either remain the same or increase rather than diminish to cover more families.

*We all have the same pain and the same problems.*

– Male FGD participant, Bekaa

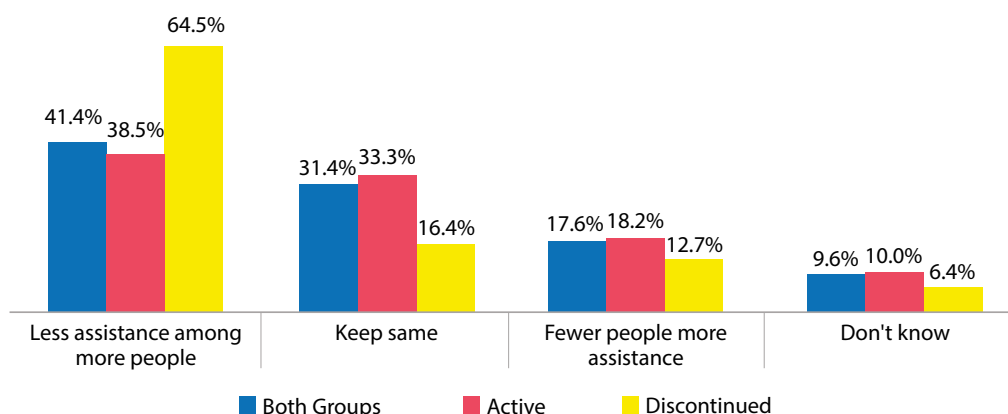
This sentiment was shared by respondents to the telephone survey (which, being confidential and private, may have led to reduced “virtue-signalling” response bias). The chart, below, presents responses to the question on whether it is better to distribute a smaller transfer more widely or increase the transfer value for a smaller number of recipients or keep things as they are.

Overall, the most popular choice among respondents (at 41.4 per cent in aggregate) was to spread the assistance more widely amongst a greater number of recipients, but this was closely followed by the preference to keep the same assistance for the same number of people (31.4 per cent), with relatively few people (17.6 per cent) preferring to increase the transfer value but provide it to fewer people.

There was a more marked difference between those respondents that were current recipients of Joint Action assistance and those not – almost two-thirds of discontinued recipients preferred to spread it more widely – potentially in the hope that they would have a greater chance of re-inclusion – with only 16 per cent preferring the status quo. Active recipients were polarised in the opposite manner – approximately one third (38.5 per cent) wanted to spread assistance more widely, with exactly one-third preferring to keep assistance the same.

121 UN key informants

**Figure 12: Household Survey – Share resource among same, more or fewer families?**



*Share resources among more families, keep things same, or more to fewer families? (n=1000)*

Despite the differences in preference across both groups of respondents, it is clear that there is no significant appetite for providing fewer families assistance, even if this means more for those that remain. Thus, the approach of UNHCR and WFP to seeking to assist a wider population appears to be grounded in good evidence.

**18. While Joint Action support is playing a key role in the survival of Syrians in Lebanon, the transfer value is no longer adequate, despite efforts to increase it .**

Despite the solid basis for a strategy of reaching greater than planned numbers of Syrians with cash transfers, as noted above, evidence from both Syrians and institutional stakeholders suggests that this strategy is approaching the end of its practical utility. The negative consequences of an ever-diminishing transfer value are beginning to outweigh the value of more needy families receiving assistance. As discussed above, one of the main indicators in relation to Joint Action outcomes - the prevalence of negative (food and/or livelihood) coping strategies or protection risks (e.g. child labour, survival sex, evictions, premature returns) – has shown little or no positive progress, and indeed regression across a number of measures.

Data from Syrians participating in focus group discussions provides further evidence as to the widespread (and increasing) use of negative coping strategies amongst the population. Many participants noted that they may have started to cope at the start of the cash support program but with the increased intensity of the economic crisis, the effects of inflation on prices, coping strategies were increasingly utilised. Syrians noted a variety of negative coping strategies, primarily skipping meals, removing children from school and sending them to work and taking on debt for food and medication.

At least 80 per cent of the participants in focus group discussion had a minimum of one or two children engaged in some form of labour, ranging from 9 to 18 years old. Younger children engage in physically undemanding (but still risky) work such as street selling, with older children taking up more demanding work such as selling or portering in wholesale markets, crop harvesting, working in mechanic workshops, barber shops and others. For girls, parents expressed more concern for their safety, so seek jobs where they can be close to them: either working with them in the field, or in hair salons, or supporting their mothers in house cleaning.

Skipping meals is another common risk coping strategy noted as being adopted by the majority of focus group participants. Interestingly, most only noted this as a strategy when explicitly asked about it, suggesting it has become a norm rather than a strategy that is resorted to. In addition to reducing or eliminating many nutritious (and hence more expensive) ingredients from their diets, many mothers noted resorting to replacement strategies: for example replacing bread with rice, or providing the same (cheaper) food for their families for different meals.

A majority of Syrians interviewed as part of this evaluation noted that coping strategies have become a daily way of life rather than a temporary situation. They have normalised many of the strategies in the sense that,



at the time of research, many of them are engaged in unconsciously rather than intentionally, underscoring the prolonged nature of the hardships that they face.

*My son is 10 years and works at a factory, he gets 120,000 L.L./week.*

*– Female FGD participant, North*

*My girl cries everyday because she does not want to work but then how can we feed all of us?"*

*– Female FGD participant, Bekaa*

*My son is 9 years old and works in the potato fields.*

*– Male FGD participant, Bekaa*

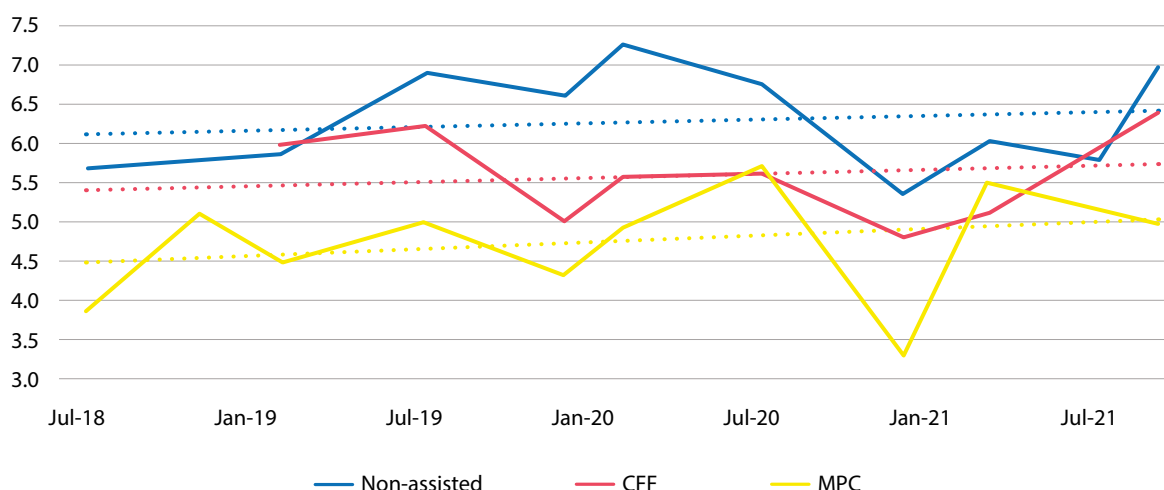
The Livelihoods Coping Strategies Index data gathered by WFP via BNOM (presented in the chart, below) highlights an important difference in the use of such strategies between the three groups of respondents to the surveys.

The data show a clear differential between non-recipients of assistance and the CFF/MPC recipients, suggesting that the provision of assistance has been successful in mitigating the severity of the crises and difficult socio-economic conditions faced by Syrians in Lebanon.

This evidence is well-supported by qualitative data from interviews with institutional stakeholders across all groups (UN, Government, NGO) and participants in FGDs.

Key informants provided consistent feedback on the material and psycho-social benefits that participation in the Joint Action has brought for participating households – albeit diminishing in parallel with the buying power of the transfer value due to inflation. Interviewees also noted numerous anecdotal examples of families that have leveraged the cash transfers to pay for a variety of essential household outgoings.

**Figure 13: Livelihood Coping Strategy Index by Modality**



*Livelihood Coping Strategy Index by Modality (WFP BNOM Data, 2021)*

*Early in the Joint Action, I visited a female-headed-household with eight children. The household head told me that if it wasn't for the cash assistance she might have died or her children would have been forced to work to obtain the cash they needed to survive.*

*– NGO Key Informant*

There was an almost unanimous consensus among interviewees from a variety of institutions that the cash transfers, while insufficient to meet needs on their own, and most certainly no longer protecting increasingly precarious livelihood activities, are providing a basic needs foundation for recipient households. Many respondents expressed that Lebanon would see more substantial occurrence of all major protection issues (child labour, early marriage, GBV, sex work) without the cash transfers, with none asserting the contrary.

*If you have enough to survive for 15 days in a month, you will bite your hand for the remaining 15 days until the next month. If not, you need to engage in risky strategies.*

– NGO Key Informant

However, respondents also were clear that the progressive relative decrease in value of the cash transfer due to inflation, and the strategy of reaching more people with less resources per capita has led to increasing hardship in aggregate, and an inability to achieve the objectives or targets of the Joint Action since 2019. Fundamental to this challenge is the limited capacity of the Joint Action to increase the transfer value to Syrians, the factors driving which, in summary, are:

- Limitations in funding to both reach adequate numbers in need *and* provide for those needs fully (with concerns of diminished funding in 2023 and beyond – see finding 30);
- Political challenges centring around perceptions of the refugee burden on the country as well as resentment that refugees receive cash assistance when so many Lebanese were in need (see finding 39);
- An expressed preference among recipient populations to spread assistance more widely over a greater amount for fewer recipients (see finding 17);
- A risk of the benefit of transfer value increases being captured by increases in costs such as rent (see finding 23);
- Absence of consensus among institutional stakeholders as to whether the transfer value should remain the same or whether it should increase (or indeed be provided in LBP or provided in US dollars) (see finding 30).

Sub-question 2.2: Were these outcomes different between men and women?

**FINDINGS**

- 19. There are some, but minor, differences in outcomes reported among men and women, with these differences more significant between those receiving and not receiving cash transfers.
- 20. Internal reporting has limited disaggregation of outputs or outcomes for males or females, but annual VASyR reporting presents more detailed analysis of gender-related indicators.
- 21. Preferential allocation of support to female-headed households has led to some misrepresentation of HH status.

**19. There are some, but minor, differences in outcomes reported among men and women, with these differences more significant between those receiving and not receiving cash transfers.**

Both quantitative and qualitative data from primary sources (the telephone survey and focus group discussions) are largely well-correlated in that the outcomes of Joint Action programming are relatively evenly distributed amongst men and women in households. This is not unexpected, given that (a) the Joint Action is primarily a resource transfer programme, with little in the way of complementary programming that directly seeks to address gender-related issues, and (b) the reductions in buying power of the transfer amount due to inflation since 2019 are felt at a household level, with the socio-economic challenges being experienced by all household members.

An analysis of the needs that the cash transfers are used for amongst respondents to the household survey (among both those active and discontinued – see chart, right), by sex of the respondent, indicates very close correlation of the key priorities between women and men.

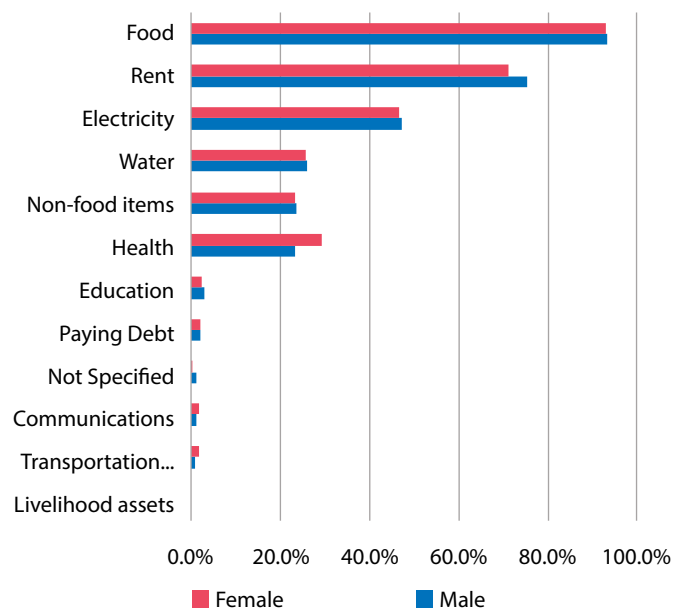
The most significant priorities noted are food and rent, with utilities (electricity and water) coming second. Both men and women were closely correlated in their priority with these items. The only area with a more significant divergence was in the area of health, with women ascribing a higher priority to use of the cash transfers for healthcare than men. This is not unexpected, given the increased responsibilities of women in child bearing and child rearing that require a greater focus on healthcare.

These results are in line with FGD findings, in which both men and women prioritised food, rent and utilities for use of the resources transferred to them by the Joint Action.

An analysis of negative coping strategies implemented by respondents to the household survey, by sex of household head, shows a slightly more divergent trend. On average, more female than male headed households are likely to engage in negative coping strategies, and those are more likely to be food-related than non-food-related. The chart, right, displays the overall averages for the prevalence of different coping strategies among women and men, with there being, on average, a 43 per cent chance of female-headed households engaging in a given food coping strategy, compared to 33 per cent for male-headed ones.

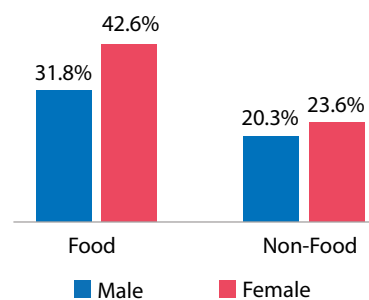
Utilisation of non-food coping strategies was more closely aligned between female vs. male headed households, at 20 percent for male, 24 percent for female. This may reflect gender differences in decision-making within the household economy.

**Figure 14: Household Survey – Main HH Needs that Cash Transfers Meet**



Main HH Needs to which Cash Transfers Contribute, by sex (n=999)

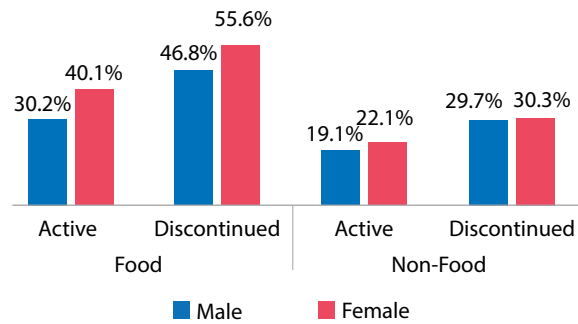
**Figure 15: Household Survey – Average Prevalence of Coping Strategies, by HH head sex**



Average Prevalence of Coping Strategies, by sex of HH Head (n=951)

A similar trend can be seen among those active recipients of cash transfers and those that have been discontinued, presented in the chart, right. The impacts of receipt of cash do appear to be disproportionately reported by female-headed households, again, particularly with respect to food coping strategies (respondents were asked to report on behalf of their households). Both female and male-headed households who are no longer in receipt of the cash transfers are more likely to engage in such strategies, but there is an almost 56 per cent chance of discontinued female-headed households engaging in a given food-related coping strategy vs. 47 per cent chance for male, and a 40 per cent chance for female-headed households in receipt of the cash transfer vs 30 per cent for male.

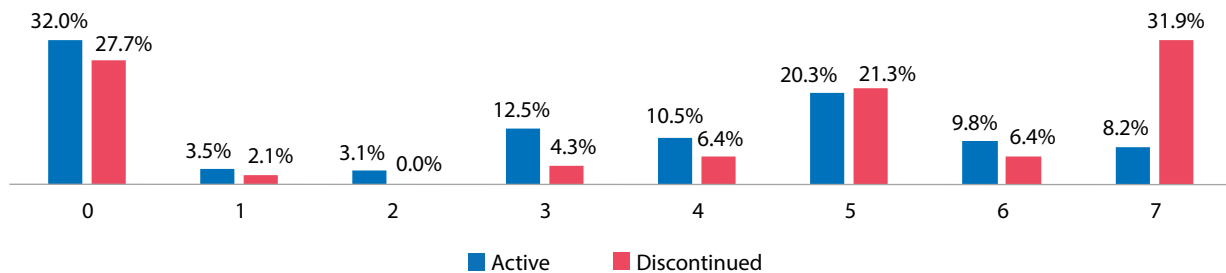
**Figure 16: HH Survey – Average Prevalence of Coping Strategies by programme status and sex of HH head**



*Average Prevalence of Coping Strategies by programme status and sex of HH head (n=999)*

The absolute number of negative coping strategies engaged is also relevant (the above charts simply present the percentage likelihood of a given strategy being employed). The chart, below, presents findings on the number of strategies reported by female-headed households in receipt of cash transfers or not.

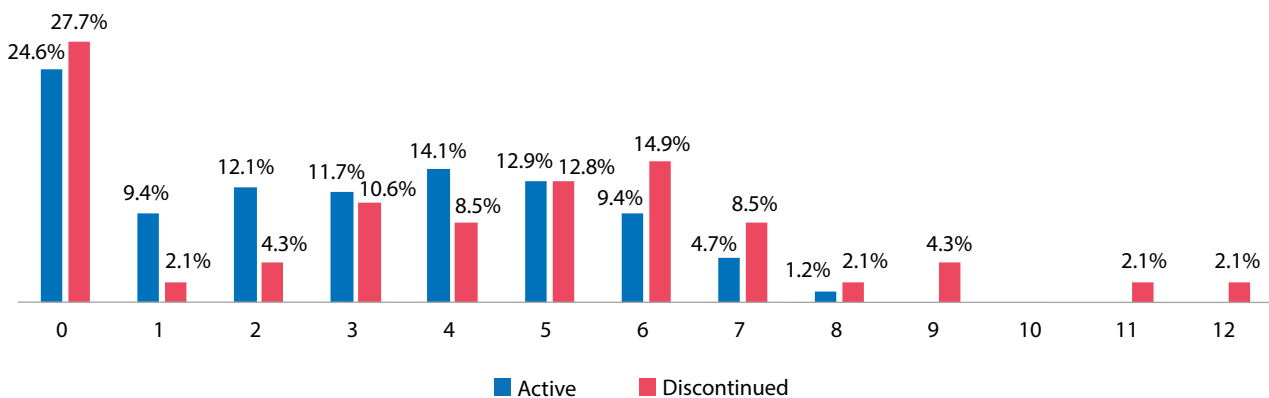
**Figure 17: Number of Food Coping Strategies per Female-headed HH – Active vs. Discontinued**



*Number of Food Coping Strategies per Female-headed HH – Active vs. Discontinued Cash Recipient (n=380)*

There is a clear trend of those not in receipt of Joint Action transfers engaging in a greater number of coping strategies – with almost one-third (32 per cent) reporting engaging in all seven of the key strategies measured, vs. approximately 8 per cent of female-headed households in receipt. These results are significantly different for male-headed households – less than half the proportion of this group than female-headed households reported engaging in all seven strategies (both active and discontinued).

**Figure 18: Number of Non-Food Coping Strategies/Female-headed HH – Active vs. Discontinued Cash Recipients**



*Number of NON-Food Coping Strategies per Female-headed HH – Active vs. Discontinued Cash Recipient (n=380)*

The trend is similar, if not as marked, for non-food coping strategies, with more active female-headed households in receipt of assistance reporting none or few strategies than those discontinued, and higher numbers of strategies amongst the discontinued respondents.

As with average likelihood of engagement in food vs. non-food coping strategies discussed above, there was not a significant difference between the numbers of non-food strategies undertaken by active/discontinued male and female-headed households in the survey.

**Table 7: Syrian Refugee Child Marriage Prevalence 2017–2021**

Year	% of girls 15-19 married <sup>122</sup>
2017	22%
2018	29%
2019	27%
2020	26%
2021	20%

The above data correlate well with the qualitative findings from interviews, and an analysis of Joint Action programmatic reporting and datasets. Qualitative evidence indicates a general acknowledgement of increases in the prevalence of GBV, child and female labour in the context of the deteriorating socio-economic environment in Lebanon since 2019<sup>123</sup>, but data is somewhat anecdotal. UNHCR undertakes protection monitoring as part of its non-Joint Action work, and this data does indicate some specific gender-related concerns (such as female child labour or child marriage) that were increasing over the

course of the relevant time periods. For example, UNHCR reported in late 2021 that 28 per cent of all children working were girls, whereas prior to the second half of 2021 this rate was measured at 18 per cent.<sup>124</sup> Analysis of VASyR data on child marriage from 2018 to 2021 presents some interesting findings, presented in the table. These results, while not specifically related to the Joint Action, indicate a rise in child marriage between 2017 and 2018, with a year-on-year decrease in the years since then. Given wide evidence for increasing use of negative coping strategies, it is challenging to interpret these results coherently.

A tentative, but potentially meaningful change among Syrians in receipt of assistance noted via the focus group discussions is self-reported increased levels of awareness amongst female Syrians of the nature of gender-based violence and sexual harassment and that there are ways to access support for preventing/treating it. Feedback from FGD participants was that such support is not widely available (particularly in the more rural regions) and of a lack of trust in the police and judicial sectors, inhibiting access to justice for survivors. Nonetheless, the level of awareness of rights and the violations of these is suggestive of a change in gender norms amongst Syrians over time that may (albeit speculatively) be associated with the assistance provided by the Joint Action and other initiatives – respondents did not assert that the Joint Action was responsible for these increases, but the reports of the changes themselves suggest opportunities for more research and/or entry points for further work in this area.

A final area of concern is in relation to more recent (mid-2022) developments in Lebanon in relation to the realignment of telecommunication fees with the de-facto currency exchange rate. Prior to July 2022, communications expenses were denominated according to the official exchange rate of 1,500 LBP to the US dollar. From July, they were charged at the official flexible (Sayrafa) exchange rate (approximately 30,000 LBP to the US dollar in July), thus leading to a multiple-times increase in telecommunications rates. Communication costs are included as part of the SMEB and if the transfer value were commensurate with this would include the increased cost - which was updated in the basket following the increase in mid-2022. Further, according to the Lebanon Inter-Agency Protection Sector, women and girls would be disproportionately affected by this rate increase, as it has led to a major reduction in telecommunications access in households, where cost increases may lead to less devices in use, and decreased privacy when in use. This could lead to delays in protection referrals and challenges in case management. This is noted as a major concern for GBV case management, where women and girls may find it increasingly difficult to contact case managers.<sup>125</sup> In addition, media reports note that the same decrees will mandate the discontinuation of the 2G cellular network, which is used by (reportedly) 230,000 households across Lebanon that have access only to non-smartphones for data access.<sup>126</sup>

122 All data from VASyR reports, 2017–2021

123 UN, NGO key informants

124 UNHCR, 2022, Protection Monitoring Findings Lebanon – 4th quarter 2021

125 Lebanon Crisis Analytics Team, Telecoms Price Rises Flash Report, July 2022

126 <https://jp.reuters.com/article/lebanon-electricity-outages-idAFL8N2ZS26D>

## 20. Internal reporting has limited disaggregation of outputs or outcomes for males or females, but annual VASyR reporting presents more detailed analysis of gender-related indicators.

As discussed under Sub-question 2.1, UNHCR and WFP data collection tools for cash transfer programming include provision for a range of sex, age and vulnerability characteristics.<sup>127</sup> Notwithstanding the collection of these data, there is limited Joint Action reporting on gender-specific outcomes within cash transfer programming – primarily the Food Consumption Score and Coping Strategies Index, which are reported by WFP disaggregated by sex of household head. Similarly, UNHCR protection quarterly reports mainly report on coping strategies in relation to gender. Analysis of these is presented above. Thus, the monitoring and reporting activities specific to the Joint Action are limited in their capacity to present findings on differential outcomes for males and females and how the Joint Action may be influencing them.

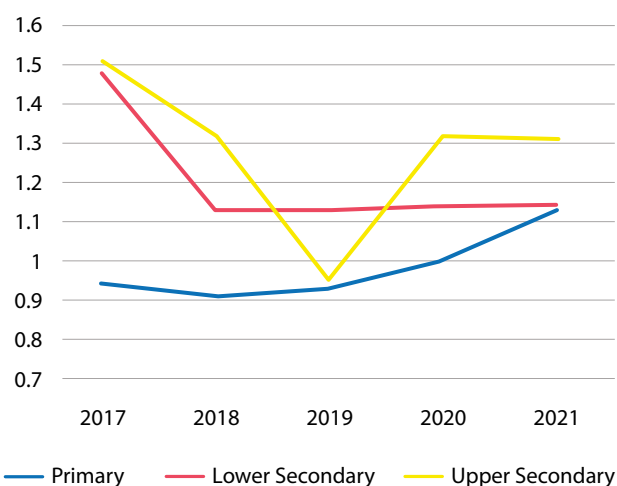
Nonetheless, under the annual VASyR, there is extensive analysis of the risks and vulnerabilities related to female-headed households. Indeed, from 2017 through to 2021 (except for 2019), the annual VASyR had a specific section related to gender analysis. This typically focuses upon the specific risks and vulnerabilities under livelihoods, education, shelter and protection (including child protection) faced primarily by female-headed households, although some data relates to outcomes amongst female members of households.

An example of useful analysis related to gender outcomes (of girls) among all respondents to the VASyR survey is presented in the chart (below). It is a measure of education enrolment parity between boys and girls – values above 1 indicate more girls than boys enrolled, and vice versa for values below 1.

The data shows<sup>128</sup>, by 2021 more girls than boys enrolled across all levels of school, though values for lower and upper secondary have been deteriorating for girls since 2017 and improving for primary. Importantly, this may be a reflection of increasing school dropouts seen between 2020 and 2021, a reflection of the COVID-19 restrictions and the increase in negative coping strategies (increased child labour, decreased school enrolment) that disproportionately impact boys.

The chart, below, presents VASyR data from 2019 to 2021 (2019 data on overall enrolment by sex was not presented in the 2018 VASyR report), demonstrating this deterioration in school enrolment (summarised across all school levels) between 2020 and 2021.<sup>129</sup> It is important to note that the VASyR methodology records information that is presented by the heads of households (82 per cent of which are male), and thus may include gender bias in respondents' answers.<sup>130</sup>

Figure 19: VASyR Data – Gender Parity Index in Education



These data, albeit from a wider sample population than are assisted by the Joint Action modalities, illustrate some of the different outcomes for males and female Syrians that have been noted via the evaluation primary data collection methods. Therefore, the VASyR data presents a useful focus on gender-related issues that can be leveraged by the Joint Action, primarily with respect to female-headed households (which are specifically supported individually with case management and are eligible for complementary supports via (e.g. PCAP)), and secondarily amongst the overall female population from the number of Syrian refugees known to UNHCR.<sup>131</sup>

127 A list of sex and other vulnerability characteristics is presented in the Post Distribution Monitoring and Outcome Monitoring Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance

128 Note that the VASyR 2021 data reports historical data for 2019 and 2020 also (page 165), but the 2020 data cited in the 2021 report does not match the original 2020 reported data

129 Data from VASyR reports 2019, 2020, 2021, Education sections.

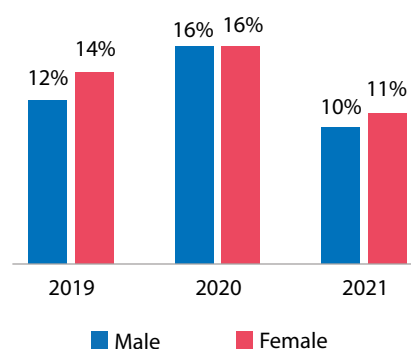
130 VASyR Methodological Approach, see VASyR 2019 report, page 22

131 "known to UNHCR" is the specific phrasing within the sampling methodology descriptions in successive VASyR reports.

Ad-hoc analysis of VASyR datasets, disaggregated by assistance modality (MCAP, MPC, Food e-Card) disaggregated by gender was undertaken by UNHCR in 2021 in an unpublished report<sup>132</sup> – this is a good example of in-depth analysis by gender and could present useful findings for future programming.

The consensus of data from qualitative interview sources is that while gender disaggregated data collection exists, more can and should be done with respect to gender-related data collection and analysis.<sup>133</sup> Key informants engaged in data management note that limited analysis undertaken does highlight some differentiated results, but these are tentative and warrant more rigorous approaches.

**Figure 20: VASyR Data – School Enrolment Rate 2019–2021**



## 21. Preferential allocation of support to female-headed households has led to some misrepresentation of HH status.

The Joint Action monitoring modalities and other assessments (notably the VASyR) specify the household as the unit of measurement, with the PMT targeting formula also using gender of the head of HH as one of the vulnerability variables.<sup>134</sup>

*The primary sampling unit was defined as the village level (i.e. cluster) and UNHCR cases served as the secondary sampling unit. A case was defined as a group of people who are identified together as one unit (usually immediate family/household) under UNHCR databases.*

– UNHCR VASyR Report, 2020

Analysis of the Syrian population in Lebanon by Development Analytics as part of the PMT formula development noted that female-headed households are more likely to be poor, have a higher proportion of disabled members, less likely to have a working-age male, and have a higher share of dependents.<sup>135</sup> A variety of research efforts that have taken place amongst the Syrian population in Lebanon have highlighted the increased vulnerability of female-headed households to negative coping strategies such as early marriage, reduced schooling for children, increased child labour etc.<sup>136</sup>

Successive VASyR reports note a specific challenge in the approach to data collection with respect to the focus on the household as the unit of measurement – and thus the gender of the head of household being a key data point. Evidence from interviewees across Joint Action implementation staff confirm that head-of-household status is self-reported by refugees and that there is a risk misrepresentation, potentially in a hope that eligibility for additional transfer value will be created. As noted by one key informant:

*We know that many male refugees between 18-50 are less likely to be registered with UNHCR than female in the same age bracket. They are part of households that are registered, but it is their spouses who are registered. So according to the registration database they look like female-headed households and more vulnerable, but they're not.*

– UN Key Informant

132 UNHCR, Internal (unpublished) draft report, Analysis on Meaningful Assistance, May 2021

133 Key informants from UNHCR, WFP and NGO partners

134 The targeting approach is discussed in detail under Evaluation Question 1, above.

135 Onur Altındağ, Stephen D. O'Connell, Aytuğ Şaşmaz, Zeynep Balcıoğlu, Paola Cadoni, Matilda Jerneck, Aimee Kunze Foong, "Targeting humanitarian aid using administrative data: Model design and validation," Journal of Development Economics, Volume 148, 2021, 102564, ISSN 0304-3878, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2020.102564>

136 See CAMEALEON, 2022, Leaving No One Behind: Evidence From Lebanon on How Multi-Purpose Cash Beneficiaries with Different Vulnerability Profiles Spend Income and Access Services

This concern of misrepresentation was noted by a variety of key informants across UNHCR, WFP and external stakeholders (such as donors, coordination groups). A key challenge is that the scale of the programme means universal validation visits to households are not feasible, thus “many households self-report as female-headed to obtain more assistance” (donor key informant).

While much of the evidence for this misreporting of household status is anecdotal, quantitative analysis of the primary data from the evaluation household telephone survey supports this. Survey participants were drawn from the UNHCR registration database, with gender of the registered household head a key parameter. Within the sample of households ultimately contacted, 41.6 per cent were female-headed per UNHCR data.

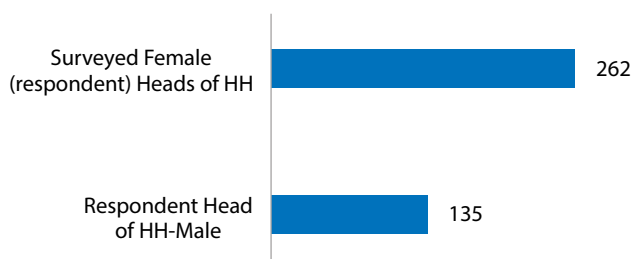
Survey respondents were asked their own gender and whether they were the household head as part of the introductory questions to the survey. Of the 1000 respondents, 85 per cent indicated they were the household head, but only 32 per cent of these indicated they were female.

Cross-matching of individual respondents between UNHCR data and the survey data indicates direct contradictions between households registered as being female-headed with UNHCR, but with male members claiming to be the household head when contacted by the evaluation research team.

In total, 135 respondents to the telephone survey self-identified their households as male-headed when they are registered with UNHCR as female-headed. Given that interviews were conducted with 416 female headed households (according to UNHCR data), this comprises a mislabelling or misrepresentation of 32.4 per cent – slightly more if data from non-respondents to the question are discarded. The chart above highlights this discrepancy between registered and self-reported data to the evaluation research team.

This analysis, while not definitive (insofar as checking of the validity of registration data was not specifically built into the evaluation methodology, so may include some biases), does triangulate well with the qualitative evidence of concerns of misrepresentation of households as female-headed. There may be a variety of reasons for the discrepancy, such as out-of-date registration data, bias or miscommunication on how the question was presented to respondents, concerns about personal security for men in relation to political/military affiliation in Syria, or deliberate efforts on the part of transfer recipients to ‘game’ the targeting formula (as qualitative evidence suggests). However, the inconsistency between evaluation data and UNHCR registration data for the same households may warrant further assessment.

**Figure 21: HH Survey – Discrepancies between Head of HH Status (n=1000)**



*Sampled (UNHCR data) vs. Survey Self-Reported Female Heads of HH (n=1000)*



*Sub-question 2.3: What are the unintended positive and/or negative outcomes of the joint action on protection risks affecting beneficiaries or on tensions within families, especially amongst refugee communities and with host populations?*

#### **FINDINGS**

- 22. Inter-community tensions between Syrians and Lebanese are reinforced by the scale and visibility of the Joint Action as well as inaccurate information and poor awareness of the Joint Action.**
- 23. The Joint Action cash transfers may contribute to tensions between or within refugee households.**

### **22. Inter-community tensions between Syrians and Lebanese are reinforced by the scale and visibility of the Joint Action as well as inaccurate information and poor awareness of the Joint Action.**

Previous evaluations and studies relating to refugee cash programmes for food assistance or cash-based programming dating back to 2019 noted the prevalence of tensions between the Lebanese and Syrian communities issue of concern.<sup>137</sup> VASyR research from 2018 suggested that such tensions were not significant, with 70 per cent of interviewed refugee households at that time stating there was no tension between the Syrian refugee and the host communities, and none reporting high/very high tension levels. This dynamic changed in succeeding years, and by 2020 45 per cent of respondents felt there were no tensions.<sup>138</sup> By 2021, almost one third of households (31 per cent) reported “perceived or real discrimination in the provision of aid as a key source of tensions between refugees and the host community”. While community relations have been tracked on an ongoing basis by VASyR, 2021 was the first year where consideration of aid as a source of tension was reported via this publication.

The emergence and increase of Syrian/Lebanese tension due to perceived inequality or prejudice around cash assistance is strongly corroborated by the evaluation primary data. Most key informants to the evaluation highlighted a growing narrative in Lebanon in the last two years where Syrians are increasingly being incorrectly blamed for the socioeconomic deterioration of the country and the increasing poverty of Lebanese. While media reports on this emerged as early as 2018<sup>139</sup>, key informants noted substantial recent increases in inflammatory rhetoric by politicians, Lebanese media and social media users.<sup>140</sup> In all FGDs, refugees agreed that problems with prejudice and racism were increasingly prevalent, with Lebanese blaming their Syrian neighbours for their increasing poverty, the lack of job opportunities, inflation, the fuel crisis and withdrawal of subsidies. All gave examples of how this manifested in terms of protection risks such as verbal or even physical abuse, harassment or poor treatment by service providers and authorities.<sup>141</sup>

While the cash programming initiatives (including the Joint Action), which have contributed over \$600 million to the Lebanese economy since 2018, are not the cause of these social issues per se, the scale and visibility of the Joint Action contributes to reinforcing these perceptions. In this context cash programme/the Joint Action is a convenient target towards which these socio-political frustrations can be directed. These issues are historical and contextual, and are coming to a head because of the change in circumstances facing Lebanese. Many key informants noted that the provision of cash assistance to refugees itself was an issue, but wide coverage that assists only the refugee population, stands in contrast to increasing Lebanese social protection needs.<sup>142</sup> The protection sector reported 30 per cent of refugees in some communities noting the main driver of tensions is this assistance.<sup>143</sup>

Negative perceptions have been further reinforced by the circulation of incorrect or exaggerated information circulated via social media<sup>144</sup>, two particularly significant examples of which are:

137 Research Report on AAP in the World Food Programme’s Multi-Purpose Cash Programme, CAMEALEON, 2019; WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021

138 VASyR reports 2018–2020

139 See <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/news/lebanons-foreign-minister-blames-downtrodden-economy-syrian-refugees>

140 Various key informants. See also Speetjens and Laughlin, Lebanon Scapegoating Syrian Refugees for Economic Crisis, 2022

141 All FGDs

142 The LCRP does include cash assistance for Lebanese under the NPTP but this is only a fraction of the coverage and value. The ESSN was established to fill the gap in needs for Lebanese but is not under the LCRP. While donor funded this is through an IDA loan and is publicised as assistance from government.

143 Various key informants (UN agencies, working groups)

144 Ibid

- That refugees receive all cash assistance in USD (some cash interventions do provide USD).
- That many refugees claim assistance in Lebanon but remit it back to Syria, or indeed spend considerable time in Syria and return only for assistance transfers.

Joint Action stakeholders noted that limited information is shared with the Lebanese community about the assistance provided by the international community, which is contributing to these issues.<sup>145</sup> This is corroborated by a 2022 evaluation of the potential for dollarisation of cash assistance commissioned by the Strategic Taskforce on Cash Assistance, which made a number of recommendations related to communication to mitigate tensions.<sup>146</sup> While the Joint Action does not include Lebanese, the international response (and both Joint Action agencies) has provided humanitarian cash assistance to Lebanese through the ESN, NPTP, emergency cash programme for the Beirut blast and winter cash assistance, but these are not well publicised. While several key informants highlighted that the volume of cash injected in to the Lebanese economy through the Joint Action has significant positive multiplier effects for local businesses, which could potentially help to counter some of these negative narratives, this is not something that is being reported in popular media or by government, nor significantly by the international community. This was considered by some stakeholders as a systemic issue beyond the UN implementers or the refugee cash response, being symptomatic of broader challenges regarding this negative narrative on refugees that is not being countered or challenged.<sup>147</sup>

There is ample data on how the increasing tensions lead to protection risks for Joint Action beneficiaries. The most common issues, raised by key informants and refugees alike, were confrontations with Lebanese at payment sites, especially in areas with high numbers of refugees per ATM and in Beirut's southern suburbs, and anecdotal reports of intimidation and extortion at ATMs.<sup>148</sup>

*No real problem at the ATM, but when we leave there is a real threat. I once went [to the ATM] and after a person pulled a gun and knife threatening to kill me if I didn't give him my money.*

– Male FGD participant, Beirut

These risks may have a gender dimension, with CAMEALEON research highlighting that women were reporting more incidents of verbal and physical harassment.<sup>149</sup> While there were numerous instances of racism or prejudice cited by FGD participants (and corroborated by key informants), there were few cases of severe violence mentioned, and the ATM monitoring undertaken by Joint Action implementing partners (and other measures such as increasing numbers of ATMs, staggering distributions) was noted by stakeholders to be having a positive impact on reducing or eliminating individual incidents. Nevertheless, ATMs – highly visible in the community and generating large queues at pay-out times – are a particular design feature of the Joint Action associated with such risks.

### **23. The Joint Action cash transfers may contribute to tensions between or within refugee households.**

This has been reported in previous studies, which concluded that factors driving this were the similarity of circumstances facing refugees who were discontinued and lack of visibility of refugees of the targeting approach<sup>150</sup> (see EQ1.3 for more details). On the one hand, the breadth of coverage under the Joint Action has increased during this evaluation period which could have helped to mitigate this risk. On the other, there are still the hard cut offs in assistance thresholds (discussed in EQ1.3) which are not commensurate to the change in vulnerability status of households at the threshold. Given that the Joint Action reached approximately 73 per cent of the Syrians registered with UNHCR<sup>151</sup>, but 88 per cent of all Syrians in Lebanon are living under the

145 UN key informants

146 Hamadje, Independent Evaluation: Phase I Dollarisation Process of Direct Cash Assistance to Lebanon, Strategic Cash Task Force 2022.

147 Various key informants

148 FGD participants

149 Various key informants

150 Research Report on AAP in the World Food Programme's Multi-Purpose Cash Programme, CAMEALEON, 2019; WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021

151 As of 2021, the Joint Action reached 624,212 individuals, with VASyR reporting 855,172 Syrians registered with UNHCR by March 2021.

SMEB<sup>152</sup>, there are still significant numbers of extremely vulnerable people or households that do not receive anything. Meanwhile other households of similar socio-economic status can receive multiple cash assistance (from the Joint Action, from the UN agencies outside the Joint Action, and from other cash actors such as UNICEF), which several key informants considered could contribute to perceptions of unfairness in targeting and decisions on eligibility. Some key informants reflected that there was a need for greater conflict sensitivity in the way that the Joint Action was targeted, and improvements to how Joint Action and other refugee cash assistance packages were coordinated. Participants in FGDs shared some of the sense of unfairness, though it was linked to limited understanding of the targeting and eligibility criteria for the Joint Action.

Implementing partners also highlighted a risk that in cases of GBV the receipt of cash assistance could compel the survivor to remain within the household for financial security. Another issue reported by WFP was where male heads of household controlled the resources and did not provide these for the needs of the family. These appear to be isolated incidents rather than something systemic. The Joint Action agencies aim to identify such risks through the complaints and feedback mechanisms as well as programme monitoring. When such cases are identified, they are referred to UNHCR for registration as a separate beneficiary.<sup>153</sup>

**Other Risks:** Programme partners, staff involved in monitoring, staff in field offices and the protection sector reported some instances of refugees feeling unsafe travelling to and from ATMs, of intimidation from landlords or increasing rents when the transfer value increases. WFP process monitoring data collected since 2019 through 2021 indicates a low-level but persistent prevalence of minor security incidents at ATMs, typically harassment of ATM attendees by members of the public, bank staff or customers, or, more rarely, violent incidents or attempts to extort money from Syrians.<sup>154</sup> Additional risks were cited as a result of the increasing cost of transportation to ATMs reported – meaning people in remote sites and informal tented settlements are relying on taxi drivers to go and collect cash and do not always receive what they expect. A further reported risk that has also been documented elsewhere (and not strictly within the scope of this evaluation)<sup>155</sup> were the monopolies being created by WFP contracted shops which was contributing to price increases – particularly in small towns.

*Sub-question 2.4: How effective were the systems and measures applied to reinforce the accountability to affected population (AAP) (MPCA monitoring processes, complaint, referral and feedback mechanism, joint call centre, communication on targeting, discontinuation)?*

#### FINDINGS

24. The SMS communication channel is well received by and has been accessible to refugees, though increasing costs are a concern.
25. The division of Joint Action responsibilities between UNHCR and WFP leads to some duplication of communication, but without negative effects.
26. Despite challenges, the newly-formulated call centres remain a relevant channel for communicating with refugees on the Joint Action.

#### **24. The SMS communication channel is well received by and has been accessible to refugees, though increasing costs are a concern.**

The Joint Action provides key programme information through SMS, including:

- Notification of eligibility/ discontinuation from assistance;
- Duration of assistance;
- The right to appeal and details of how to access the GRM;
- Notification of payment upload and value of assistance.

152 VASyR 2021 report. Note that the VASyR reports on a sample of all Syrians in Lebanon, whereas UNHCR has registered only a proportion of the total number of Syrians. Therefore the likely absolute numbers of people under the SMEB are even higher than these proportions suggest.

153 UN key informants

154 WFP Lebanon (internal) monthly process monitoring report data, 2019–2021

155 WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021

Prior to COVID SMS communication was already proven to be an efficient and effective channel for disseminating this basic programme information at scale, being a communication channel that is accessible for the majority of refugees and also preferred by beneficiaries.<sup>156</sup> The effectiveness of this channel was further highlighted by key informants, who stated that with the onset of COVID which limited some face-to-face communication channels such as the helpdesks and discussions with outreach volunteers, this meant that messages about the programme could still reach beneficiaries.

A limitation that was previously noted with the SMS channel is the requirement that phone lines are continually topped up with credit.<sup>157</sup> While the SMS are free to receive, this effectively incurs a monthly cost to beneficiaries/phone owners to access information about the Joint Action. In the context of the deteriorating socioeconomic situation and hike in costs of telecommunication services in 2022<sup>158</sup>, this issue may become more critical.

**25. The division of Joint Action responsibilities between UNHCR and WFP leads to some duplication of communication, but without negative effects.**

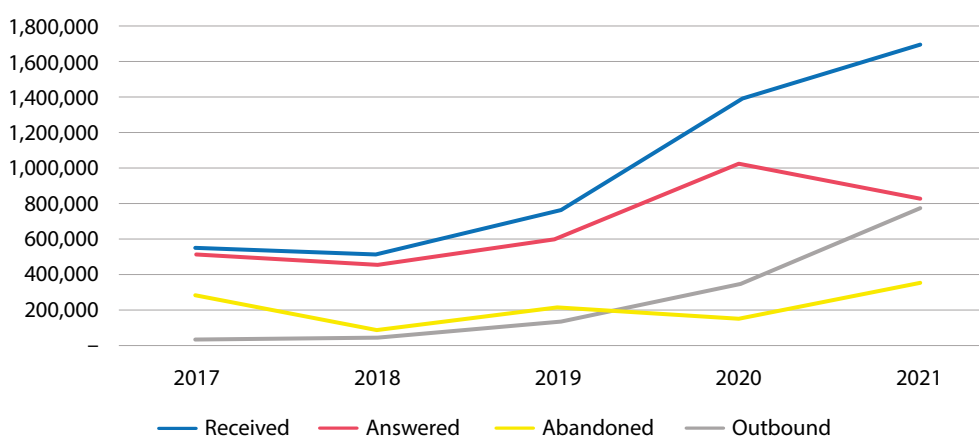
While WFP MPC beneficiaries receive a single SMS notifying them of the card upload each month, MCAP beneficiaries receive two (one on CCF from WFP and one on MCAP from UNHCR). FGDs held as part of this evaluation and findings reported in the AAP study<sup>159</sup>, suggest that receiving these multiple SMS messages about different types of assistance do not present any challenges or confusion for beneficiaries.

**26. Despite challenges, the newly-formulated call centres remain a relevant channel for communicating with refugees on the Joint Action.**

From 2018 to mid 2021, the main channel for two-way communication with beneficiaries has been the joint call centre, managed by a commercial call centre operator contracted by UNHCR. The nature of the call is recorded in the management information system and issues or queries that cannot be addressed by the operator are escalated to the appropriate agency. Previous research on the MPCA programme has demonstrated this relevance, with refugees reporting that they were comfortable with the hotline as a channel and happy with the principle of a hotline for raising issues.<sup>160</sup>

UNHCR data from the call centre highlighted the high volumes of calls received by the joint call centre. As shown in the chart, below, the joint (and in late 2021, separate) call centre(s) (combined for 2021 in this chart) demonstrates substantially increased volumes – from an average of 46,000 calls per month in 2017, to 133,000 in 2021.

**Figure 22: UNHCR/WFP Call Centre Data 2017–2021 (Source: UNHCR)**



156 Documented in the WFP Lebanon Protection Risks & Barriers to Gender, Age & Disability Inclusion in Cash & Basic Needs Assistance & Livelihoods Programmes report, 2019, Research Report on AAP in the World Food Programme’s Multi-Purpose Cash Programme, CAMEALEON, 2019 and WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021. Most refugees own or have access to a phone. Even for those with literacy challenges, household or community support is effective in ensuring wide understanding of the messages. Refugees resoundingly preferred this channel.

157 Telecom providers recycle phone lines that are not topped up with credit each month.

158 Lebanon Crisis Analytics Team, Telecoms Price Rises Flash Report, July 2022.

159 Research Report on AAP in the World Food Programme’s Multi-Purpose Cash Programme, CAMEALEON, 2019

160 Ibid

Previous studies highlighted high levels of dissatisfaction with the call centre among refugees. This evaluation has highlighted similar perceptions among refugees. Issues highlighted include:

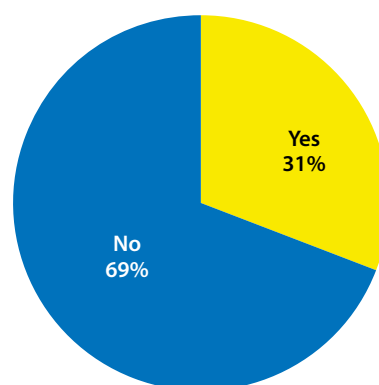
- i) **Issues with access:** the line is not a toll-free service and refugees must pay to call and charges start as soon as the line connects. This was reported as an issue in 2019 and some key informants considered this was more of a problem now giving the increased cost of living. Refugees in the AAP study also consistently complained about the lengthy waiting times to speak to an operator<sup>161</sup>, during which time they lose credit. A significant portion reported abandoning calls before they were able to speak to someone. This issue of access can only get progressively worse given the increasingly limited income at households' disposal to spend on calls, and the recent hikes in the cost of telecom services. Another issue, though less commonly reported, was being unable to connect to the line.
- ii) **Issues with resolution:** a key element of an effective complaints and feedback mechanism is that issues raised are responded to and addressed, and in a timely way. The AAP study highlighted that, whereas refugees were mostly satisfied with the handling of card and pin issues (which were resolved satisfactorily though with some delays), there was widespread dissatisfaction with the resolution of queries and complaints relating to targeting. This same dissatisfaction was expressed by refugees in all FGDs for this evaluation. However, the use of call centres as appeal/redress mechanisms for targeting/re-targeting conflates their intended usage as client-feedback mechanisms. In this regard, the introduction of other appeal/redress mechanisms (such as the online facility in 2021) are likely to enhance community expectations and perceptions of call centre performance.

The above chart on call centre performance triangulates well with these findings - it shows that the number of answered calls progressively diverged from those received as the volumes increased – during 2017 and 2018, approximately 90 per cent of calls were answered, but by 2021, this had dropped to 52 per cent.

The household telephone survey conducted as part of the evaluation shows a similar trend – of the 62 per cent of respondents that claimed to have contacted the call centre at some point, most of them (69 per cent) did not obtain resolution of their issues or satisfactory answers to their questions.

That said, such perspectives may well be historical in relation to the original joint call centre, rather than the separated centres since late 2021. Interviews with UNHCR and WFP staff responsible for the call centre and direct observation of both WFP and UNHCR call centres (the separate call centres are housed in the same premises, under the same management operator) suggest that performance for 2022 may significantly improve, as may the provision of an online channel for appeals/redress.

**Figure 23: Call Centre Success in Resolving Issues (HH survey, n=563)**



161 Research Report on AAP in the World Food Programme's Multi-Purpose Cash Programme, CAMEALEON, 2019

### 3.3. EVALUATION QUESTION 3: EFFICIENCY – HOW EFFICIENT WERE THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT ACTION?

*Sub-question 3.1: Have the processes (cash delivery mechanisms including issuance, validation, delivery, monitoring and beneficiary feedback) been efficient, secure, and accessible?*

#### FINDINGS

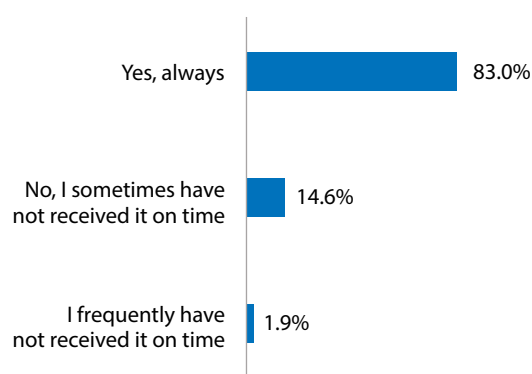
- 27. Cash payments are disbursed in a timely manner, driven by robust, automated processes, although inefficiencies contribute to delays in disbursement of payments to beneficiaries.
- 28. Joint Action processes meet the challenge of delivering assistance cost-efficiently, at scale, while still being accessible to vulnerable groups (including mainstreaming age/gender/diversity).
- 29. Refugees increasingly face difficulties and delays in redeeming their transfers at pay-out points.

#### 27. Cash payments are disbursed in a timely manner, driven by robust, automated processes, although inefficiencies contribute to delays in disbursement of payments to beneficiaries

Studies from 2019 and 2020 highlighted that the Joint Action payment processes generally function well.<sup>162</sup> These show that delivery of cash assistance to beneficiaries has been timely, providing predictable monthly transfers, attributed to the rigorous digital payment processes and systems established and refined through LOUISE over several years. These, and other, studies have also highlighted the adaptability on the part of the implementers to modify these payment processes, to ensure continued, predictable and timely payments despite the challenges in the enabling environment.<sup>163</sup>

Key informants for this evaluation including implementing partners and internal stakeholders were in agreement. Beneficiaries also reported that payments have been disbursed in a predictable and timely way. The chart (right) and those below describe a variety of perspective of household survey respondents regarding the means of transfer of the cash to households. Most people (83 per cent) found that the transfer came through on time every month, while very few (less than 2 per cent) reported frequent issues.

**Figure 24: Cash Transfer Timeliness (source: HH survey)**



*Assessing Assistance on Time Every Month (n=886)*

Some inefficiencies contribute to delays in other parts of the programme cycle, which can lead to some delays in disbursement of payments to beneficiaries. For example, e-card distributions can be delayed due to ‘no shows’ from beneficiaries, which lengthens the time between the beneficiary entering the programme and their receipt of assistance. The main reason given for non-attendance was outdated contact numbers.<sup>164</sup> Absence of updated contact information was cited by key informants in this and the 2020 Country Strategy Programme Evaluation of WFP as a challenge for implementing partners’ distributions and monitoring. Another inefficiency is with the process for card and PIN replacement – other studies<sup>165</sup> previously reported that this process could take between 2 to 3 months depending on when in the monthly payment cycle the card was lost, with some Key Informants to the evaluation reporting that this is still the case. Two interviewees queried whether these continual delays meant that it was time to remove reliance on the card for delivery of payments (noting that this is not a requirement for payments through MTOs).

162 WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021; Research Report on AAP in the World Food Programme’s Multi-Purpose Cash Programme, CAMEALEON, 2019; Briefing Paper: *How Much Does it Cost a Syrian Refugee Household to Access their Cash Assistance?*, CAMEALEON/Key Aid Consulting, 2019

163 User journeys of Syrian refugees receiving multi-purpose cash from WFP in Lebanon, CAMEALEON/Ground Truth Solutions, 2021; WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021

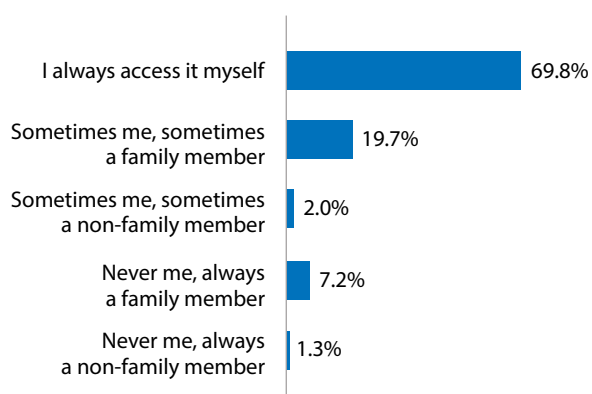
164 WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021

165 WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021; Research Report on AAP in the World Food Programme’s Multi-Purpose Cash Programme, CAMEALEON, 2019; Briefing Paper: *How Much Does it Cost a Syrian Refugee Household to Access their Cash Assistance?*, CAMEALEON/Key Aid Consulting, 2019

## 28. Joint Action processes meet the challenge of delivering assistance cost-efficiently, at scale, while still being accessible to vulnerable groups.

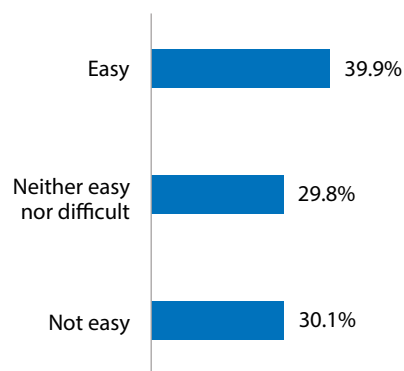
Various studies carried out in 2019 to early 2020<sup>166</sup> reported that, in addressing the challenges of delivering assistance at scale, the Joint Action has tended to follow a ‘one size fits all’ approach to delivery. In other words, the focus on meeting needs at scale, in a way that maximises efficient use of limited resources, has – understandably – limited room for diversifying or tailoring delivery processes to fit the constraints of different vulnerable groups. Some elements have been designed with access and inclusion in mind – for example, doorstep services for those with mobility challenges. These studies also recognised the difficult decisions and trade-offs inherent in the design of large-scale cash assistance, and in seeking to balance the competing demands of speed, cost efficiency, coverage, effectiveness, equity and a countability and noted that, despite this, delivery processes on the Joint Action were still (generally speaking) accessible. Stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation agreed that the common systems developed under LOUISE helped to make assistance easier to access for refugees (notwithstanding the challenges now faced with accessing ATMs – see below).

Figure 25: Who Accesses ATM (source: HH survey)



Accessing ATM Cash Transfers (n=890)

Figure 26: Ease of Accessing ATM (source: HH survey)



Ease of Accessing ATM Cash Transfers (n=888)

Although the numbers were small and should be interpreted with caution, among household survey respondents, a quarter of those that reported using a non-family member to obtain cash from the ATM on their behalf stated they paid them (100,000LBP) for the service.

Since the Joint Action began, the implementing agencies have made good efforts to improve the mainstreaming of age/gender/diversity within the Joint Action. Learning on accessibility has been collected through various channels<sup>167</sup> and in response the Joint Action processes have been adapted in several ways:

- Enhancing inclusion in targeting – addressing exclusion errors in the formula through analytical research into excluded severely vulnerable profiles and development of the GRM based on these profiles, to enhance inclusion of particular vulnerable groups (see EQ 1.3).
- Improving accessibility of the GRM – introduction of the online application for the GRM, and proactive identification of households fitting GRM vulnerability profiles to enhance inclusion of those who may not know about or may be excluded from lodging an appeal (see EQ 1.3).
- Improving accessibility of payment processes for women – to address lack confidence and difficulties faced in completing the ATM transaction process, development of new communication materials and practical training to increase awareness and knowledge on how to operate the ATM. LOUISE procedures were also modified, to encourage ATM monitors to actively support those beneficiaries that needed help during redemption. WFP KIs reported that this was improving the time needed for redemption, with beneficiaries reporting that the waiting time was reduced from 60 to 18 minutes.

166 Ibid; McMichael, G. WFP Lebanon Protection Risks & Barriers to Gender, Age & Disability Inclusion in Cash & Basic Needs Assistance & Livelihoods Programmes. Internal report for WFP, 2019.

167 Including WFP’s 2019 inclusion study, the CAMEALEON third party monitoring research, outreach volunteers, and refugee FGDs.

During the Joint Action, a refugee-centred approach has been followed when modifying delivery processes, effectively balancing donor and agency priorities with beneficiary priorities. A good example is the changes made by WFP to their validation process.<sup>168</sup> Prior to 2019 these sessions took place at UNHCR reception centres. In 2019, donors requested that validation sessions for Joint Action beneficiaries be increased from two to four times a year. In response, WFP established a new partnership with Liban Post, which has many more outlets sited closer to communities, in an effort to limit the impact on beneficiaries. This change reduced the distance travelled and the access costs (time, financial costs for transport) for beneficiaries and was well received by beneficiaries<sup>169</sup>, although concerns were expressed by stakeholders regarding the compliance-driven and “patronising” nature of the validation process.<sup>170</sup> Coupling validation with additional services such as information, education and communication, registration data updates and even COVID-19 vaccination (all undertaken by UNHCR at mass validation sites) is a means to mitigate this concern, with further opportunities to increase AAP being possible via both (UNHCR and WFP) validation approaches. Meanwhile the adaptations made to programme processes due to COVID, while seeking to minimise health risks, also aimed to minimise any impact on people in terms of opportunity or financial costs. Since 2020, UNHCR has introduced a network of kiosks, automated self-validating stations, which also serve for other purposes (updating personal information, appointments setting, etc), in an attempt to alleviate the pressure on validation sites managed by UNHCR and facilitate access to beneficiaries closer to their place of residence.<sup>171</sup>

## 29. Refugees increasingly face difficulties and delays in redeeming their transfers at pay-out points.

Various reports<sup>172</sup> have documented this issue. In some remote districts with limited or no ATMs, beneficiaries have had to travel long distances (up to 30 minutes’ drive) to reach ATMs. In areas with a high density of people per ATM, there have been long queues and wait times as well as issues with liquidity (ATMs emptying, which can require beneficiaries to return another day). This was corroborated by primary data from the household survey, which found 30 per cent of respondents considered accessing cash transfers not easy (40 per cent considered it easy, with the remaining 30 per cent stating it was neither easy nor difficult).

The Joint Action agencies did make concerted efforts to mitigate these issues, such as negotiating for installation of new ATMs and for additional replenishment of high traffic ATMs. However, based on KIIs and findings from FGDs, these issues reportedly increased significantly with the contraction of the banking sector, contributing also to the protection risks identified in EQ2.2. Refugees in informal tented settlements and more remote areas are also facing greater difficulties to travel to ATMs, given the high fuel prices and risks associated with crossing check points. All KIIs who responded were unanimous in welcoming the decision of the Joint Action agencies to look beyond BLF and diversify pay out points to address these difficulties (see more under EQ3.3). Some KIIs considered that the changes seen in the enabling environment are such that the ATM payment mechanism is no longer fit for purpose. An analysis of the main problems that people faced in accessing their cash transfer via ATMs shows that four out of five people did face one or more problems at some point, with distance to the ATM, the cost of transportation there and the queueing being the most significant, with 20-24 per cent of respondents experiencing at least one of these issues. A few respondents (n=4) also highlighted fears or experiences of theft at the ATM as a particular concern.

The final chart presents the number of problems that household members reported experiencing. While just over one-third reported none at all, between 18 and 22 per cent of others reported one, two or three of the above problems, with a minority (almost six per cent) reporting experience four or more of them.

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168 During validation, a beneficiary household member that is nominated as an official cardholder attends a validation session, presents the Common Card and has their identity confirmed. This allows UNHCR and WFP to make sure the card remains within the household to whom it belongs. Failure to undergo validation leads to the suspension of assistance. MCAP/CFF beneficiaries in FGDs still report going through UNHCR for validation rather than WFP, although UN key informants report that beneficiaries of any modality can be validated by either WFP or UNHCR at their respective sites.

169 Briefing Paper: *How Much Does it Cost a Syrian Refugee Household to Access their Cash Assistance?*, CAMEALEON/Key Aid Consulting, 2019, WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021.

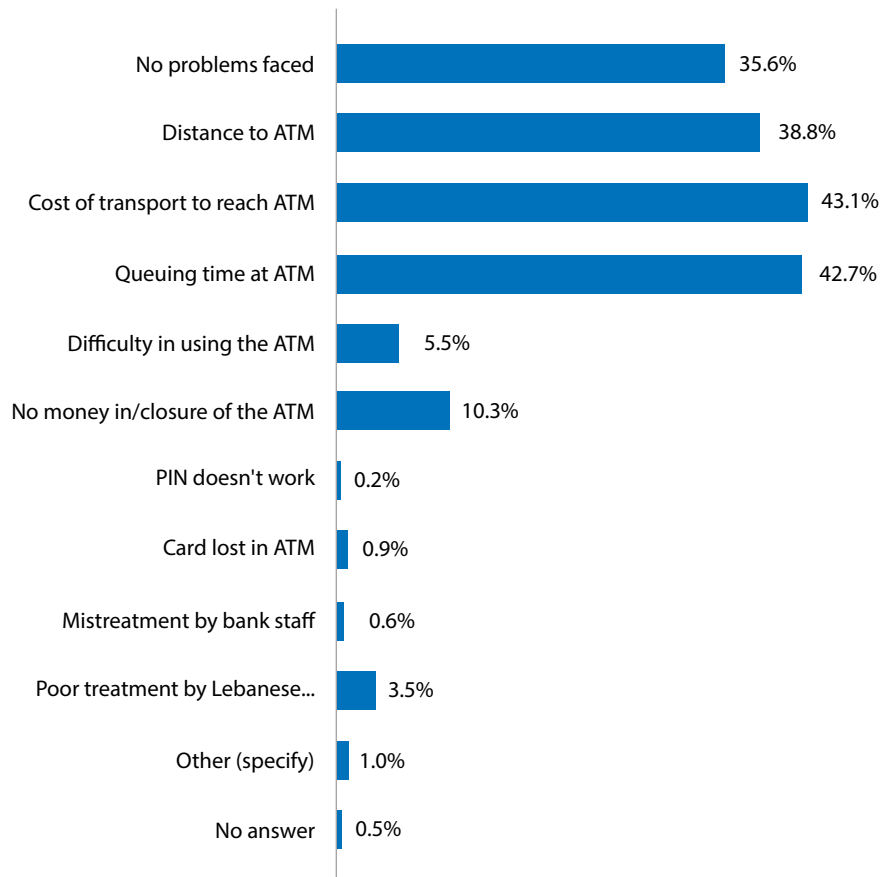
170 Donor key informant

171 UN key informant

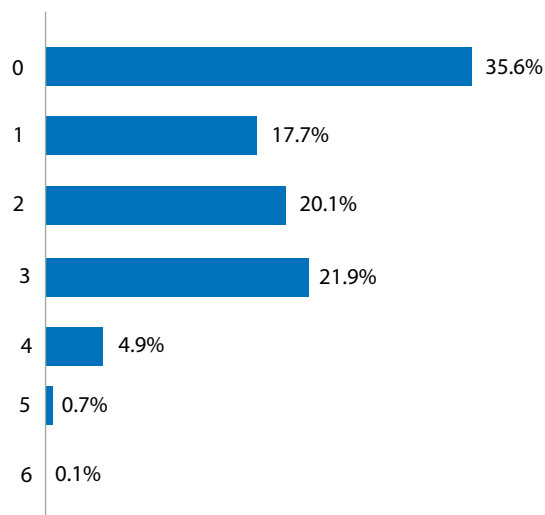
172 Research Report on AAP in the World Food Programme’s Multi-Purpose Cash Programme, CAMEALEON, 2019, Briefing Paper: *How Much Does it Cost a Syrian Refugee Household to Access their Cash Assistance?*, CAMEALEON/Key Aid Consulting, 2019



**Figure 27: Issues Faced with ATM Cash Transfers**  
(source: HH survey)



**Figure 28: Number of Problems Reported Per Respondent**  
(source: HH survey)



*Sub-question 3.2: How appropriate was the human and financial resourcing to meet the Joint Action objectives, including multi-donor financing?*

**FINDINGS**

- 30. Since 2019, the Joint Action has allocated its resources across a substantially higher population than planned – although numbers in need and price inflation are a constant challenge.**
- 31. UNHCR and WFP have implemented the Joint Action with an appropriate mix of multi-donor funding allocations, although further efficiencies may be possible.**

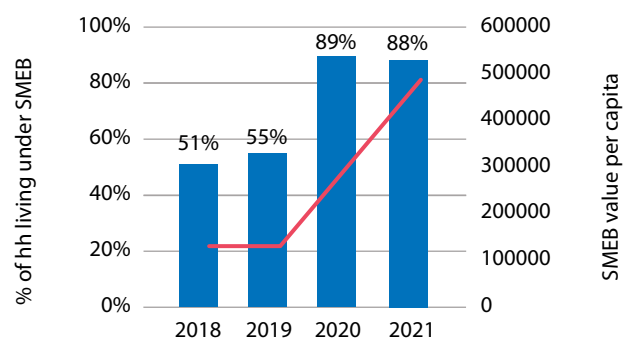
**30. Since 2019, the Joint Action has allocated its resources across a substantially higher population than planned – although numbers in need and price inflation are a constant challenge.**

Although the population of Syrians in Lebanon had been experiencing continued privations and survival challenges in the years leading to the economic crisis of 2019, the extant data from that period (primarily the VASyR reporting) indicates that support was making a measurable positive impact on basic survival indicators. In 2019, the VASyR reported that 75 per cent of Syrians had an “acceptable food consumption”, with the share of households with an adequate diet demonstrating an increase from 62 per cent in 2017, 67 per cent in 2018 to 75 per cent in 2019. Improved dietary diversity was also reported in that year.<sup>173</sup> The report also highlighted an association between MPC and/or WFP food e-cards with improved food consumption, noting that “89% of households that received multi-purpose cash assistance of US\$173 per month and 83% of households that received a WFP e-card have an acceptable food consumption. This clearly indicates the positive impact of WFP assistance on Syrian refugee households’ food consumption levels.”<sup>174</sup>

Nonetheless, the same report documented a variety of negative trends faced by Syrians in 2019 – decreased per capita expenditure, indicative of “...a decline in Syrian refugees’ access to resources”<sup>175</sup>, increasing debt, more limited access to healthcare and no improvements in shelter. While the magnitude of the economic crisis facing Lebanon at that time was not apparent, the report noted “anxieties surrounding economic austerity, overstretched resources and high unemployment” and the disproportionate impact of this on Syrians.<sup>176</sup>

The successive crises that have impacted Lebanon since 2019 have led to a dramatic increase in the numbers of people in need, as measured by the proxy of choice for the basic assistance sector – the SMEB. The chart, right, highlights how the proportion of households living under the SMEB, as documented in successive VASyR reports, has increased dramatically between 2018 and 2021 – from 51 per cent in 2018 to 88 per cent in 2021. Simultaneously, inflation has, equally dramatically, increased the LBP cost of the SMEB over the same timeframe.

**Figure 29: Proportion of Syrian Households living below SMEB, 2018–2021**



*Household Income (per capita) <SMEB 2018–2021*

This relative cost (although relatively static in US\$ – the increase is largely due to the inflation of the LBP) is important as increases in general multi-purpose cash assistance transfer values only took place in mid 2020 and late 2021, and no increases were adequate to match the rate of inflation or significantly impact the proportion of people living under the SMEB.

The chart below tracks the Joint Action transfer value per household vs. the SMEB (per household) over the 2020–2021 period. This shows the increasing divergence between the transfer value and SMEB over a one-year period to the conclusion of the first phase of the Joint Action.

173 Vulnerability Analysis of Syrian Refugees, 2019, page 83

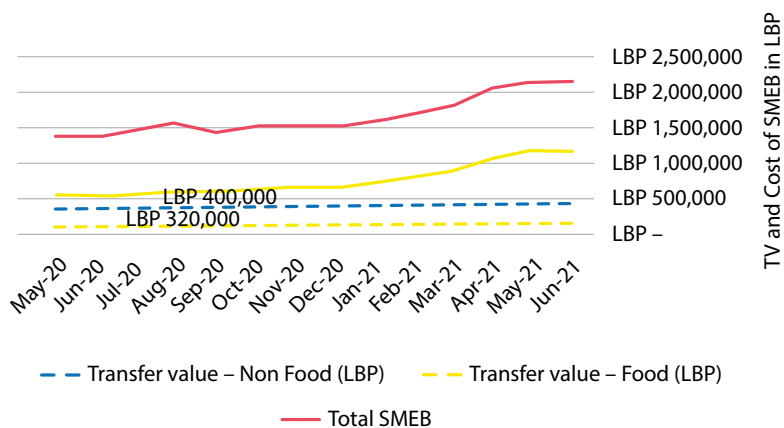
174 Ibid, page 84

175 Ibid, page 93

176 Ibid, page 11

As discussed in detail in Section 1 of this report and under Sub-question 2.1, in response to the deterioration in living conditions and increase in Syrians falling under the SMEB, and thus in need for external assistance, the initial programme target of 56,000 households (336,000 individuals) was expanded to the point where the Joint Action was reaching 99,643 households (almost 625,000 individuals) by completion of the evaluated phase of the programme in 2021.

Figure 30: Transfer Value vs SMEB 2020–2021



The decreasing value of the Lebanese Pound and the fact that the transfer value was denominated in LBP facilitated that substantially greater reach of the programming to more of the population.

Over the course of the 2019-2021 period of the Joint Action under evaluation, the overall programme amount expended was US\$651,736,040 – representing slightly more than US\$1,000 per beneficiary. Although this is a simplistic representation of the data (both the programme budget and the number of people reached changed from year to year), for the purposes of this evaluation it is a reasonable approximation. Thus, over the three years of the Joint Action, there is a good case to make that value for money was achieved.

Evidence from stakeholders indicates that the Joint Action strategy of reaching more people with a relatively decreasing amount of money (as inflation outpaced the transfer value) was, overall, appropriate to both the need to reach more needy households and also to the political challenges inherent in increasing the transfer value (discussed under targeting above).

*The strategy of reaching more with less is something that we [UNHCR/WFP] are not overly happy about, but it's a reflection of the reality. 91 per cent of the population fall within the highly-vulnerable bracket – it's the moral choice.*

– UN key informant

Perspectives from many different stakeholders representing different sectors within Lebanon solicited for this evaluation on whether the transfer value should remain the same, whether it should increase, be provided in LBP or provided in US dollars are highly divergent. There is little consensus across stakeholders from different organisations, nor sometimes between individuals from a given organisation. What is clear, as discussed under evaluation question 2, is that the cash transfers are providing a vital lifeline to Syrians, but that lifeline is becoming increasingly stretched, to the point that there is little or no capacity to diminish values further. Alternative strategies are needed to mitigate reductions in donor funding likely in 2022/2023 and beyond, take advantage of the rollout of national social safety net programming and alleviate the rise in negative coping strategies amongst Syrians as inflation continues to erode their resources.

**31. UNHCR and WFP have implemented the Joint Action with an appropriate mix of multi-donor funding allocations, although further efficiencies may be possible.**

The Joint Action was implemented via a basket of funding from a variety of donors to UNHCR and WFP, listed in the table, right, that provided earmarked as well as flexible funding.<sup>177</sup> The table comprises donors who in 2019-2021 provided funding earmarked to the UNHCR or WFP cash programmes, as well as donors who provided flexible funding at country or regional level.

177 UN, donor key informants

Analysis of the allocation of the funding across the different operational, overhead and transfer costs, presented in the charts below, indicates that approximately 88 per cent of all programme funding was disbursed as cash transfers to Syrian households, with the remaining 12 per cent of the programme funding being used for operational costs of managing the programme.<sup>178</sup>

Of this 12 per cent, approximately half was used to manage the programme (HR costs, partner transfers, operational management, equipment, bank fees etc.), and the remaining 50 per cent was organisational overhead of UNHCR and WFP (see chart, right).

While there are little in the way of established benchmarks in order to make like-for-like comparisons of overhead rates, it is unlikely that a 12 per cent overhead rate would be considered excessive in the context of humanitarian programming.

Further, from this approximately US\$6m of programme funding was allocated to activities undertaken via implementing partners (field monitoring, desk formula analysis work, card distributions/validation, needs assessment research and partner subgrants). This comprises 8 per cent of total operational costs of the Joint Action.

This triangulates with the findings under Sub-question 4.3 regarding the limited engagement of UNHCR/WFP with national partners and the evidence of capacity and willingness of such partners to do more.

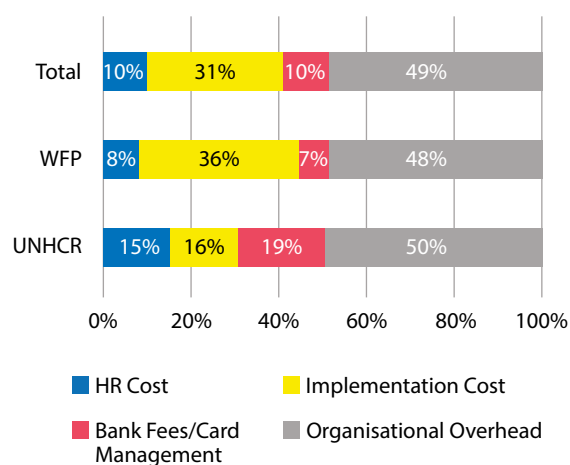
Of note is the level of expenditure on bank fees/ card management (\$7.8m over the course of the Joint Action). Given the decreasing utility of the mainstream banking sector in Lebanon (discussed above), and the plans to initiate cash transfers via MTOs (albeit for the main purpose of enhancing access to beneficiaries to cash out points), there is a case to be made for generating savings on these banking fees (and ATM monitoring costs) in the coming phase by greatly restricting or even eliminating the service through mainstream ATMs. There are examples of this being undertaken in Lebanon, specifically by UNICEF through its (albeit smaller) cash transfer initiatives.<sup>179</sup> The 2022 evaluation of Cash Assistance noted that use of ATMs for LBP transfers incurred a “medium to high” operational cost, whereas use of MTOs was “low to medium”.<sup>180</sup> This evaluation also provides a comparison of cash transfer modalities in use in Lebanon as of 2022 which includes cost elements.<sup>181</sup>

Finally, the impact of the USD to LBP exchange rate has likely had an impact on the total resources available to the programme. Whereas at the time of evaluation, UNHCR and WFP had a negotiated preferential exchange rate very close to the unofficial market rate (since March 2020), prior to this, the LOUISE agencies operated the official exchange rate which had been pegged to the US dollar at LBP1,507 since approximately the year 2000.<sup>182</sup>

**Table 8: Joint Action Donors**

UNHCR	WFP
Australia	
Belgium	
Canada	
ECHO	
France	EUTF Madad
Germany	
Italy	Ireland
Korea	
Netherlands	
Norway	
Private	
Saudi Arabia	
Spain	UK
Switzerland	
USA (BPRM)	

**Figure 31: Breakdown of Joint Action Operational Costs**



178 All financial data from UNHCR financial records provided to the evaluation team

179 UN key informants

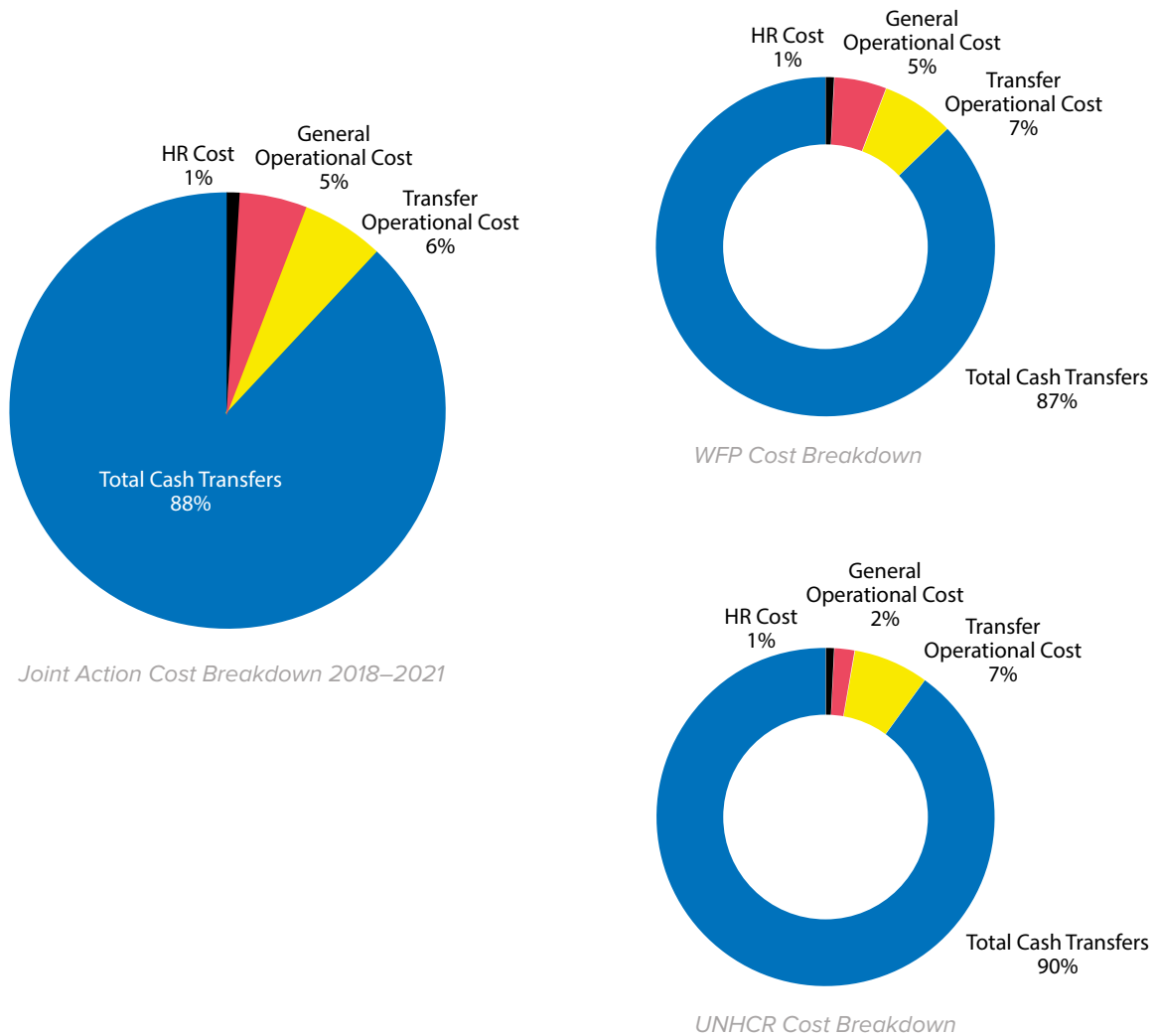
180 Strategic Taskforce on Cash Assistance, 2022, Independent Evaluation: Phase I Dollarisation Process of Direct Cash Assistance to Lebanon

181 Ibid, Table 7, pg. 37

182 See <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/PA.NUS.FCRF?locations=LB>

The economic crisis in Lebanon became most apparent with the rise in inflation from mid 2019, with the “unofficial” rate reaching approximately 2,500 LBP to 1 US\$ by mid-March 2020.<sup>183</sup> While the negotiation of the improved exchange rates by UNHCR and WFP is laudable, the lag (of approximately six months) in moving from the official exchange rate to the preferential rate will undoubtedly have led to losses on exchanges from USD to LBP.

**Figure 32: Joint Action Financial Breakdown**



183 Although ‘official’ data on an ‘unofficial’ exchange rate is self-evidently challenging to obtain, a useful tracker of current and historical market rates widely used in Lebanon is obtainable at <https://lirarate.org/>

*Sub-question 3.3: Has the Joint Action succeeded in adapting to the changing context in a timely manner? What were the enabling factors and the barriers?*

**FINDINGS**

- 32. The Joint Action has succeeded in adapting to changes in the operating environment and context in Lebanon to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of the cash transfer programming.**
- 33. Key factors affecting timeliness of these changes are preparedness, legal/regulatory challenges, risk tolerance, coordination challenges and organisational capacities.**

**32. The Joint Action has succeeded in adapting to changes in the operating environment and context in Lebanon to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of the cash transfer programming.**

There is substantial evidence that a variety of important changes have been made to the Joint Action implementation during the evaluation period. These changes are documented throughout this evaluation report, and summarised here:

- Maintaining relevance in the face of COVID and the triple crisis (Sub-question 1.1).
- Establishment and ongoing revision of outcome/output measurement mechanisms and data in line with the programme objectives and in response to emerging issues (such as increased evictions of Syrians) (Sub-question 2.1).
- Use of a variety of process, output and outcome monitoring and assessments as well as robust partner engagement to maintain up-to-date context information (Sub-question 2.1).
- Mitigation of the severity of the triple crises on a substantially larger population than planned through increasing the reach of the Joint Action (Sub-question 2.1).
- Increasing safety and security of distributions via ATM monitoring (Sub-question 2.3).
- Redesigning the call centre approach to address poor performance issues (Sub-question 2.4).
- Increasing accessibility of cash transfers through use of different distribution times and modalities (e.g. the MTO pilot in 2022) (Sub-questions 3.1, 3.2).

These have been important to adapt the Joint Action to the changing context as well as to improve the programme based on evidence and learning.

While modifications to existing payment processes were completed in a timely manner, other changes to programme processes have taken longer to implement. A previous evaluation<sup>184</sup> (substantiated by key informants) highlighted that the implementing agencies in collaboration with BLF responded decisively and quickly to implement a series of measures that helped to maintain the relevance of cash assistance in the face of the triple crisis in 2019-20. These included staggering the uploading of e-cards, deploying monitors to hotspot ATMs, integrating additional ATMs, enabling cash beneficiaries to redeem transfers in contracted shops, and expanding the number of contracted shops. In contrast, there have been delays in making other critical programme changes:

- External (and some internal) key informants were unanimous in the opinion that changes to the exchange rate, and diversification of payment mechanisms beyond BLF ATMs (see Sub-questions 1.1 and 3.2 for details), have not been timely – several stakeholders were of the opinion that these changes should have been made earlier.
- In the case of training and sensitisation to overcome barriers to the ATM redemption process, this was put into place within the last 12 months (i.e. 2021–2022) in response to findings raised in CAMEALEON's 2021 study on confidence and usage of ATMs.<sup>185</sup> However other key informants questioned why this had taken so long, given that these issues were also raised in other (earlier) CAMEALEON and internal studies.<sup>186</sup>
- Similarly, other stakeholders noted a range of recommended changes that have come out of published research which had been officially accepted but not yet implemented.<sup>187</sup>

184 WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021

185 UN key informants

186 This includes the AAP study, and the 2019 WFP inclusion study

187 For example, the CAMEALEON research papers have submitted 49 recommendations for actions to WFP of which 54% were fully accepted and 21% partially accepted but most of these had yet to be acted on. (based on the CAMEALEON Evaluation and key informants).

### 33. Key factors affecting timeliness of these changes are preparedness, legal/regulatory challenges, risk tolerance, coordination challenges and organisational capacities.

The rapid modifications to the existing payment processes were considered by key internal stakeholders to have been enabled by several factors including: UNHCR/WFP's strong relationships with BLF; the regular monitoring activities carried out under the Joint Action which provided real time data on the evolving context; and the fact that, even though these changes were modifications of joint (LOUISE) systems, these were all the responsibility of and managed by a single agency (WFP). Meanwhile where changes took longer to implement, various constraining factors applied:

- **Limited preparedness and macroeconomic capacity/expertise:** several key informants noted that the issues with the banking sector, while happening relatively rapidly in 2020, had been building since 2016 and that by 2019 there were signs that a major crisis was imminent. They felt that the Joint Action agencies should have been more aware of this and taken steps to prepare for the collapse of the currency and to diversify from BLF. One stakeholder claimed that recommendations for changes to the exchange rate and to expand the number of partner financial service providers were made as early as 2019.
- **Legal and regulatory barriers (internal and external):** in the case of the exchange rate negotiations, internal interviewees explained that this needed to be in line with the rules and institutions governing the country and that such negotiations, which involve working around official government policy on exchange rates, necessarily took time. Regarding the diversification of financial services partners, several external and internal interviewees noted that while the decision to work with MTOs was taken in 2021 the tendering and contractual negotiation processes have been slow to conclude.
- **Focus on risk mitigation (linked to risk appetite of the UN and donors):** in the case of the diversification of financial service providers, UNHCR/WFP concerns about effectively managing risk were considered by stakeholders to have contributed to delays in several ways: Firstly, there was a perceived initial reluctance within WFP to move away from an established "known-quantity" partnership and processes. Secondly, concerns about risk mitigation were perceived to have subsequently influenced the timeliness of the eventual move to include MTOs – with key informants highlighting an exhaustive and time-consuming assessment of options, and a subsequent insistence to work with MTOs through BLF and to maintain the Common Card in MTO transactions.<sup>188</sup> Thirdly, evaluation interviewees also criticised the decision to first pilot with a small number of high-capacity outlets, as well as the (continued) delays to the re-contracting of BLF due to insistence on inclusion of a new pre-financing clause (due to concerns of bank sector collapse). These are all valid concerns - but some interviewees felt that these risks should have been weighed against the risks, to refugees, of not acting, which has contributed to issues of access and protection risks for beneficiaries.
- **Coordination issues:** while there are clear benefits to UNHCR and WFP from working jointly (see evaluation question 4), a challenge to be negotiated is the requirement to reach collective decisions and involve multiple stakeholders in implementing changes. Several key informants highlighted this challenge with respect to the joint working arrangements between UNHCR and WFP. An example of the additional time that coordination requires is the implementation of recommendations set out in the CAMEALEON research cited above. While CAMEALEON's third party monitoring arrangement is with the WFP MPC (not the Joint Action, or LOUISE as a whole), many of the recommendations relate to actions and decisions that either need joint agreement or are the responsibility of only one of the parties. This challenge is noted in the evaluation of CAMEALEON and has also been raised by WFP to the MPCA donor steering committee.
- **Capacities:** the gender-responsive training for cash redemption was only started in late 2021, even though other studies had noted this issue as early as 2018. While this was not explored in depth in the evaluation research, the evidence from interviews suggests that capacity issues around gender mainstreaming were a significant factor. For example, WFP was actively investing in strengthening its internal gender and inclusion capacities since 2019, which may have needed to come first, before actions could be taken at a programme level. Meanwhile the triple crisis has led to a refocus on other urgent issues, meaning other recommended changes could not be prioritised.

<sup>188</sup> MTOs could complete transactions without the common card. Internal interviewees noted that the continued use of the common card was necessary to maintain financial controls, provide a common mechanism through which refugees could access cash across programmes, and to avoid exclusion caused by MTO's "know-your-customer" requirements.

### 3.4. EVALUATION QUESTION 4: COHERENCE/CONNECTEDNESS – HOW EFFECTIVE WAS THE COORDINATION BETWEEN WFP AND UNHCR, AND WITH OTHER ACTORS, IN IMPLEMENTING THE JOINT ACTION?

*Sub-question 4.1: How effective was the coordination between WFP and UNHCR in implementing the Joint Action and its adaptations, through the LOUISE mechanism, and coordination with donors and other stakeholders (such as CAMEALEON, Basic Assistance and Food Security Sectors, academia, etc.)? What should be maintained? What needs to be improved?*

#### FINDINGS

34. The high-level/global MoUs/agreements that govern joint programming and coordination between UNHCR and WFP constitute a solid basis for programming.
35. Initial coordination between WFP and UNHCR faced challenges, but this has greatly improved over the course of the programme.
36. External coordination is strong, and welcomed, despite a substantial number of actors delivering assistance in Lebanon.

#### 34. The high-level/global MoUs/agreements that govern joint programming and coordination between UNHCR and WFP constitute a solid basis for programming.

UNHCR and WFP have a history of coordination and cooperation at a global scale dating back several decades. A 1985 MoU between UNHCR and WFP formalised a close partnership in the service of refugees. A revised MoU was initiated in 1994, further revised in 1997 and again in 2002, reflecting both organisation's experience in implementing the provisions of the previous MoU iterations.<sup>189</sup> The MoU was again updated in 2011, and a series of addenda were signed over the succeeding decade:

1. **2011 Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and WFP on joint programming.**
2. **2017 UNHCR WFP Global MoU Addendum on Cash Assistance to Refugees.**
3. **2018 Addendum on Data Sharing to the 2011 MoU.**
4. **2020 UNHCR WFP UNICEF Trilateral Data-Sharing Agreement for Cash Assistance.**

The 2018 addendum focuses on the collaborative approach to data, in particular with respect to supporting country offices. The addendum contains clear processes for sharing of data and further commits each agency to endeavouring to ensure that no reason to reject a request for the sharing of Non-Personal Data or information arises. For a more detailed itemisation of the provisions under each of the above instruments, see Appendix 14.

The scope of the memorandums of understanding and the agreements, and particularly noting the longevity of the partnership between UNHCR and WFP, mean that there is a solid policy and strategic basis for cooperation and coordination between the two organisations in implementation of the Joint Action. In particular, the joint work principles and the operational approaches set out in the 2017 addendum to the MoU cover the key dynamics of operation of the cash programming.

These formal agreements of cooperation have been cited by a variety of internal WFP/UNHCR stakeholders interviewed as governing the relationship between the two country offices' programming. The data-sharing amendment to the global MoU was noted in particular as relevant, given the data-intensive nature of the Joint Action.<sup>190</sup>

#### 35. Initial coordination between WFP and UNHCR faced challenges, but this has greatly improved over the course of the programme.

One of the limitations of this evaluation is that the ongoing (and in no way irregular) turnover of staff, particularly international staff at management levels in WFP and UNHCR, leads to a loss of institutional memory for the first 1-2 years of the Joint Action. However, the available evidence from a variety of key informants to the evaluation indicates that the beginning of the Joint Action was a time of some friction related to the different mandates and approaches of both organisations, particularly with respect to the different management structures and systems in how they implement programming.

<sup>189</sup> MoU between UNHCR and WFP, 2002, preamble.

<sup>190</sup> UN key informants.



*For UNHCR continuity and predictability is very important, we try to really continue programmes. WFP is a lot more project-based.*

*– UN key informant*

Stakeholders note that this manifested itself in some duplication of efforts – implementing partners noted instances of double-messaging from both partners in relation to the same issues. This was exacerbated around the time of particular crises, such as the Beirut Blast of 2020, which stakeholders noted required considerable time to (1-2 months) for smooth coordination processes to be put in place – a considerable amount of time in relation to humanitarian response work, where speed of action is a key determinant of positive outcomes.

Despite the early challenges, the evidence from stakeholders indicates that there has been a continuum of improvement over the course of the 2019-2021 (and more recent) period, with both internal and external interviewees noting a considerable effort to improve coordination in terms of information sharing and programme implementation processes. Examples of some good coordination efforts noted by interviewees were:

- Arrangement of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for communication and implementation.
- Regular monthly or weekly meetings to ensure that all programme activities are aligned.
- Joint monitoring missions to ensure complementarity on monitoring.
- Division of workloads on site monitoring, validation, follow up activities.
- Use of each other's sites for validation etc. when needed/ available.
- Use of different formal and informal communication channels (email, WhatsApp text groups), to ensure complementarity of work and facilitate joint missions etc.
- Complementary support on the newly-separated call centre (although the issues discussed above related to the success of the joint call centre are a counterpoint to this) guided by the principle that a caller for one organisation isn't referred to the other call centre – they solve each others problems if possible.

Good coordination was particularly noted by internal stakeholders at field level where good interpersonal relationships between field staff facilitate good communications. In some field locations (e.g. North – Tripoli) UNHCR and WFP shared a physical premises until 2021/2022, further enhancing practical coordination.

In addition to the practical aspects of coordination, there is evidence that coordination between UNHCR and WFP at a more strategic and higher level has led to some positive outcomes and results that would not have been achieved separately. Specific examples of the capacity of the partners to create synergies provided by a variety of internal and external stakeholders to the evaluation were:

- Advocacy with one voice to government through emphasising both organisations' complementary mandates (WFP food, UNHCR protection). This was of particular significance with respect to the increasing of transfer values in 2021 – UNHCR or WFP would not have been able to undertake this unilaterally without much greater repercussions.<sup>191</sup>
- Creation of the LOUISE platform itself.
- Ensuring continuity of the cash transfer processes (card issuance, ATM functioning) with the financial service provider (BLF).
- Joint work on proposal modifications and reporting to donors, minimising work that otherwise would be required to do separately.
- Good sharing of learning and strategic planning processes with respect to individual organisational expertise: WFP on technical and operational issues and expertise on food, UNHCR on protection issues (though also with good expertise on cash programming).
- Creating of systematic analysis and needs assessment tools, standards and protocols, e.g. setting up the SMEB/EB, joint vulnerability assessments, joint targeting.
- Greater negotiating power (via the LOUISE partnership) with external actors and providers, e.g., increasing the numbers of ATMs, finding solutions for ATM replenishment, negotiating the preferential rate.
- Leveraging shared sites for other programmes.<sup>192</sup>

191 UN, donor key informants

192 UN key informants

*To make this programme keep working it is a joint effort between BLF and the UN agencies. We are in close communication which is helping us enormously and keeping everything smooth and efficient.*

– Financial Service Provider Key Informant

Despite the broad consensus of the utility of the basic assistance/cash coordination platforms in Lebanon, many stakeholders feel that coordination has some way to go to be optimised to the level aspired to via the global MoU cited above. Evidence from internal and external stakeholders is that work is still siloed, with, for example, duplicative approaches to data collection (e.g., coping strategies outcome monitoring being conducted separately by both organisations). A 2020 review of the LOUISE mechanism on behalf of all member agencies noted disparate process and outcome monitoring processes and a lack of joint analysis of process monitoring indicators by BAWG members.<sup>193</sup> The review recommended exploring the role of a third party for joint process monitoring across LOUISE and seeking synergies around impact monitoring.<sup>194</sup> Concerns were also raised on timely communications related to outcomes of the GRM process and inclusion of additional recipients of assistance via the LOUISE mechanism. Duplication in monitoring, in particular, is potentially inefficient and precludes a more systematic and deeper approach to gathering data related to other important socio-economic or protection-related outcomes amongst the Syrian population, such as actively updating household information (via visits) in a more timely manner.<sup>195</sup>

Further, it is clear from evidence gathered via interviews with internal key informants and a review of secondary data internal to both organisations that data sharing between both organisation has proven an ongoing and to-date not fully resolved challenge. Given its strong protection mandate and its role as custodian of very specific data on persons of concern that is maintained within its registration databases, UNHCR has very specific rules around data protection based in a policy rooted in international data protection principles. These policies are such that UNHCR will not provide unrestricted data access to WFP. Requests for data must be specific to the exact data required and accompanied by robust justifications for the requirement and intended use of this data.

Evidence from stakeholders from both organisations is that an issue related to non/incomplete fulfilment of data-sharing requests by WFP to UNHCR has been raised numerous times by WFP since before the Joint Action was initiated. The rationale for a broad-based access to data is/was that sharing of (non-personal data) would allow WFP to ensure a fully informed, accurate and accountable targeting system, ensuring the inclusion of only the most vulnerable categories in their assistance framework. However, data sharing requests by WFP over the course of the Joint Action have raised concerns with UNHCR in relation to the both the legitimate basis and proportionality of the need for the data being requested and the method of data sharing. The concern on the part of UNHCR is that the requests do not conform to the principles set out in the 2018 Data Sharing Addendum.<sup>196</sup>

UNHCR deemed that various requests were not in line with the Addendum principle of necessity/proportionality, nor that of security, insofar as the data requested, although with personally identifying elements removed, could lead to an unacceptable risk of re-identification of individuals.<sup>197</sup>

As noted in Appendix 14, the 2018 Data-Sharing Addendum to the Global MoU provides for comprehensive sharing of data between the two organisations (noting that “Each Agency will endeavour to ensure that no reason to reject a request for the sharing of Non-Personal Data or information arises.”<sup>198</sup>) with grounds for refusal to share limited to:

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193 Key Aid Consulting/UNICEF, 2020, LOUISE Learning Review notes that the indicators were agreed through the BAWG for PDM, which include satisfaction with the distribution process, use of the grant, etc. Each LOUISE member agency has reportedly integrated these into its own monitoring forms but does not pool data between members for analysis.

194 Key Aid Consulting/UNICEF, 2020, LOUISE Learning Review, Section IV.4.3

195 Noted as not having been undertaken in a decade by one key informant.

196 Specifically those itemised in Section 5.1.2: Principles of Personal Data Protection. This is reiterated in Section 5.2.1, which notes “For the avoidance of doubt, a Country Office is permitted to request Personal Data elements identified in Annex 1 only where considered necessary and proportionate to the purpose specified.”

197 UN key informants

198 2018 Addendum on Data Sharing to the January 2011 MoU Between UNHCR and WFP, Section 4.1.3

- breaches of contract with a third party;
- not having access to the data;
- if such sharing is likely to pose risks to Persons of Concern, humanitarian actors or other stakeholders.<sup>199</sup>

However, it is clear from the primary and secondary evidence that a rigorous application of the (more specific) principles articulated later in the same agreement has led to multiple rejections of data-sharing requests. This has led to ongoing friction between the two partners before, during and beyond the entire period under evaluation. Applying the principles of the agreement to, on the one hand expect blanket access to potentially sensitive data, and, on the other refuse requests for data, calls into question the utility or interpretation of the agreement in the Lebanon context as currently formulated.

Nonetheless, evidence from internal interviewees from UNHCR and WFP suggests that, over time, accommodations have been found with respect to ensuring data-sharing requests are more in line with what WFP deems is necessary and is deemed to be in conformance with global data sharing principles and agreements by UNHCR. More structured approaches to data-sharing – such as procedures in harmony with specific referral protocols for cases in need of protection services picked up via WFP’s call centre – can meet the needs of both partners.

Platforms for online/real-time data sharing do exist – specifically the Refugee Assistance Information System (RAIS) and the similar Project X, but these tools are aimed at ensuring coordination between different actors, avoidance of duplication, referrals/communication and reporting. Access to more fundamental demographic and socio-economic population data to optimise targeting or inclusion/ exclusion is not part of these systems. Further, highly-specific data requests are time-consuming to prepare and must be reformulated if the underlying needs change, and are thus inefficient.

Finally, very recent (mid-2022) developments with respect to data-sharing efforts appear to be leading to further coordination on data, notably a WFP-led management solution for monitoring data via the Automated Data and Analysis Reporting System (ADAR), which is likely to come on line in late 2022.<sup>200</sup>

### **36. Coordination with respect to Working Groups and interagency forums was universally reported to be strong, and welcomed, though the substantial number of actors delivering assistance in Lebanon presents a challenge to true consultation/participation.**

Notwithstanding some specific challenges noted below, the general consensus of evidence from internal and external stakeholders on coordination with external bodies was positive. There are several coordination bodies with which the evaluation team consulted:

- Basic Assistance Sector Working Group (BAWG)<sup>201</sup>
- Strategic Cash Task Force
- Cash Working Group
- Protection Sector
- Food Security Sector

Evaluation feedback from participants on each of these groups was that UNHCR and WFP coordinate well with other cash actors via these mechanisms, particularly around the avoidance of duplication, general information-sharing (e.g. via the 4Ws – who does what, where and when), and a limited amount of strategizing on complementary programming.<sup>202</sup>

The Inter-Agency Basic Assistance Sector (which integrates the BAWG), in particular, is co-led by UNHCR and the Government, and provides a considerable amount of information on different basic assistance initiatives under the LCRP – which includes Joint Action resources (although not specifically differentiated/ disaggregated from other support to the three UNHCR/WFP cash transfer modalities).

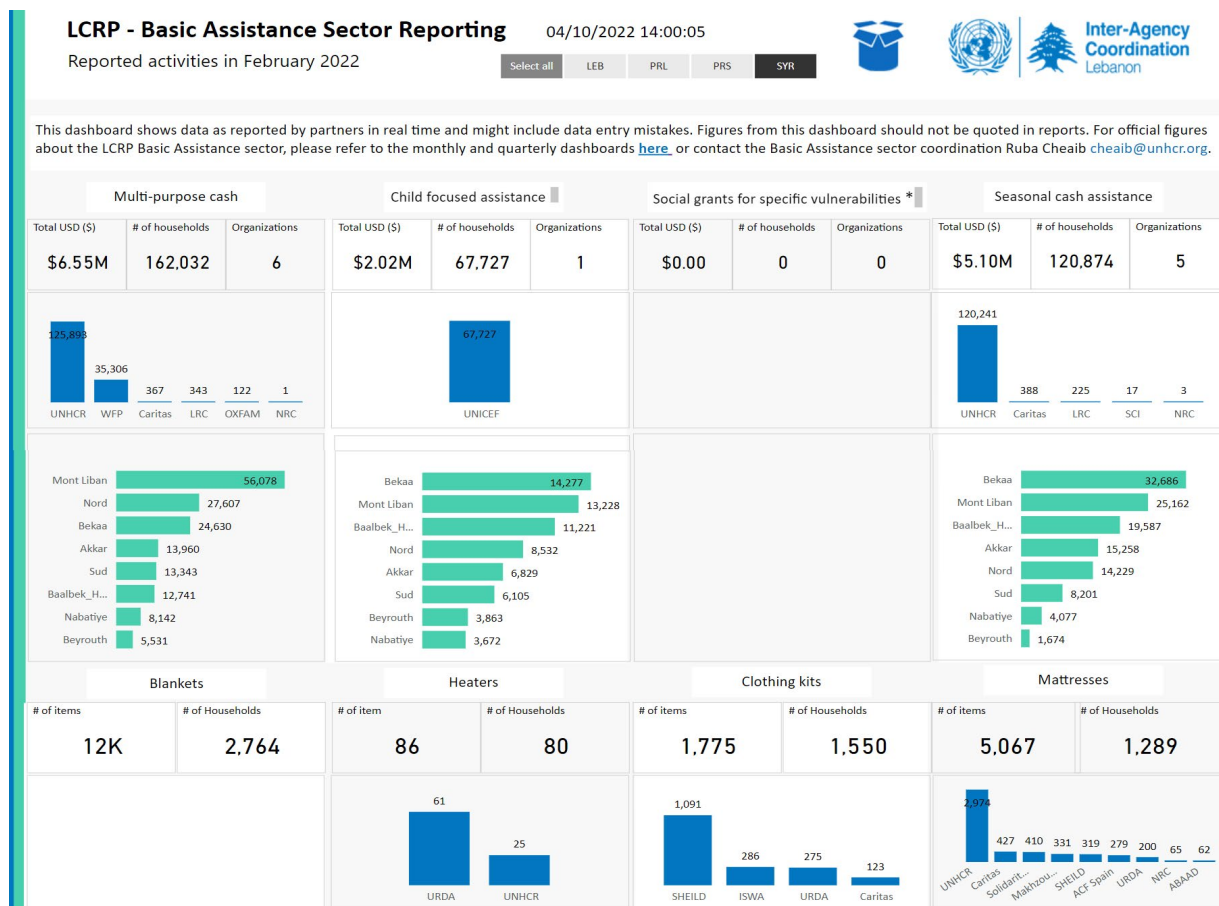
199 Ibid

200 UN key informant

201 The Working Group and Core Group are the mechanisms for coordination within the Sector

202 NGO key informant

Figure 33: Basic Assistance Reporting – Online Dashboard



The BA Sector is responsible for coordinating this information and also for disseminating a wide variety of information and practice related to basic assistance provision in Lebanon, as well as playing a key role in the preparation of key assessments such as the VASyR. It therefore represents one of the main vehicles for coordination within Lebanon’s crisis response ecosystem.

Given the wide-ranging nature of the sector and its membership, some stakeholders criticised the wide reach of the national-level groups in particular, which, while important from an information-sharing perspective, can hinder effective decision-making.<sup>203</sup> Some (NGO) stakeholders felt that regional level coordination was more effective, although this may reflect the more field-focused resources and priorities of such actors.

In particular, stakeholders emphasised the need to ensure efficient and effective conversations between the different technical groups and noted a need to link the groups to the wider strategic environment, particularly with respect to support to both Lebanese and refugees.<sup>204</sup> This is discussed further below under Sub-Question 4.3 below.

203 NGO, UN key informants

204 UN key informant

*Sub-question 4.2: How well has the Joint Action interacted with other programmes/activities of the two organisations (e.g., PCAP, ECA, Food e-card, WINCAP etc.)?*

**FINDINGS**

- 37. There is a continuum of assistance between the Joint Action and other initiatives, particularly where individual cases of exclusion or vulnerability are identified.**
- 38. Harmonisation of targeting approaches and efforts to align/layer other initiatives with the Joint Action have been partially successful.**

**37. There is a continuum of assistance between the Joint Action and other initiatives, particularly where individual cases of exclusion or vulnerability are identified.**

UNHCR and WFP, in the proposal for the Joint Action submitted in 2018, noted an explicit intention for creating synergies with different interventions in Joint Action programme strategies. Specific programmes/activities noted within the proposal are:

- E-vouchers/Food e-card (WFP)
- Cash-for food (WFP)
- Unrestricted Multi-Purpose Cash (WFP)
- Seasonal cash assistance (UNHCR)
- Protection cash assistance (UNHCR)

In practical terms, the Joint Action proposal confines the specifics of any synergies that could be created between these initiatives to the use of the LOUISE platform for cash distribution, which “necessitates close collaboration with all LOUISE agencies using the card so as to minimise duplication and maximise the impact of assistance”.<sup>205</sup>

The following table describes the different initiatives that are intended to be complementary to the Joint Action:

**Table 9: Cash/resource transfer modalities complementary to the Joint Action**

Title	Implementer	# of beneficiary HH per annum 2018–2021
Protection Cash Assistance Programme (PCAP)	UNHCR	3,128 (2018) – 6,325 (2021)
Emergency Cash Assistance (ECA)	UNHCR	4,077 (2019) – 6,988 (2021)
Cash for Rent (CfR)	UNHCR	1,571 (2021 only)
Winter Cash Assistance Programme (WinCAP)	UNHCR	206,882 (2018) – 281,884 (2021)
Temporary Multipurpose Cash Assistance Programme	UNHCR	23,655 May-Oct 2020
Food e-cards	WFP	55,171 ('18) – 35,670 ('21)
MCAP only <sup>206</sup>	UNHCR	14,241 ('18) – 69,338 ('21)
MCAP/Food e-card	UNHCR/WFP	30,360 ('18) – 160,106 ('21)

Over the course of the Joint Action, successive progress reports note synergies or complementary activities between the Joint Action modalities and these other modalities. Specific examples of processes noted by WFP and UNHCR in their annual reporting are:

- The use of the LOUISE platform for various cash regular or ad-hoc/seasonal cash distributions.
- The use of the joint call centre to provide support to Syrians relating to the range of assistance modalities and/or directing callers to the most appropriate modality (via referral procedures).

<sup>205</sup> Joint Action Proposal (eSINGLE FORM FOR HUMANITARIAN AID ACTIONS 2018/00890/RQ/01/01), Annex 1

<sup>206</sup> Outside the Joint Action modality, UNHCR MCAP is also provided as a standalone transfer without a corresponding food top up contribution (in contrast to the Joint Action MCAP that is associated with CFF).

Less clearly articulated, but evident throughout the approach to the cash programming, is the synergistic effect of the targeting/retargeting processes – including the GRM and SIHV – in ensuring that the maximum number of people in need of assistance are reached with some form of assistance that is commensurate with their specific needs. Those households that do not qualify for the relevant Joint Action modality/ies of assistance but that have specific needs can be eligible, via the same targeting and delivery mechanisms, for other forms of assistance. While the efficiency and appropriateness of moving beneficiaries between different modalities has been discussed under evaluation questions 1 and 2 above, the mechanisms whereby they complement each other are well-established.

Another clear synergy is the VASyR joint assessment, which is used by multiple agencies within the BAWG for a variety of programming initiatives, and has underpinned the Joint Action and complementary assistance modalities from before the Joint Action was initiated.

There are no other specific synergies noted within project documentation, nor was any framework noted by the evaluators whereby synergistic work could be assessed and documented.

Evidence from informants to the evaluation across all stakeholder groups supports the finding. The different criteria whereby households or individuals are eligible for the other modalities were acknowledged as contributing to a multi-layered system that seeks to ensure that the fewest number of needy people are left without assistance of some form and avoids duplication within the context of the modalities managed by WFP and UNHCR (coordination with external initiatives is discussed in the next section). This system has evolved over time in response to both the internal management dynamics of both organisations, and feedback from key stakeholders, including refugees themselves.<sup>207</sup>

### **38. Harmonisation of targeting approaches and efforts to align/layer other initiatives with the Joint Action have been partially successful.**

Despite the above-mentioned synergies and good coordination with the wider basic assistance/food security/protection community, UNHCR and WFP face the challenge of a context of immense need within Lebanon. The complexity of the targeting process, coupled with mechanisms to tackle exclusion/inclusion errors (SIHV, GRM), and the fact that there are two organisations with different mandates and different approaches to providing cash (or other assistance) for different purposes has led to a degree of fragmentation and opacity to the cash assistance system. UNHCR (in consultations with WFP) separated food cash from non-food basic needs cash on the basis of overwhelming feedback from refugees, whereas previously these were layered.<sup>208</sup> However, for each of these modalities to achieve concrete welfare/food security/protection outcomes as set then they should be layered in a more systematic and clearer fashion. MPCA alone to those not receiving food assistance will mean recipients will use the assistance for food, and similarly for ad-hoc but sectorally-specific transfers such as winterisation assistance – such transfers will only be used for their intended needs if other basic needs are minimally met. As noted in the household survey and corroborated by FGDs conducted as part of this evaluation, Syrians, as of mid-2022, prioritise rent first, food second and utilities third.<sup>209</sup> All cash transfers will be used to meet the – shifting – priorities of the Syrian population, irrespective of the source modality.

Indeed, most Syrian participants within the FGDs were not sure where their assistance came from, or whether there was a specific purpose for which it was intended. Some participants noted assistance from non-Joint Action sources (e.g. UNICEF) as being tied to a specific purpose (children’s education), but typically exhibited little or no awareness of the various modalities under which WFP and UNHCR provide assistance.

*They didn't visit homes to inspect the situation or any base on the reason for providing the help. It's pure luck. You suddenly receive an SMS stating that you will be provided with help.*

*– Male FGD Participant, Beirut*

207 BAWG key informants

208 BAWG key informant

209 Discussed under Sub-question 2.1

*We only know about the United Nations, Umam.*

*– Female FGD Participants, South*

Thus, while cash assistance via the different modalities is supposed to be reactive to address a specific crisis situation faced by Syrians, but if they are not meeting the minimum of their basic needs, then it will be allocated to these. Interviewees to the evaluation agreed with UNHCR's decision to separate assistance modalities in terms of putting people at the centre of the response but this calls into question the assistance objectives which may need to be reassessed in the light of the deepening crisis.<sup>210</sup>

The challenges associated with these different modalities has been noted by multiple stakeholders interviewed as part of the evaluation. Stakeholders and refugees themselves noted confusion and frustration with some refugees receiving nothing and some receiving multiple assistances – food, no food, cash for education, winterisation etc.<sup>211</sup> This is also a factor when advocating with donors for increased funding for Syrians – the nuances of differences between modalities are challenging to convey in a convincing manner, particularly as the divisions between them break down as basic needs are met less and less.

While there is a good argument for having support mechanisms to address emergency needs that cannot be met through other, more slow-moving, mechanisms, use of these mechanisms to systematically compensate for targeting errors by the PMT formula and GRM is not the most efficient approach, and has led to confusion and amongst institutional stakeholders and a sense of injustice amongst many refugees.

Some stakeholders have noted the interplay of different modalities as an unrecognised synergy of the Join-Action - when a household moves from MPC to MCAP/CFF, little or nothing changes for the household in terms of amount received or delivery mechanism – and this is indeed a reflection of the efficient and synergistic nature of the LOUISE mechanism. However, given that resources will be applied by recipients to meet the basic needs that they deem most essential, these shifts – that come with a transaction cost for UNHCR and WFP, changes in communication (that can lead to confusion among recipients) and separate reporting requirements risk becoming inefficient paper exercises.

*We need to have some more economies of scale, there are huge transaction costs and losses of efficiency. But trying to figure out who is doing what is very difficult.*

*– UN key informant*

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210 BAWG key informant

211 NGO, Government key informants

*Sub-question 4.3: Has the joint action been coherent with the overall humanitarian response in Lebanon? Has it forged effective partnerships (including referrals) on the ground and allowed for making the bridge between addressing immediate needs and a longer-term approach?*

#### **FINDINGS**

- 39. Joint Action design incorporated clear intentions to integrate into humanitarian response and protection mechanisms within Lebanon, but have had limited success.**
- 40. The Joint Action has extensive and positive linkages to other cash initiatives implemented by WFP and UNHCR, but more limited linkages to those implemented by other agencies.**
- 41. Non-governmental partner involvement in the Joint Action is limited to provision of specific services although there is capacity and willingness to do more.**

### **39. Joint Action design incorporated clear intentions to integrate into humanitarian response and protection mechanisms within Lebanon, but have had limited success.**

As noted above, the Joint Action design made explicit reference to how the programme is intended to integrate with a range of humanitarian and longer-term development response initiatives in Lebanon.

*UNHCR and WFP actively participate in the development of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) led by the Government of Lebanon (GoL) through the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) and supported by the international community.*

*Joint Action Proposal, Annex 1*

The Joint Action proposal notes that the action “is aligned with” the following key strategic response plans for Lebanon:

- The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (2017–2020),
- The UN Strategic Framework (2017–2020),
- WFP Regional Vision 2020
- WFP Lebanon Country Strategic Plan 2018–2020,
- UNHCR’s Strategy for Cash-Based Interventions 2016–2020
- The UNHCR Lebanon Country Operational Plan 2018

Indeed, the Joint Action is directly in line with the intended outcomes of Objective 2 of the 2017-2020 LCRP (Provide immediate assistance to vulnerable populations). It further discusses in detail the rationale for, outcomes supported by and delivery mechanisms of multi-purpose cash provided by members of the Basic Assistance Sector (within which the Joint Action falls).<sup>212</sup>

However, the 2017-2020 LCRP, authored in 2017/2018, predates the triple crisis in Lebanon, and therefore did not and could not anticipate the developments that took place (for example, it was – quite reasonably - predicated on the robustness of the banking sector, the value of the Lebanese currency and hence transfer values of cash programming). The LCRP was updated in 2021 and integrated a variety of the provisions and processes that cash actors had implemented over the course of the preceding years to mitigate the impacts of the crises, for example (as relevant to the Joint Action):

- Increased community engagement measures
- Streamlined and increased coordination of cash assistance
- Staggering the loading of food cards
- Increasing the numbers of ATMs to avoid lines of refugees at redemption points<sup>213</sup>

The LCRP was updated again in early 2022 to cover the 2022-2023 period, and this again reflected the dynamics of basic assistance over the 2021-2022 period. Notably, It highlighted the challenges faced with multipurpose cash programming (which incorporates the Joint Action) with respect to any adjustments to the transfer values. It highlights that while “political concerns stemming from the fear of fuelling tensions between Lebanese and Syrians prevented an increase in the value to match the rising prices and costs in

<sup>212</sup> Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2020, Sections 2.1-2.7.

<sup>213</sup> Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017-2021 (Updated Version), Part II: Assumptions and Risks, page 101.



the country”<sup>214</sup>, “strong advocacy” led to an increase of the transfer value to 800,000 LBP per family per month, in September 2021, thus helping to meet basic needs and maximising the impact of other sectoral interventions.<sup>215</sup>

Many of the updates present in the 2021 version of the LCRP, and the 2022 version are in line with changes brought to the Joint Action by UNHCR and WFP on foot of the crises. However, there are a variety of additional elements within the 2021 LCRP that have not been reflected to a large extent within the Joint Action. Some examples of such elements are as follows:

- Mitigation of the impact of climate stressors such as increased temperatures, seasonal shocks (heavy or reduced rainfalls and snow cover), increased incidence of drought, more frequent heatwaves, fewer frost days and rising sea levels (pg. 101).
- Activities to ameliorate concerns and rising tensions expressed by the host community and authorities, especially those related to perceived aid bias on food assistance and targeting as well as competition over jobs for both Lebanese and displaced refugees (pg. 102).
- Formulate integrated programmes to address the economic vulnerabilities of families that lead to child labour, through actions such as cash interventions (pg. 103).
- Mitigate the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) across all interventions, with a focus on areas of particular concern, such as cash assistance (pg. 147).
- Combining interventions (including cash) through an integrated multisectoral package of services (pg. 147, 148).
- Increases in cash provided via MCAP to cover WASH needs for host communities (pg. 193).

The gaps in proposed programming or integration with other programme are supported by evidence from other sources, such as the findings of a 2022 Joint Social Protection Mission to Lebanon, which recommended that “programs that typically target only refugees should also gradually align with a longer-term sustained approach within the national system. In all of these efforts, considering more joined up and synergistic approaches in terms of strategic planning and delivery platforms is crucial to maximise the coverage and impact of various social protection initiatives at a time of rapidly increasing poverty, vulnerability, inequalities and humanitarian needs.”<sup>216</sup> This recommendation builds on and complements various social protection policies, plans, analyses and positions undertaken since the beginning of the triple crisis. For example, a 2020 joint position paper on social protection recommended that “policy makers should increasingly consider alignment and inclusion of mechanisms for protection of groups with special status (refugees and unregistered migrants) in the national social protection system”.<sup>217</sup> The extant social protection sector reform plan for Lebanon, the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (the “3RF”), while primarily concerned with national social protection systems, specifically mentions the needs of Syrian refugees/migrants in the context of social protection needs, and notes that it will be crucial to address challenges of fragmentation and lack of coordination with respect to social assistance programmes for all in Lebanon.<sup>218</sup>

Primary evaluation evidence from a range of internal and external stakeholders suggests that integration of the Joint Action cash programming with the abovementioned social protection initiatives is present to some degree, but limited. One clear example of such integration was noted in the evaluation of WFP’s country programme in 2021, which noted that WFP had “a comparative advantage [among UN agencies] in leading the specific operational support required for the transfer delivery. This has led to the creation of useful synergies between the refugee response and the national systems for social protection through the NPTP.”<sup>219</sup> Echoing the recommendations of the sources cited above, the evaluation highlights an ongoing opportunity for the WFP to work with the World Bank in the establishment of national social protection systems.

The consensus from most informants is that “more should be done” with respect to linking Joint Action programming to national social protection strategies/initiatives and to other forms of assistance on the

214 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2022-2023, Part II, Basic Assistance Sector, page 37.

215 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2022-2023, page 37

216 UNICEF, ILO, WFP, WB, EU, 2022, Key Agreed Points and Actions From the Joint Social Protection Mission to Lebanon.

217 UN Joint Programme on Social Protection, 2020, Social Protection in Lebanon: Bridging the Immediate Response with Long-Term Priorities

218 EU, UN, World Bank, 2020 Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF)

219 WFP, 2021, Evaluation of Lebanon WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018–2021

humanitarian-peace-development nexus. Examples provided include linkages to livelihoods initiatives, particularly for households dropped or excluded from cash transfer programming, in order to layer and link different strands of assistance.<sup>220</sup> Key informants noted periodic discussions in different interagency forums (BAWG, CWG) on issues of integration, but limited action or changes to programming. This is largely ascribed to the challenging political environment around Syrian refugees in the context of social protection.<sup>221</sup> Further, earlier linkages have been lost as livelihoods programming shifts more towards development and is not being linked to specific refugee geographical areas.<sup>222</sup> Greater tensions around cash provision to Syrians when so many Lebanese are in significant need means that the task of advocating for greater integration of programmes (and similarly meeting increasing needs of the Syrian population) is increasingly challenging.<sup>223</sup> Added to this is the level of resources needed for broad-based and effective linkages to programming along the nexus – not just livelihoods (which would entail training and job creation/identification in an extremely challenging climate) but also sectors such as shelter, WASH, education and climate resilience – all areas noted by stakeholders as important for cash programming to be linked more effectively to.

*Cash assistance without the jobs is not a sustainable solution. We should start from a place where we can continue. This must be part of the longer term solution.*

– Government Key Informant

Stakeholders have expressed a potential need for an impartial agent or agency to drive the process of coordination with and linkages to social protection (and other nexus-related) initiatives forwards in the short term (see sub-question 4.4 for more detail on this). Such an entity can exist outside of agency or national politics and involve all cash and social protection actors.<sup>224</sup>

*We haven't done enough on complementary assistance. Cash is still essential but it's not enough. People need other support, other solutions.*

– UN key informants

#### **40. The Joint Action has extensive and positive linkages to other cash initiatives implemented by WFP and UNHCR, but more limited linkages to those implemented by other agencies.**

There is good evaluation evidence as to how the Joint Action links to and complements the variety of other cash transfer modalities in a non-duplicative and layered manner. UNHCR and WFP seek to coordinate assistance with other agencies/NGOs to avoid duplication or overlap across different initiatives. The coordination aspect of this is discussed under Sub-questions 4.1 and 4.2 above. Other agencies also undertake cash programming activities that are coordinated primarily via the BAWG, albeit noted by key informants to happen mainly at Beirut level via monthly BAWG meetings to try to avoid duplication; and the Food Security and Agriculture Sector (co-led by WFP) that plays a key role in cash assistance.<sup>225</sup> In addition to the formal working group meetings, stakeholders noted participating in side meetings with those that are undertaking assistance to ensure complementarity across the Basic Assistance, Health, WASH, GBV, Child Protection, Food Security, Social Stability/livelihoods, Shelter sectors, the Lebanese International Humanitarian NGO forum – all these groups were reported to regularly meet to address issues, get updates, identify areas of collaboration, trends, needs etc.<sup>226</sup>

While there are reports of a substantial number of other organisations undertaking basic assistance programming with a cash element (one key informant noted approximately 150 programmes in operation, with UNHCR/WFP only aware of a small fraction of this)<sup>227</sup> some of the most prominent examples of other agencies undertaking cash supports provided to the evaluation are:

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220 UN key informant

221 And, of course, the legal restrictions on work by Syrians in Lebanon to – increasingly limited – part-time opportunities in the environmental, agricultural or construction sectors.

222 UN key informant

223 UN, Donor key informants

224 UN, Working Group stakeholders.

225 UN key informant.

226 UN, NGO key informants

227 UN key informant

- UNICEF has implemented an emergency cash transfer (ECT) programme started after the Beirut Blast in 2020 and the “Haddi” grant since mid-2021 targeted at households with vulnerable children and youth.
- Various NGO supports.
- UNFPA (linked to GBV case management, since 2021).

External providers of other cash programmes noted some criticism of UNHCR/WFP efforts to coordinate and create synergies between the various transfer initiatives. Some stakeholders noted a certain amount of duplication in transfers (this was particularly noted with respect to ad-hoc distributions by NGOs that are frequently not at all coordinated via the BAWG or other bodies<sup>228</sup>), with some stakeholders expressing a need for greater efforts regarding visibility around which households are in receipt of what assistance (potentially through the RAIS), but concerned that no strategic discussions have taken place on this.<sup>229</sup>

Ultimately, most evaluation stakeholders agree that, similar to the above finding under Sub-question 4.2, there is a need for better coordination across all cash initiatives to mitigate the disproportionately visible problem of some Syrians receiving no assistance while others obtain multiple supports where all face similar challenges. Bodies such as the BAWG and CWG can help, as other sector working groups have limited discussions regarding cash assistance.

#### **41. Non-governmental partner involvement in the Joint Action is limited to provision of specific services although there is capacity and willingness to do more.**

**UNHCR** has a global-level suite of policies and processes guiding partnerships with not-for-profit organisations in order to fulfil its mandate to refugees and other persons of concern. These policies and processes are underpinned by the following Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP) principles of partnership:<sup>230</sup>

- Equality
- Transparency
- Result-oriented approach
- Responsibility
- Complementarity

**WFP** implements partnerships on the basis of shared objectives, efficiency and effectiveness.<sup>231</sup> Similarly to UNHCR, it also commits to the above GHP principles of partnership, as well as working towards achievement of SDG 17<sup>232</sup>, which focuses on (among others) sustainability, partnership and local/national capacity-building.<sup>233</sup> Further, the 2018-2020 country strategic plan for WFP Lebanon includes support to national actors as one of its four strategic outcomes.<sup>234</sup>

Elements of the Joint Action are implemented via several national/international non-governmental agencies within Lebanon, on behalf of UNHCR and WFP. The original proposal had a more extensive list of implementing partners (IPs), but some have been dropped from the programme and others added over the course of Joint Action implementation, as follows:

228 NGO key informants

229 Working Group, Government key informant

230 As codified by the Global Humanitarian Platform, created in 2006, which brings together UN and non-UN humanitarian organizations on an equal footing. See <https://www.unhcr.org/5735bd464.pdf>

231 See <https://www.wfp.org/partner-with-us>

232 SDG17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

233 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17>

234 Strategic outcome 4: National institutions and national and international humanitarian actors are supported in their efforts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their assistance.

IPs per 2018 Proposal	Added IPs (year)	Core IPs as of 2021/2022
Caritas Lebanon	Lebanese Red Cross (2020)	Caritas Lebanon
World Vision	ACTED (2020)*	World Vision
SHIELD	LOST (2020)*	SHIELD
PU-AMI		Lebanese Red Cross
Danish Refugee Council		
INTERSOS		

\* WFP signed temporary Field Level Agreements (FLAs) with ACTED and LOST in 2019 (both) and 2020 (LOST only) to respond to acute needs resulting from the economic crisis and COVID-19 pandemic in Lebanon, through the distribution of in-kind food – not part of the core Joint Action programming.

As reported by UNHCR/WFP via the Joint Action annual reports, the core programme partners of World Vision, Caritas, Sheild and Makhzoumi Foundation supported implementation of the Basic Assistance activities. The main responsibilities of these partners was (and continues to be) in validation and card/pin distribution, conducting post distribution and outcome monitoring exercises (in concert with their roles in collecting data for the annual VASyR. They also collect a range of data for ad-hoc quantitative and qualitative assessments for targeting, for the GRM and (in 2019) for the SIHV.

In 2020/2021, responding to increasing tensions around cash distributions, the Lebanese Red Cross was contracted to complement other partners in undertaking ATM monitoring and supporting the mechanics of the cash transfer programming, i.e. basic awareness sessions on distributions, ATM card usage etc. with recipients.

Feedback from various key informants to the evaluation notes a number of successful aspects of the UNHCR/WFP partnership strategy for the Joint Action, and also a number of challenges or weaknesses that could be considered as opportunities for improvement, to bring UNHCR and WFP partnership efforts more in line with the principles noted above.

### Strengths:

- National NGOs typically are well integrated into communities and understand the context and different dynamics.
- Different forums are available for coordination. In addition to the BAWG, the Lebanon Humanitarian International Forum is complemented by a domestic forum (the Lebanon Humanitarian Domestic Forum – LHDF), although this is reported to be focused at Beirut level, and not to be operational at field at the time of the evaluation.
- A potentially useful suite of digital reporting and coordination tools that can be deployed across all actors once developed – e.g. the RAIS, ProjectX, ActivityInfo (a tool based on which was reported by UNHCR as being under pilot for community-level coordination).

### Challenges:

- A macro-level challenge noted by UN stakeholders is, despite recent efforts to localise humanitarian response work, the limited number of sufficiently strong national NGOs/CSOs with which to work in Lebanon.
- Key informants noted that it has been challenging to engage with some on coordination of support (via the BAWG or directly) – some CSOs with heavily earmarked funding for specific distributions are not necessarily willing to coordinate through BAWG.<sup>235</sup>
- Divergent political and/or religious affiliations potentially play a part in the pool of available partners to UNHCR and WFP.
- Some NGOs may not be willing to manage the administration/bureaucracy related to coordination and the UN system which can be slow and burdensome, especially with respect to a programme the size of the Joint Action.

<sup>235</sup> UN key informant.

- Sub-national coordinators among NGOs/CSOs are only part-time and do not necessarily have the resources for lots of coordination in various forums.<sup>236</sup>
- Limited communication/coordination between UNHCR and WFP reflected in mis or duplicative communication to implementing partners and double reporting burdens for joint partners (discussed under Sub-question 4.1 above).

Another issue noted by key informants to the evaluation was in relation to the depth and quality of partnerships with NGOs by UNHCR/WFP. Although the principles of partnership espoused by both agencies (and indeed SDG 17) emphasise the localisation of assistance, building of capacity of partners and equality of partnerships, there is consistent evidence that NGO partnerships under the Joint Action are focused on the logistics of programme implementation – validation, distribution, monitoring, reporting – rather than a deeper engagement on potentially more substantive work further along the humanitarian-peace-development nexus. Many NGO partners expressed that they had the desire and capacity (and in some cases complementary resources/funding) to engage more deeply with respect to work with the Syrian population on longer-term development issues, advocacy and/or communications but that opportunities to do so within the framework of their partnership with UNHCR/WFP were not forthcoming.

Stakeholders equally acknowledged that the Lebanon context is a demanding and tough environment for UNHCR and WFP to work within, with considerable expectation and scrutiny, but still feel there is scope to address the challenges.

*Policies, agendas – they plan, we need to implement without taking our point of view. They say “come prepared, let’s discuss” but then ignore us. They have their agenda and we need to implement that.*

– NGO Key Informant

This shortcoming was also noted in the evaluation of the WFP country strategic plan, which notes “...a need to work with partners to achieve better integration and coordination of emergency cash assistance with livelihood interventions.”<sup>237</sup>

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236 UN key informant.

237 WFP, 2021, Evaluation of Lebanon WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018–2021, page xi, para 61

*Sub-question 4.4: What is the scope for aligning multipurpose cash assistance to refugees with the social protection landscape (e.g., services, livelihoods programmes, cash-plus approaches, etc.) and humanitarian development nexus in Lebanon?*

#### FINDINGS

- 42. Articulation of a social protection engagement strategy is primarily within UNHCR and WFP's wider country strategies.**
- 43. Lebanese social protection systems have seen several improvements in the enabling environment, with scope for inclusion of refugees and synergies across the HDP nexus, although stakeholders are not optimistic that this will be realised.**

#### **42. Articulation of a social protection engagement strategy is primarily within UNHCR and WFP's wider country strategies.**

Linking with or influencing social protection is not an objective of the Joint Action per se and is not reflected in the programme logic or documentation. However, during the evaluation period, WFP's country strategic plan introduced a dedicated strategic objective focusing on strengthening the Lebanese social protection system.<sup>238</sup> This has been carried forwards to the succeeding Country Strategic Plan covering 2023-2025.<sup>239</sup>

Since 2014, WFP has provided implementation support to the government of Lebanon's only social transfer programme, the NPTP, which provided registered poor households with a monthly food e-voucher. WFP's operational systems and processes (and NGO partnerships) established for its cash assistance for refugees, and which underpin the delivery of the Joint Action, provided the platform for payment delivery and monitoring. WFP's stated objective for the system strengthening activities was to build the institutional capacities of MOSA, such that the cash delivery platform and expertise underpinning the Joint Action can support establishment of foundational delivery systems for the NPTP and other future social assistance schemes in Lebanon.<sup>240</sup>

In 2019 a capacity building plan for support to the NPTP was developed with MOSA, with an associated results framework covering three areas:

- i) Strengthening of NPTP operational systems to support the management of beneficiary information and updates, receipt of assistance and a grievance system.
- ii) Monitoring and evaluation tools.
- iii) Staff capacity development.

This work was funded by EUTF-MADAD and explicitly supported the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, providing cash assistance to refugees and Lebanese and articulating these linkages between the refugee cash assistance and national system building.<sup>241</sup> With the deterioration in the poverty of Lebanese due to the triple crisis, WFP's operational systems for cash delivery underpinning the Joint Action were also further leveraged to support (emergency) social protection system development under the new World Bank-funded social safety net. This aims to reach 147,000 extremely poor households.<sup>242</sup> The UN interagency<sup>243</sup> social safety net project under the UNSDCF that began in 2020 also allocated defined roles to WFP, focused on operational delivery and leveraging its systems expertise developed under the cash assistance for refugees.

While UNHCR's mandate means it has not engaged much to date on social protection<sup>244</sup>, its country strategy for 2022 has a strategic objective to support the dignity and wellbeing and develop human capital of refugees through supporting inclusive access to social protection. This aims to go beyond its direct support through basic assistance, health care and shelter programmes, to support development of the national social protection system, through strengthened collaboration with social protection actors including the World Bank, UNDP, ILO and UNICEF.<sup>245</sup>

238 Strategic Outcome 5, WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018–2022

239 Strategic Outcome 1, WFP Lebanon country strategic plan (2023–2025)

240 WFP Country Strategy Programme Evaluation, 2021, Cross-sector cash assistance for Syrian refugees and host communities in Lebanon, The Cash Learning Partnership, 2014

241 EUTF. EUTF support to social assistance to vulnerable refugees and host communities affected by the Syrian crisis in Lebanon: Action Document (Jun 2018). EU Trust Fund, 2018

242 International Bank For Reconstruction And Development Project Appraisal Document PAD3855, December 2020

243 Including ILO, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP

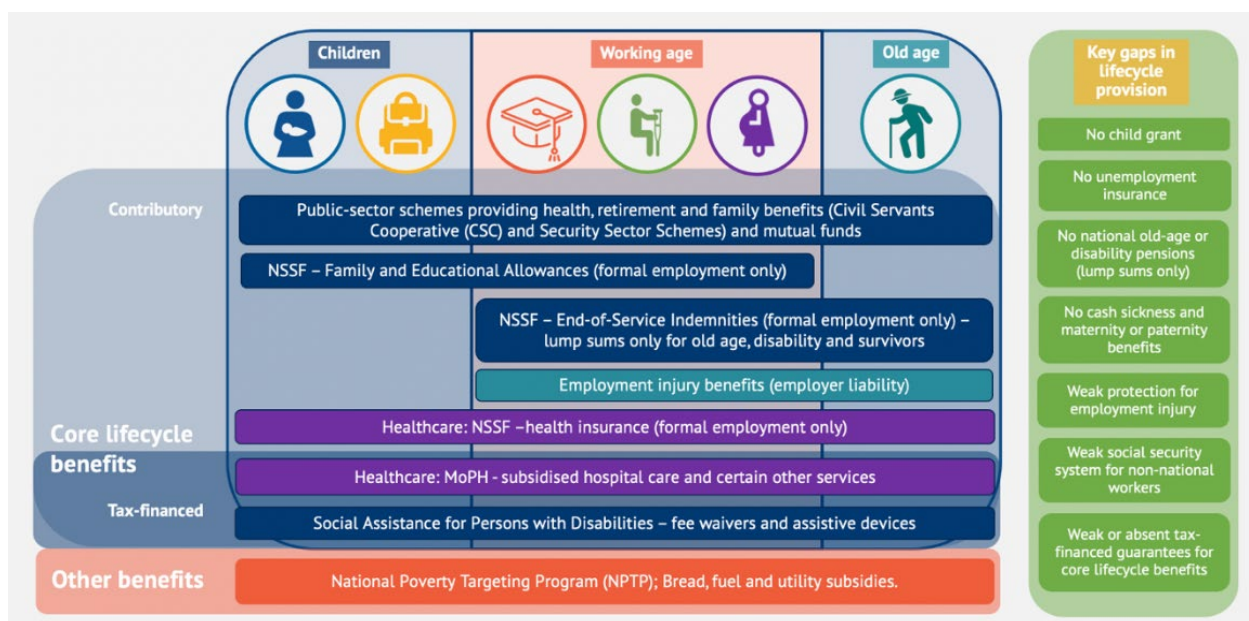
244 UNHCR KII's

245 <https://reporting.unhcr.org/lebanon#:~:text=Strategy%202022&text=UNHCR%20s%20vision%20for%20the,durable%20solutions%20outside%20of%20Lebanon>

**43. Lebanese social protection systems have seen several improvements in the enabling environment, with scope for inclusion of refugees and synergies across the HDP nexus, although stakeholders are not optimistic that this will be realised.**

The Lebanese social protection system is characterised by multiple, fragmented social assistance and social insurance programmes. The informal sector is excluded from any kind of social insurance and there is no social protection floor supporting vulnerability through the lifecycle (see figure below). The NPTP is the first and largest national scheme providing social transfers to poor Lebanese households, which have very restricted coverage in comparison to needs. There is limited policy or strategy providing direction to the sector.<sup>246</sup> Government-provided social protection does not automatically extend to non-nationals in Lebanon and refugees are ineligible for the three main social assistance schemes<sup>247</sup> under MoSA. However, wider services such as health (subsidised by UNHCR and international actors) and training services run by Social Development Centres could be accessed by refugees as well as Lebanese.

**Figure 34: State of the social protection system 2019**



Source: UNICEF/ILO, 2020, *Towards a Social Protection Floor for Lebanon: Policy options and costs for core life-cycle social grants, Policy Note*

Over the period of the Joint Action there have been several developments in the enabling environment for social protection, including:

- i) **Increasing vulnerability of Lebanese, building support for social protection for Lebanese:** the triple crisis' impact on the Lebanese population, with an estimated 75 per cent in poverty and 36 per cent in extreme poverty by 2021, starkly highlighted the need for better social protection, including for cash-based social assistance, in Lebanon. The crisis has been an entry point for the rapid expansion of social transfers in Lebanon, with the NPTP transitioning from vouchers to cash and scaling up to reach some 75,000 households by 2021 and the approval of the Emergency Social Safety Net Project (ESSN) in 2021 which aims to provide medium term cash transfers to an additional 150,000 poor households (currently reaching 75,000).
- ii) **Social protection strategy drafted and awaiting endorsement:** this has been led by UNICEF with MOSA and sets out a proposed future direction for social protection system development in Lebanon, under 5 pillars. This was finalised and adopted by the Council of Ministers but is still awaiting parliamentary approval and/or amendments (see point vi. below). However the overarching strategic framework on the

246 See the following for more details: ILO and UNICEF, 2021, *Towards a Social Protection Floor for Lebanon, Policy options and costs for core life-cycle social grants, Policy Note*; UNICEF/ILO/MOSA, 2021, *A Social Protection Strategy Framework for Lebanon, Towards a Rights-Based, Shock-Responsive and Sustainable System*.

247 Services for people with disabilities, social care for children via MoSA-contracted institutions, and the NPTP (which provided health and education subsidies and the food e-voucher).

direction of the system for Lebanese under these pillars seems set (albeit explicitly rejecting inclusion of non-nationals<sup>248</sup>) and should inform social protection system building efforts going forward.

**Figure 35: MOSA Social Protection Strategy Pillars<sup>249</sup>**

Social Assistance	Financial Access to Social Services	Social Welfare	Economic Inclusion and Labor Activation	Social Insurance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cash transfers</li> <li>• In-kind transfers</li> <li>• Subsidies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial access to healthcare (fee waivers, etc.)</li> <li>• Health insurance</li> <li>• Financial access to education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service interventions, case management and referral services</li> <li>• Development and support of a social workforce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labor regulations</li> <li>• Active labor market policies</li> <li>• Linkages with livelihoods and employment strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insurance for unemployment, maternity, disability, work accidents</li> <li>• Old-age, disability, and survivors' pensions</li> </ul>

- iii) **Further advances in administrative system building, and planned consolidation of schemes under World Bank support:** the ESSN has a component focused on operational system building and capacity building including developing an integrated system for managing beneficiary data, automating delivery processes and development of a social registry on the IMPACT Platform under Central Inspection.<sup>250</sup> Phase I operational and systems are beginning to be Government-led. The World Bank's ambition is that these systems will be fully handed over and managed by government at the end of the ESSN period, and will underpin data and delivery systems under social assistance more broadly going forward. Once systems are operational in 2023 it is also expected that the NPTP and ESSN caseloads will be merged.<sup>251</sup>
- iv) **Proliferation of plans to develop new social assistance schemes to meet needs of specific vulnerable groups, including refugees:** the draft social protection strategy proposes that Lebanon establish a series of 'social grants' to provide social assistance to children, the elderly and people with disabilities to enhance the social protection floor through the life cycle. Under the ESSN the World Bank is supporting a conditional cash transfer to poor Lebanese HH with children with the aim to cover costs of accessing education. At the same time, UNICEF is embarking on implementation of pilot social grants to particular vulnerable groups. The pilot disability grant to young people in partnership with MOSA is expected to be launched in late 2022, funded by the EU. UNICEF's Haddi programme has been providing emergency grants to households with children since 2021 in collaboration with MOSA and there are plans to continue this in some form into 2023, transitioning this to the 'child grant' component of the social grants. These UNICEF-supported schemes are explicitly targeting all population groups, not only Lebanese. There remain diverging perceptions among the key social protection partners about the best approach to take.<sup>252</sup>
- v) **Development of a new Aide Memoire in 2022 by UN and donors in an effort to overcome coordination challenges on support to social protection system building:** several evaluation interviewees noted that the rapid developments in the social protection space, along with weak leadership of the government, lack of endorsement of the strategy, competing mandates, agendas and priorities of different partners, plus the proliferation of funding streams and coordination forums, were an impediment to coherent and strategic development of the social protection sector. A joint mission on social protection between the ILO, UNICEF, and WFP in consultation with the World Bank and the EU in April 2022 aimed to address this. It culminated in the agreement on priority actions to jointly implement under three main areas:
- enhancing the institutional framework for social protection;
  - coherent collaboration to expand social assistance coverage per the national vision; and
  - further development of the national SP MIS.<sup>253</sup>

248 UN key informant

249 UNICEF/ILO/MOSA, 2021, A Social Protection Strategy Framework for Lebanon, Towards a Rights-Based, Shock-Responsive and Sustainable System

250 A key informant (on coordination) notes that while the original draft of this system made reference to the inclusion of non-Lebanese, the Government subsequently stated that this will not be the case.

251 Bilateral agency key informant

252 For example, whether to continue with the ESSN targeting approach as a way to reach and include vulnerable groups; or to introduce social grants to reduce broad-based reliance on single poverty targeted scheme; or whether to layer social grants on top of the poverty targeted scheme for more adequate coverage of needs.

253 Unpublished Aide Memoire: Key Agreed Points and Actions from the Joint Social Protection Mission to Lebanon, April 2022.



An agreed next step was to complete a roadmap for effective division of labour and comparative advantage among the five agencies and mapping of different support partners will bring/are bringing to the implementation of the national strategy and its pillars, especially on social assistance.

These developments can have implications for the Joint Action in terms of possible synergies and entry points for engagement across the HDP nexus with social protection. Key informants discussed the following ideas which align with the findings of the evaluation based on previous knowledge of the social protection context):

- On the one hand, the worsening tensions between Lebanese and Syrians and rhetoric about Syrians in Lebanon presents further barriers to the possibility of the inclusion of refugees into the national social protection system – certainly for social transfers - in the short to medium term. Indeed, several stakeholders explained that the main factor delaying the endorsement of the draft social protection strategy was the document's explicit reference to the expansion of social protection beyond citizens to protect the socio-economic rights of all residents (including migrant workers, Palestinian refugees, and Syrian refugees).

On the other hand, the driver of these social tensions is at least partly dissatisfaction at the levels of assistance being provided to Lebanese and Syrians. This, and, the recent expansions of cash-based social protection to Lebanese mean that greater attention needs to be given to how cash based assistance to these population groups can be more strategically aligned and coherently communicated, such that provision of basic assistance to refugees demonstrates some tangible benefit for citizens. As a minimum this could highlight more clearly the needs-basis of assistance for different population groups while building of a narrative that international humanitarian assistance is contributing to building national (operational) systems. Ideally, it would support a narrative that donor funding is also meeting the needs of Lebanese (in light of the countries' refugee burden). This does not necessarily entail that the basic assistance budget of the LCRP is spread to Lebanese. Rather it could be achieved through a more coherent joined up strategy of existing, disparate donors as contributing to a common vision rather than separate projects (on LCRP BA; social grants; NPTP; and ESSN).

- While the direction of social grants is still not clear, some evaluation propose a possible future pathway for the social protection system in Lebanon the expansion of age and disability targeted programmes that reach both Lebanese and refugees (whether within a single programme or as two, separate but aligned, programmes).<sup>254</sup> The targeting strategy of the Joint Action was not considered by key informants to (yet) be adequate to complement this, but could in future be adapted to support identification and referral of severely vulnerable households fitting the criteria for social grants for (eventual) inclusion in these schemes.
- UNHCR may be well placed to engage with/align with social protection supporting access to services (complementing the cash). Pillar 1 on social assistance is already a crowded space. In contrast, Pillar 2 is where UNHCR may have a comparative advantage – continuing and expanding their work covering costs of healthcare for refugees. This could align with proposed reforms to the SHI system for Lebanese and also be a way to provide more equitable needs-based assistance across these populations - if host communities could be included.<sup>255</sup> Given that one of the main reported expenditures of the cash transfer recipients is on health-related needs, investing more in reducing costs of services at the point of use may also help to maximise impacts of the cash assistance.

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254 Bilateral agency key informant

255 Key informants noted increased demand from the Lebanese population for previously poorly-used primary health care services resulting from the financial crisis, in addition to UNHCR-supported clinics.

## CONCLUSIONS

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**EVALUATION QUESTION 1, Sub Question 1: 1.1:** *To what extent has the joint action (in its multiple modalities) been able to respond to the needs of the intended beneficiaries (women and men) in the context of evolving and compounding crises (refugees, COVID-19, economic collapse)?*

**Conclusion 1.1.1:** The Joint Action has, across its design, implementation and via a range of ongoing data collection activities and assessments, maintained its relevance for the basic needs of increasing numbers of Syrians in Lebanon. Although limited in its reach and facing challenges of responsiveness, cash assistance through the Joint Action continues to be a highly relevant way of meeting food and other basic needs of refugees despite the challenges in the operational context since the Joint Action began.

**Links to Findings 1, 2, 3**

**Conclusion 1.1.2:** The Syrian population's ability to safely access the programme is increasingly constrained by a variety of challenges, including inter-communal tensions, issues with ATMs (and banks in general) and rising costs of communication and transportation services. The plans to include MTOs in payment delivery is a welcome step, as solutions that contribute to the issues of the long queues and protection risks at ATMs are needed and MTOs are closer (and therefore less expensive) to reach, however this change is happening slowly. Meanwhile ongoing inflation and increasing costs of telecoms means the accessibility of SMS communication and the call centre are likely to reduce further, for which solutions are required.

**Links to Findings 4, 5, 6**

*1.2 Has it been able to integrate gender and equity issues in its modality?*

**Conclusion 1.2.1:** There are a variety of measures implemented across the Joint Action to ensure equity and inclusion of vulnerable groups, including women, as well as appropriate sex, age, disability and diversity data collection processes. Further, the provision of complementary modalities focused on protection (ECA/PCAP) have a potentially synergistic effect with the Joint Action cash provision. However, the programme has not sought to achieve gender transformative results, and incomplete integration of these modalities and poor understanding by vulnerable groups of their objectives limits the potential synergies.

**Links to Findings 1, 6, 7**

**Conclusion 1.2.2:** Preferential targeting of female-headed households, application of inclusion measures in cash transfer implementation and sex-and-age-disaggregated monitoring data are useful and valid in ensuring gender considerations are integrated into the Joint Action. However, these are not sufficient to address the deeper gender inequalities faced by Syrian women in Lebanon, and the renewed resources and focus of UNHCR/WFP and partners on gender present opportunities to move the programme further along the gender scale to be more transformative.

**Links to Findings 3, 6, 7**

*1.3 How adequate was the targeting process, i.e., transparent, predictable, independent, impartial, gender-sensitive, and inclusive for reaching the most vulnerable?*

**Conclusion 1.3.1:** Overall, the current PMT/GRM-based targeting system, to date, reflects a strong emphasis on impartiality and efficiency over transparency and predictability. This is a direct and predictable result of choices made by UNHCR and WFP. It would also be easy to make different choices in the future if so desired: the elevation of the use of profiles and the Multidimensional Deprivation Index; choices about the release of those criteria to the public; and different choices about the frequency of selection into and removal from the list of supported beneficiaries could significantly improve the experience of the program. However, these choices may result in small losses in efficient selection of beneficiaries: simpler criteria and their publication may result in some inclusion and exclusion errors; allowing those who at one point qualify to receive benefits for longer without checking may result in some households receiving benefits they no longer need.

**Links to Findings 9, 10, 11**

**Conclusion 1.3.2:** Currently, the targeting process is seen as an opaque, data-driven process with a limited number of human corrections through the GRM (and previously the SIHVs) that may be efficient but is not widely understood. The PMT approach strongly limits the capacity of programme beneficiaries to “game” the targeting process, but also for most stakeholders to present informed and meaningful criticism or feedback. The creation of marginalised household profiles to facilitate automatic inclusion for cash transfer serves as an excellent opportunity to improve transparency and accountability to affected populations and conflict sensitivity (aspects of inter/intra-community tensions). However, the confidential nature of the household profile composition and how they do or do not qualify for assistance negates this.

**Links to Finding 12**

*1.4 Was the overall targeting approach by proxy mean testing (followed by GRM and SIHV) and the way it is implemented by both agencies and partners, the most appropriate given the nature and the size of the programme as well as the context?*

**Conclusion 1.4.1:** Multi-purpose cash targeting, via proxy means testing and supported by the GRM, has been a successful and largely objective technical approach to the challenge of providing basic assistance to large numbers of people. The targeting approach used on the JA has benefits in terms of cost efficiency, timeliness, and impartiality. Its accuracy is in line with other poverty-targeted approaches globally (although this is premised on the assumption of the underlying accuracy of the data, which doesn’t necessarily hold in practice).

**Links to Finding 13**

**Conclusion 1.4.2:** The targeting model has limitations when viewed from the point of view of complexity, transparency and accountability to refugees. Furthermore, the use of the ranking (which means little in practical terms) as the basis for justifying inclusion and exclusion decisions is problematic. Overall, the general picture is of an approach that has been helpful for implementers in making sense of a highly difficult task in a difficult context, but not so helpful for communities.

**Links to Findings 14-16**

## **EVALUATION QUESTION 2, Sub-question 2.1: To what extent has the joint action achieved its objectives?**

**Conclusion 2.1.1:** In response to the deepening crises in Lebanon, the Joint Action is reaching many times the originally planned population, and is mitigating the effects of these crises for recipients. However, inflation is reducing the relative buying power of the transfer value, leading to a deterioration in living conditions among the Syrian population, albeit not to the same extent as those not in receipt. Managing the challenge of increasing needs without commensurate increase in the resource envelope means the decision to broaden coverage has been at the expense of depth of assistance. Thus, the Joint Action objectives, as originally formulated, are not being fully achieved, nor are likely to given the current circumstances in Lebanon.

**Links to Findings 16-18**

### *2.2: Were these outcomes different between men and women?*

**Conclusion 2.2.1:** The challenges faced by the Syrian population in Lebanon as a result of the triple crises have been exacerbated for women and girls, and the Joint Action has had a small, but significant impact on mitigating these. However, limited collection and analysis of data in relation to gender (as part of the Joint Action and wider data collection) constrains recognition of these challenges and therefore evidence-based programming strategies that target women and girls.

**Links to Findings 19-21**

**Conclusion 2.2.2:** Poorer outcomes for Syrian women and girls are likely to continue within the deteriorating socio-economic environment in Lebanon, exacerbated by limitations on their ability to seek justice or redress. Limited data collection and compliance activities by the Joint Action may be compounding the risks of these poorer outcomes, and manipulation of the limited mechanisms that do exist within the Joint Action to support females.

**Links to Findings 20, 21**

### *2.3: What are the unintended positive and/or negative outcomes of the joint action on protection risks affecting beneficiaries or on tensions within families, especially amongst refugee communities and with host populations?*

**Conclusion 2.3.1:** Despite the fact that the UNHCR and WFP cash transfer programming (which includes the Joint Action) supports a considerable proportion of the Syrian population in Lebanon, and contributes a significant amount of foreign currency into the Lebanese economy, visibility of the programme is not sufficient to counter inaccurate information and misconceptions regarding the support that have negative protection consequences for Syrians.

**Links to Finding 22**

**Conclusion 2.3.2:** While the Joint Action is not the cause of deteriorating relations between the Syrian and Lebanese populations, there is a risk that the programme intensifies these issues, particularly given the lack of strategic coordination of cash programmes across population groups. The scale and visibility of the Joint Action mean it is a convenient target towards which these socio-political frustrations can be directed. The fact that the Joint Action only assists Syrians can contribute further to this risk. The other cash interventions under the LCRP and the broader responses to the triple crisis which target vulnerable Lebanese with food or basic needs assistance are not coordinated with the Joint Action (discussed under 4.3 and 4.4), and the Lebanese population is not well informed about the assistance provided by the international community to citizens.

**Links to Finding 23**

*2.4: How effective were the systems and measures applied to reinforce the accountability to affected population (AAP) (MPCA monitoring processes, complaint, referral and feedback mechanism, joint call centre, communication on targeting, discontinuation)?*

**Conclusion 2.4.1:** The primary communication methods have been effective for information dissemination, but 2022 changes in the telecommunications market are leading to higher user costs. Thus, many Syrian households will have more limited access to and use of mobile/internet connectivity.

**Links to Findings 24-26**

**Conclusion 2.4.2:** The Joint Call Centre, as originally designed and managed, was not fit for purpose with respect to the substantially increased number of beneficiary households and the data needs of both organisations. The revised approach, using separate, but linked, call centres, may go some way to address these limitations. However, negative perceptions of the call centre efficacy remain among beneficiaries, and the dynamics of how/why the Syrian population engages with the call centre may not be fully aligned with its actual mandate.

**Links to Finding 26**

**EVALUATION QUESTION 3, Sub-question 3.1: Have the processes (cash delivery mechanisms including issuance, validation, delivery, monitoring and beneficiary feedback) been efficient, secure, and accessible?**

**Conclusion 3.1.1:** The Joint Action has successfully managed somewhat conflicting priorities of scale and delivery challenges on the one hand and diversity on the other, albeit with trade offs in relation to cost-efficiency and the need to reach vulnerable groups. Taking this into account, the delivery mechanism design can be said to be accessible and efficient from an age, gender and diversity perspective. Going beyond this to focus on specific needs and constraints facing vulnerable groups would require greater focus on outreach but this has cost implications.

**Links to Findings 27, 28**

**Conclusion 3.1.2:** The Joint Action has been successful in ensuring a good balance of accountability of cash transfer mechanisms to donor responsiveness and refugee needs and capacities. However, the deteriorating socio-economic context has led to increasing challenges in the efficiency of mechanisms.

**Links to Findings 28, 29**

*3.2: How appropriate was the human and financial resourcing to meet the Joint Action objectives, including multi-donor financing?*

**Conclusion 3.2.1:** The Joint Action is reaching considerably more beneficiaries than originally planned, albeit with increasingly limited buying power of the transfer rate. Increasing numbers of Syrians moving below the survival expenditure level means that the strategy to reach more, with less, has merit, but increased programme savings are required to counter the ongoing rises in living costs and likely reductions in donor resources.

**Links to Findings 30**

**Conclusion 3.2.2:** The cost structure of the Joint Action is relatively robust, with a reasonable ratio of operational cost to cash transfers (12 per cent). Nonetheless, there is both scope and significant need for making cost savings on the programme, particularly in the areas of administrative costs related to banking and currency exchange.

**Links to Findings 31**

*3.3: Has the Joint Action succeeded in adapting to the changing context in a timely manner? What were the enabling factors and the barriers?*

**Conclusion 3.3.1:** The Joint Action has been largely successful in adapting to the changing context in Lebanon, though timeliness of adaptation has been a constraint, due to a variety of factors. However, there are ongoing opportunities to be more responsive to the needs of the Syrian population and in a more timely fashion.

**Links to Findings 32, 33**

**EVALUATION QUESTION 4, Sub-question 4.1: How effective was the coordination between WFP and UNHCR in implementing the Joint Action and its adaptations, through the LOUISE mechanism, and coordination with donors and other stakeholders (such as CAMEALEON, Basic Assistance and Food Security Sectors, academia, etc.)? What should be maintained? What needs to be improved?**

**Conclusion 4.1.1:** Despite differences in mandate and competitiveness inherent to different organisational approaches, there have been some definite successes with respect to coordination. These successes (joint monitoring, advocacy on transfer values, joint donor funding, greater political space, joint needs analysis) can be capitalised on and deepened by UNHCR and WFP in the future.

**Links to Findings 34-36**

**Conclusion 4.1.2:** Data-sharing between UNHCR and WFP in relation to beneficiaries of Joint Action cash has proven to be problematic, although both organisations appear to be making progress towards mutually acceptable working arrangements on this. Nonetheless, the two different approaches to maintaining, using and sharing data of rights-holders is an ongoing challenge, despite the 2018 Data-Sharing Addendum to the Global MoU.

**Links to Finding 36**

**4.2: How well the joint action has interacted with other programmes/activities of the two organisations (e.g., PCAP, ECA, Food e-card, WINCAP etc.)?**

**Conclusion 4.2.1:** There are clear overlaps, layering and synergies between different cash modalities and programme management tools used by both UNHCR and WFP in the Joint Action (and other assistance activities), justifying the overall joint approach to the programme. However, these positive aspects of joint work have not been well articulated from the Joint Action outset, nor follow an explicit strategy of seeking synergies/efficiencies across different programme dimensions.

**Links to Finding 37**

**Conclusion 4.2.2:** The scope and purpose of cash modalities for different purposes is becoming increasingly irrelevant in the context of deepening crises and progressively limited transfer values. There is diminishing value and cost-efficiency in attempting to layer assistance types (MPC; MCAP; food assistance; PCAP; winterisation) that are being stretched increasingly thinly to achieve maximum breadth in this context.

**Links to Finding 38**

**4.3: Has the joint action been coherent with the overall humanitarian response in Lebanon? Has it forged effective partnerships (including referrals) on the ground and allowed for making the bridge between addressing immediate needs and a longer-term approach?**

**Conclusion 4.3.1:** There is a consensus that the often-articulated but poorly-operationalised need to better link cash programming for refugees to longer-term development narratives is becoming increasingly important, albeit in the face of new challenges (political disinterest, social tension, deteriorating economy, decreasing aid). To do so can mitigate some of these challenges and even create efficiency gains through improved targeting, better coordination, improved services.

**Links to Finding 39**

**Conclusion 4.3.2:** Linkages between the Joint Action modalities and other cash transfer initiatives are primarily focused on avoidance of duplication, which is largely (though not completely) successful. There is a need to do more to understand the complementarity of assistance. Digital coordination solutions such as the RAIS, if more widely disseminated and taken up, can help to minimise overlaps, as can maintenance of ongoing good communications with other UN agencies and NGOs both directly and via the working groups.

**Links to Finding 40**

**Conclusion 4.3.3:** Limited engagement with the NGO/CSO sector is a missed opportunity to engage more deeply along the humanitarian-peace-development nexus. Such engagement is both in-line with recommendations of numerous assessments and reviews over the past several years (as discussed above), but also can help mitigate some of the negative outcomes of increasingly limited cash assistance (both in relative terms related to currency inflation and in absolute terms in funding reductions in coming years) and the negative societal outcomes of the ongoing crisis.

**Links to Finding 41**

*4.4: What is the scope for aligning multipurpose cash assistance to refugees with the social protection landscape (e.g., services, livelihoods programmes, cash-plus approaches, etc.) and humanitarian development nexus in Lebanon?*

**Conclusion 4.4.1:** Recent developments in the enabling environment for social protection may provide new entry points for programming, which warrant further exploration. While Lebanese and Syrian populations may need different approaches, it is important to have a common vision. At a minimum, there are arguments for greater strategic alignment of the cash assistance programmes for refugees and Lebanese directed at future inclusion for all population groups. Depending on the direction that the social protection system development takes, there are various ways that the Joint Action could also potentially contribute to social protection system development - such as through complementing or supporting the roll out of the proposed social grants.

**Links to Findings 42, 43**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

\*Recommendations marked with an asterisk are relevant for Joint Action donors

Recommendation	Linkage	Time
<p><b>Recommendation 1.1.1*</b>: UNHCR and WFP should intensify or accelerate efforts to increase programme relevance, effectiveness and efficiency through:</p> <p><i>a. Diversification of financial service providers (notably the use of MTOs) to: Reduce reliance on a single bank and its infrastructure; expand the range of access points for cash recipients.</i></p> <p><i>b. Seek clarification from and agreement with the Cash Taskforce on the next steps (if any) for dollarisation and, if it is to be implemented, prepare through robust risk analysis and ensure that effective mitigation measures are considered (e.g. a phased approach).</i></p> <p><i>c. Maintaining focus on minimising delays and inefficiencies in the cash delivery processes, notably with respect to service delivery points (MTOs vs. ATMs) and faster turnaround on card replacement.</i></p> <p><i>d. Incorporate specialist analysis of the legal, policy and macro-economic landscape into risk assessments related to cash programming, particularly as it relates to transfer values, dollarisation and inflation considerations which could mitigate the divergence between needs and resources. Such assessments should also incorporate timing considerations, i.e. potential opportunity costs (for programming and the organisations) in relation to specific action or inaction.</i></p> <p><i>e. Explore the potential for efficiency gains in pooling/combining all assistance types to provide a standard basic amount, if not possible to effectively layer with the resources available. Clarifying/simplifying approaches to cash transfer can lead to greater efficiencies and improve accountability to all stakeholders and generate greater donor buy-in.</i></p>	<p><b>Links to Conclusions 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 3.1.2, 3.3.1, 4.2.1, 4.2.2</b></p>	<p><b>Short</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Short – Medium</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 1.2.1</b>: UNHCR and WFP should seek greater opportunities to enhance the gender responsiveness of the Joint Action beyond gender-sensitive cash disbursement processes, particularly if the external environment becomes more stable. This should include conducting caseload analyses that study the ongoing gender-sensitivity and inclusiveness of the targeting model.</p>	<p><b>Links to Conclusions 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.3.1</b></p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>



<p><b>Recommendation 1.3.1*:</b> Continue efforts to identifying (and therefore reassessing) cases where household registration data is out of date as part of a redesign of the GRM for 2022-23, to ensure it continues to effectively address errors of exclusion. If UNHCR/WFP do make the proposed change to the targeting approach for 2022-23 and include the GRM profiles from the outset of targeting, the GRM could be straightforwardly reoriented in one (or more) of the following ways to ensure it continues to focus on identifying specific cases of erroneous exclusion due to the model, without calling into question the legitimacy of the model itself:</p> <p><i>a. Identifying households erroneously scored as being above the severely vulnerable threshold (i.e. not those who are among the 33% that are excluded from multi-purpose cash due to limited resources, as this is not an error due to the formula but due to the funding limitations).</i></p> <p><i>b. Maintaining assessment and assistance (i.e. via ECA/PCAP) to protection cases referred by protection actors and/or those who have become more vulnerable due to shock (to be effective, this would need to be available throughout the year).</i></p> <p><i>c. Maintain an appropriate capacity (via implementing partners) to conduct outreach visits to validate or amend household information in cases where registration data and information supplied via the GRM process conflict, linked to the formal registration data update process.</i></p>	<p><b>Links to Conclusions 1.3.1</b></p>	<p><b>Short</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 1.3.2:</b> UNHCR/WFP should explore how information related to marginalisation profiles of households (that have limited possibilities for falsification) could be made public to increase accountability and transparency.</p> <p>The use of the Multidimensional Deprivation Index to determine qualification may not be easily understood by the general public, but the tool and questions are publicly available and could easily be understood by people working on this process and project. This would leave the previous per capita expenditure-based aspect of the targeting process as difficult to understand, but the percentage of recipients that solely qualify due to the per capita expenditure aspect of the PMT model would be reduced.</p>	<p><b>Links to Conclusions 1.3.1, 1.3.2</b></p>	<p><b>Short – Medium</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 1.4.1:</b> UNHCR and WFP should continue mechanisms to facilitate qualification for assistance in off-calendar periods outside inclusion through the complex PMT system (and unrelated to protection needs). The use of the MDDI and profiles may assist in identifying those with acute and unexpected need. This should be coupled with a predictable and transparent cash support entry and exit processes for recipients that are decoupled from annual re-enlistment tied into annual budgeting. Consider linking these cases to parallel modalities (e.g., ECA, PCAP) to underpin longer-term assistance.</p> <p>Annual analyses and reporting on caseloads should be undertaken to:</p> <p><i>a. Identify characteristics of households consistently receiving benefits who could benefit from a longer-term guaranteed support, and</i></p> <p><i>b. Identify characteristics of households who face the greatest uncertainty in benefits: those who receive it for a year, and then do not receive it a following year, with a view to developing profiles for automatic inclusion, or edge cases which sometimes (appropriately) do and sometimes do not qualify.</i></p>	<p><b>Links to Conclusions 1.4.1, 1.4.2</b></p>	<p><b>Short – Medium</b></p>

<p><b>Recommendation 2.1.1:</b> In 2023, critically rethink the objectives, and the design, of cash for food and basic assistance in light of the changes in the context. While a cash programme for food and basic needs remains a relevant and critical part of the response for Syrians in Lebanon, the design fundamentals of the Joint Action should reflect the substantially greater reach of the programme with more limited contribution on a per capita/household basis to basic needs outcomes.</p>	<p><b>Links to Conclusions 2.1.1</b></p>	<p><b>Short</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2.2.1:</b> Increase internal monitoring and analysis of outputs for both women-headed households and conduct (qualitative and/or quantitative) analysis of gender-related outcomes for women and girl members in all households with a view to:</p> <p><i>a. More accurately determining existing gender-related indicators of vulnerability (e.g. female-headed households) and establishing new gender equality-related indicators (perhaps related to new programming measures noted below).<sup>256</sup> Use of the IASC Gender and Age Marker (<a href="https://www.iascgenderwithagemarker.com/en/home/">https://www.iascgenderwithagemarker.com/en/home/</a>) should be considered.</i></p> <p><i>b. Incorporating programming measures that target gender-related issues, e.g. access to justice for women, livelihoods opportunities for women (in line with recommendations 4.3.1 and 4.4.1) and access to health care, in line with the findings of the VASyR.</i></p>	<p><b>Links to Conclusions 2.2.1, 2.2.2</b></p>	<p><b>Short</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2.3.1:</b> UNHCR and WFP should increase programme visibility and advocacy at all levels to combat inaccurate information about the programme and highlight its contributions to the socio-economic environment of Lebanon. Both agencies should capitalise on the increased advocacy power and voice that operating jointly brings to ensure these messages are more widely understood amongst Government stakeholders and the wider public. This should take place in coordination with ongoing developments in the social protection landscape for Lebanese so the Joint Action (and other multi-purpose case programming for Syrians) can be viewed as part of a package of support to all in need.</p>	<p><b>Links to Conclusions 2.3.1, 2.3.2</b></p>	<p><b>Short – Medium</b></p>

<sup>256</sup> See also the Gender Handbook For Humanitarian Action [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2018-iasc\\_gender\\_handbook\\_for\\_humanitarian\\_action\\_eng\\_0.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2018-iasc_gender_handbook_for_humanitarian_action_eng_0.pdf)

<p><b>Recommendation 2.4.1:</b> UNHCR and WFP should accommodate substantially diminished access by the Syrian population to mobile/cellular connectivity through an updated communications strategy that could consider the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Advocate for the introduction of a toll-free number(s) for call centres.</i></li> <li>– <i>Analysis of the changing dynamics of mobile phone access/ownership (e.g. increased intra-household sharing of devices).</i></li> <li>– <i>Revised protection SOPs to reflect diminished access of vulnerable groups to safe/private telephone access.</i></li> <li>– <i>Increased focus on call-back procedures for missed or dropped calls in call centres.</i></li> <li>– <i>Use of validation sessions as an opportunity for information and accountability by UNHCR/WFP to the Syrian population regarding the programme.</i></li> <li>– <i>Diversification of two-way communication channels, including enhanced community engagement and in-person interaction (e.g. regular consultations, help desks) and expanded use of social media and technological solutions.</i></li> <li>– <i>Exploring how call centre operations can adequately meet AAP considerations (e.g. regarding communication of targeting, re-inclusion approaches etc.).</i></li> <li>– <i>Putting in place more outcome-related measures of call-centre performance, e.g. user-satisfaction surveys, user experiences/processes.</i></li> <li>– <i>Tracking cost-effectiveness aspects of the call centre operations, to ensure that optimal value for money is being achieved vis á vis the original joint model.</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Links to Conclusions 2.4.1, 2.4.2</b></p>	<p><b>Short – Medium</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3.1.1:</b> To maximise cost-effectiveness, UNHCR/WFP should conduct an analysis of the costs and benefits of different approaches for targeting basic assistance. While there are limitations to the current targeting approach, all alternatives will have cost effectiveness trade-offs to consider. This should take into account factors such as the timeliness, costs, expected error, ease of implementation, room for bias/subjectivity and ways to mitigate, community understanding/acceptance, and potential for alignment on social protection. The key factor to consider is that agencies’ own priorities (notably around cost-efficiency) will differ from those of communities. In this respect, a reduction in accuracy to some degree could be justified if overall it improves transparency and fairness for refugees.</p>	<p><b>Links to Conclusions 3.1.1</b></p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3.2.1:</b> UNHCR and WFP should maintain their strategy of seeking to mitigate the worst of the crises for the maximum amount of people as being the most appropriate strategy to meet the overall goal of the Joint Action, if not the specific objectives.</p>	<p><b>Links to Conclusions 3.2.1, 3.2.2</b></p>	<p><b>Short</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3.3.1*:</b> UNHCR and WFP should advocate for greater exploration of and investment in service-oriented solutions that allow vulnerable populations (refugees and poor Lebanese) to meet certain basic needs outside of cash assistance. For example, UNHCR/WFP should explore appetite among donors for greater support to enhancing universal health coverage / making access free at point of use. This is something that health sector actors, and UNHCR, could be well placed to support. In the context of inflation this could be one way to relieve pressure on basic needs cash assistance.</p>	<p><b>Links to Conclusions 3.3.1</b></p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>

<p><b>Recommendation 4.1.1:</b> To clarify the processes and boundaries of data-sharing on the Joint Action, UNHCR and WFP should revisit the 2018 Data-Sharing Addendum to the Global MoU ensuring that it is fully internally consistent and reflects both organisations’ data policies.</p>	<p><b>Links to Conclusions 4.1.1, 4.1.2</b></p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4.3.1*:</b> UNHCR and WFP should consider ways that the Joint Action could better link with and support recovery and self reliance pathways of Syrians. Examples include:</p> <p><i>a. Beneficiaries could be ‘calibrated’ according to the presence of structural vulnerabilities or economic potential of the household, i.e. whether they require long term income support or have potential to support themselves if provided with the means to do so, for links to (UN or other) livelihoods programmes</i></p> <p><i>b. Link basic needs assistance to a package of support for those who either seek to migrate elsewhere or return to Syria.</i></p> <p><i>c. Explore more ‘development’ sources of finance to compensate for diminishing humanitarian funds.</i></p> <p><i>d. Deepen engagement with other actors along the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. This can be initiated with existing implementing partners that already have a mandate and capacity to undertake longer-term development programming and potentially resources to allocate to longer-term solutions for Syrians, either within Lebanon, and/or as part of the emergence of eventual return to Syria.</i></p>	<p><b>Links to Conclusions 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3</b></p>	<p><b>Medium – Long</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4.4.1*:</b> Redesign of the Joint Action objectives (see Recommendation 2.1.1) should include connections to the wider response and/or assistance to Lebanese via the following measures:</p> <p><i>a. Consolidation of the Joint Action plus other modalities of food and basic need assistance to Syrians to move more towards the foundations of a more coherent safety net and allow for greater economies of scale.</i></p> <p><i>b. Strategic coordination (and communication) of this (and other) assistance with that provided to vulnerable Lebanese, towards a coherent safety net design for the population as a whole.</i></p> <p><i>c. Consider ways to link up with and complement the UNICEF-supported social grants to refugees via, for example, support on identification and referral of cases for social grants that could provide additional ‘layers’ of assistance to meet vulnerabilities.</i></p> <p><i>d. Ensure learning from the Joint Action (via needs assessments, outcome monitoring and evaluations, reviews etc.) feeds back into social protection initiatives through the LCRP and other coordination processes and forums.</i></p>	<p><b>Links to Conclusions 4.4.1</b></p>	<p><b>Medium – Long</b></p>

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS MAPPING

Recommendation	Links to Conclusions	Links to Findings
<b>Recommendation 1.1.1</b>	1.1.1	1, 2, 3
	1.1.2	4, 5, 6
	3.1.2	28, 29
	3.3.1	32, 33
	4.2.1	37
	4.2.2	38
<b>Recommendation 1.2.1</b>	1.2.1	1, 6, 7
	1.2.2	3, 6, 7
	1.3.1	9, 10, 11
<b>Recommendation 1.3.1</b>	1.3.1	9, 10, 11
<b>Recommendation 1.3.2</b>	1.3.1	9, 10, 11
	1.3.2	12
<b>Recommendation 1.4.1</b>	1.4.1	13
	1.4.2	14-16
<b>Recommendation 2.1.1</b>	2.1.1	16-18
<b>Recommendation 2.2.1</b>	2.2.1	19-21
	2.2.2	20, 21
<b>Recommendation 2.3.1</b>	2.3.1	22
	2.3.2	23
<b>Recommendation 2.4.1</b>	2.4.1	24-26
	2.4.2	26
<b>Recommendation 3.1.1:</b>	3.1.1	28
<b>Recommendation 3.2.1:</b>	3.2.1	30
	3.2.2	31
<b>Recommendation 3.3.1:</b>	3.3.1	32, 33
	3.1.2	28, 29
<b>Recommendation 4.1.1:</b>	4.1.1	34-36
	4.1.2	36
<b>Recommendation 4.3.1</b>	4.3.1	39
	4.3.2	40
	4.3.3	41
<b>Recommendation 4.4.1</b>	4.4.1	42, 43

## APPENDIX 2. TIMELINE

Legend: Evaluation team		
AT: Andrew Trembley; BO: Brian O Callaghan; GS: Gabrielle Smith; HC: Hania Chahal; EDS: Economic Development Solutions		
Steps	By whom	Key dates
UNHCR/IMC contract signing	UNHCR/IMC Procurement	By 01 April 2022
Team contracting	IMC HR	April 01 – 25
Initial call with UNHCR	BOC, UNHCR/WFP evaluation steering committee	April 6
Confidentiality/safeguarding form signatures (by IMC evaluation team (i.e. non-EDS – these to be completed later))	IMC HR	By 08 April
Phase I: Inception (April 10 – July 15)		
Kick-off meeting (internal)	Evaluation team, UNHCR team	April 29
Sharing of UNHCR datasets for review	UNHCR project team	April 25
Desk review of secondary data & evaluability assessment	Evaluation team	April 25 – May 15
Development of draft evaluation analytical framework	BOC	April 25 – May 15
Scoping interviews	BOC & GS	May 16–30
<b>Deliverable: Draft 1 Inception Report</b>	<b>BOC</b>	<b>May 30</b>
Report review by UNHCR & Quality Assurance service	UNHCR/WFP/Steering Committee	May 31 – June 20
Feedback on draft report provided to evaluation team	UNHCR/WFP/Steering Committee	June 17
Second draft of report submitted to Evaluation Reference Group	UNHCR/WFP Reference Group	June 27
Finalisation of Inception Report	Evaluation team	July 11–13
Deliverable: Final approved Inception Report	BOC	July 15
Phase II: Data collection (July 11 – August 26)		
Preparation, translation of data collection tools	EDS	July 10–20
Selection of survey sample (from refugee registration database)	UNHCR	July 4–15
Piloting of telephone survey tool	EDS	July 25
Finalisation of telephone survey tool	AT, BOC, EDS	July 25–27
Preparation of field logistics for research	Evaluation team	July 01 – July 15

Preparation of training materials, data entry, coding sheets (qualitative & quantitative)	Evaluation team	July 01 – July 20
Training on telephone survey tool, data collection protocols, data management & coding	AT, EDS	July 25
Field research: FGDs/Site visits	AS	July 18-31
Field research: KIIs – in-person	BOC, AS	July 18-Aug 26
Field research: KIIs – remote	BOC, GS	July 18-Aug 26
Field research: Telephone survey data collection	EDS, AT	July 25-Aug 10
Data transcription into coding sheets	Evaluation team	Aug 10
<b>Deliverable: Preliminary findings presentation/debrief with UNHCR/WFP evaluation steering committee/reference group</b>	<b>Evaluation team</b>	<b>Aug 26</b>
<b>Phase III: Analysis and Reporting (August 26 – December 16)</b>		
Primary data processing (pre-coded data) & cleaning	Evaluation team	Aug 8 – Sept 15
Secondary data processing & coding	AT, BOC, GS	Aug 8 – Sept 15
Data analysis per agreed benchmarks, eval. questions & sub-questions	Evaluation team	August 26 – Oct 25
Preparation of draft 1 evaluation report	Evaluation team	August 26 – Nov 11
<b>Deliverable: Findings presentation – stakeholder workshop</b>	<b>Evaluation team</b>	<b>November 3</b>
<b>Deliverable: Draft 1 evaluation report</b>	<b>BOC</b>	<b>November 11</b>
Final evaluation report sent for quality assurance review	UNHCR project team	Nov 15
Feedback from UNHCR/WFP on draft 1 evaluation report	UNHCR/WFP/Reference Group	December 15
Finalisation of evaluation report	Evaluation team	Dec 15 – Jan 31
<b>Dissemination &amp; Follow-up (February 2023)</b>		
<b>Deliverable: Presentation of findings &amp; recommendations to RG, UNHCR/WFP Regional Bureau/HQ</b>	<b>Evaluation team</b>	<b>February 2</b>
<b>Deliverable: Quality-reviewed, final version of evaluation report and coded, cleaned, deidentified datasets</b>	<b>BOC</b>	<b>February 3</b>

## APPENDIX 3. METHODOLOGY

### Overview

The evaluation methods consisted of the following suite of research methods/tools/approaches:

Primary data	Secondary data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KIIs with institutional programme stakeholders and community leaders.</li> <li>• FGDs with Joint Action beneficiaries including those discontinued in cycle 2021–22.</li> <li>• Household telephone (remote) survey.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme documents – programme proposals, reports, and monitoring strategies/reports.</li> <li>• Datasets and data collection standard operating procedures (SOPs) regarding targeting, AAP, etc. (GRM, SIHV, VASyR and other needs assessments).</li> <li>• Donor policy, strategic and planning documents.</li> <li>• Relevant research commissioned by UNHCR and WFP or other partners related to cash transfer programming.</li> <li>• Ongoing joint monitoring data from UNHCR/WFP.</li> <li>• UNHCR/WFP guidance (SOPs, policies and procedures) for cash assistance programming.</li> </ul>

As noted above, the primary data collected by the evaluation team was supported by, and triangulated with, available secondary data, including national-level data on cash transfer services, outputs, outcomes/performance of the Joint Action. The evaluation team also reviewed:

- a. Data from the GRM and Joint Call Centre/Hotline and other data on beneficiary feedback.
- b. Process (input/output) and outcome indicators for the Joint Action collected by UNHCR/WFP.

This allowed the evaluation team to analyse secondary data at the individual/ beneficiary level, community level and initiative level and contribute to a comparative analysis of the Joint Action initiatives and the wider cash transfer sector.

For some of the primary data collection, IMC Worldwide/DT-Global partnered with a national partner: Economic Development Solutions (EDS) – a consulting, data collection, and research firm based in Beirut – in order to collect household survey data via national experienced enumerators.

### Data sources and sampling plan

Table 10, below, provides a brief overview of the key evaluation tools and proposed sample. The sections that follow provide a more detailed overview of the specific data sources and sampling plan for the evaluation.

**Table 10: Evaluation primary data tools and sample sizes**

Primary data tool	Proposed sample
<b>KIIs</b>	UNHCR and WFP Joint Action programme staff, implementing partners, donor, sister UN agencies, cluster/sector/WG representatives, cash transfer consortia, private sector partners, government (51 KIIs)
<b>FGDs</b>	Beneficiaries of one or more Joint Action cash transfers (15 FGDs)
<b>Household telephone surveys</b>	Beneficiaries of one or more Joint Action cash transfers (1,000 households)
<b>Site Visits</b>	Evaluator observation of a purposive/convenience sample of programme activities such as registration, validation, ATM usage at different sites.



## Data Sample Selection

### *Key informant interviewees*

The evaluation team initially shortlisted external and internal stakeholders based on the following:

- Inputs of the evaluation managers and evaluation steering committee.
- The initial desk review of Joint Action documentation (reports, analyses, etc.).
- Knowledge/experience of the evaluation technical specialist.

This list included key UNHCR/WFP, partner and/or other external stakeholder staff. The full list of potential key informants constructed during the stakeholder mapping process formed the sampling frame for KIIs. This task commenced during the inception phase and was refined and developed during the data collection phase in an iterative manner (i.e., snowball sampling, whereby initial interviewees provided additional names/contacts for potential additional interviews). The ultimate sample of key informants was 69 individuals.

### *Focus group discussion participants*

As individuals are more likely to share their perceptions/opinions in a group setting with others of a similar background/experience, FGDs were undertaken with groups of 10 people disaggregated (to the extent possible) according to the following criteria :

- Beneficiaries of UNHCR MCAP/WFP CFF.
- Beneficiaries of WFP MPC.
- By gender.
- Current beneficiary households.
- Discontinued households (from 2021–22 cycle) including those reincluded through the GRM.
- Geographical distribution across Lebanon to explore how contextual variation (security/access/travel issues) impacts on beneficiary experiences.
- High density urban locations
- More rural areas (to explore issues of distance and transport costs).

When setting up FGDs, the evaluation also discussed with implementing partners (who identified FGD participants) prioritising inclusion of specifically vulnerable household members (female-headed households, the elderly and/or people with disabilities). The FGD question sets included questions specifically related to vulnerability.

### *Telephone survey households*

The telephone survey comprised a final sample of 1,000 (of 1,000 planned and 1,063 successfully contacted – 63 household did not give consent to be interviewed) observations. To maximise data protection, the evaluation team used a sample drawn from the beneficiaries database by UNHCR with direction from the evaluation team. Sample selection made use of stratified sampling to ensure sufficient respondents in four subgroups: current and past recipients of both MCAP/CFF transfers and MPC transfers (see table below). The sample consisted of 75 per cent current beneficiaries and 25 per cent past beneficiaries and of 65 per cent MCAP/CFF beneficiaries and 35 per cent MPC beneficiaries. Sample selection within each of the four subgroups had geographic representativeness across the four regions. Past beneficiaries were selected from those who were enrolled in the programme in 2021 but discontinued for receiving Joint Action transfers in 2022. Samples provided by UNHCR and WFP incorporated a further replacement list of 1,000 households to ensure sufficient respondents from each sample group. Stratification by whether they are recipients of MCAP/CFF or of MPC allowed analysis of the joint action to be representative, and allowed individual analysis and comparison of the two groups. Stratification by current and past beneficiaries also allowed contrast between those currently and previously receiving support.

To ensure that vulnerable and marginalised stakeholders were included in the sample, the sample was checked using available marginalisation data provided with the sample. During data collection, incoming data was monitored to identify whether collected data has lower than expected responses by marginalised groups.

## Breakdown of Sample

The following table provides details of the evaluation research samples by data collection type and municipality. Regional composition of telephone surveys were based on distribution of the actual beneficiary proportions

**Table 11: Sample breakdown by region**

Location	Beneficiary Population <sup>257</sup>	KII	FGD	Telephone Survey Current Beneficiaries	Telephone Survey Past Beneficiaries (see text above)
North Region	23.6%	5	4	305	41
Bekaa Region	22.9%	5	4	210	50
Beirut-Mount Lebanon (BML)	40.8%	35	4	229	14
South Region	12.7%	5	3	146	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>110</b>

**Table 12: Telephone survey sample breakdown by initiative**

	MCAP/CFF Recipients	MPC Recipients	Total
<b>Current Beneficiaries*</b>	500	250	750
<b>Past Beneficiaries**</b>	150	100	250
<b>Total</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>1,000</b>

Note that the survey respondents were not queried as to the exact programme modality under which they were receiving assistance as there was a high likelihood of them not providing a correct answer.

The above breakdown provided sufficient statistical power for several important hypothesis tests. Many key outcome indicators are defined as proportions of beneficiaries: for example, the proportion of beneficiaries that borrowed money or purchased on credit in the three months preceding the survey. When making comparisons among current and past beneficiaries, the design allowed the ability to identify significant differences if the difference between the two proportions are seven percent or more.<sup>258</sup> The sample also had sufficient power to test whether the beneficiary sample met a hypothesised target within three percentage points.

<sup>257</sup> Based on numbers from Final Caseload Analysis for Basic Assistance Working Group. Only beneficiaries of MPC, CFF, and MCAP included.

<sup>258</sup> Power analyses of proportions were conducted in Stata and assume a minimum power of 0.8 and a 95 percent confidence level.

## Overview of primary data collection tools

### 1. Key Informant Interviews

#### Description

Semi-structured, remote and/or face-to-face interviews with a wide variety of stakeholders are an ideal method for obtaining in-depth, qualitative information. The main advantage of this method is that it promotes serious reflection and response by people knowledgeable in a setting of trust and confidentiality. The evaluation team was able to probe and follow up with interviewees in a way that surveys or other static instruments do not allow, potentially yielding more nuanced and relevant information. Especially important for this evaluation is that KIIs allowed the researchers to:

- Capture views and experience on the relevance of programme plans and strategies, the needs basis of activities and any changes on the basis of new data or analysis;
- Capture respondents' views from within regarding what had/had not worked and why;
- Encourage respondents to highlight the crucial gaps and solicit their perspectives on possible means to address these.

The KIIs allowed the evaluation team to test the agreed benchmarks/indicators as outlined in the analytical framework. The evaluation team expected to conduct 50-60 interviews with these stakeholders and ultimately conducted 51 interviews.

Two sets of KII tools are presented in Appendix 5. The individual questions presented in these sets were tailored to the interviewees as needed for in-depth exploration on specific issues. The two sets are as follows:

#### Joint Action representatives (UNHCR/WFP)

Key informants from Joint Action stakeholders were located primarily in Beirut (or outside Lebanon for regional/global level individuals), and interviews with this cohort were primarily the responsibility of the international evaluation team members, either in-person or remotely.

#### Government, non-government, donors

Similar to UNHCR/WFP stakeholders, key informants from these Joint Action stakeholder groups were located primarily in Beirut (with some municipality-level stakeholders, and outside Lebanon for global and regional level donor colleagues), and interviews with this cohort were also primarily the responsibility of the international evaluation team members.

### 2. Focus Group Discussions

#### Description

The evaluation team utilised secondary research data (from the desk reviews of Joint Action documentation), the in-country experience and expertise of technical specialists, evaluation steering committee members and/or the evaluation co-managers from UNHCR/WFP to identify a shortlist of sites that served as examples of Joint Action-supported locations. General criteria for selection of these sites included those representative of a long-term continuum of cash transfer support, those relevant to the objectives of this evaluation, and those representing a reasonable diversity of socio-economic characteristics. FGDs, in Arabic, were undertaken by the National Specialist who has extensive experience in this research method.

The FGD guide consisted of questions covering key information related to the evaluation questions/sub-questions and benchmarks presented in the analytical framework in Appendix 4. A list of FGD questions and protocol for conducting the FGDs and ensuring consent is presented in Appendix 5.

### 3. Household Telephone Surveys

#### Description

The evaluation data partner, EDS, conducted a telephone-based household survey to explore the context, outcomes and perceptions of the modalities of the Joint Action among community-based beneficiaries of the

Joint Action, i.e., recipients of one or more of the cash transfers under evaluation. The survey collected both qualitative and quantitative data from the household-based respondents across all targeted locations. The survey reached 1,063 (of 1,000 planned) households. Of these, 63 did not give consent to be interviewed, so the interviews were terminated and an alternate selected.

While analysis of respondents was disaggregated by sex and age, a specific gender breakdown of the sample was not deliberately stratified, i.e., no specific sex ratio was mandated, rather the available individuals (male and female) were surveyed.

The telephone-based data collection approach entails ethical concerns around confidential collection of sensitive data from respondents and ensuring appropriate consent from respondents under 18 years of age. The evaluation researchers therefore only collected survey data from adults over 18. A detailed description of the consent procedure is provided in Appendix 5 with the list of the survey questions.

#### *4. Site visits/direct observation*

Although not part of the initially-planned methodology, the evaluation team leader, in the conducting of field visits for KIIs and supervision of FGDs, took the opportunity to conduct observations of UNHCR and WFP refugee registration/validation locations, field offices and financial service providers in various locations throughout Lebanon. While strictly limited and ad-hoc, this provided useful contextual data and exposure (i.e. triangulation) to the different programme mechanics and processes that are part of the Joint Action, as well as validating some of the reported activities and phenomena (e.g. queues at ATMs) noted by primary and secondary sources throughout the evaluation. The following sites and locations were visited:

- UNHCR Registration Centre, Tripoli;
- WFP Validation Sites (Liban Post), Tripoli;
- UNHCR Validation Centre, BML;
- ATM withdrawal points, Tripoli.

## Data Collection

### *Enumerator training*

Once the finalised data collection tools were approved by UNHCR/WFP, they were prepared in templates and linked to the evidence database for rapid and efficient coding and cleaning. The Lebanon data collection partner, EDS, piloted the draft survey prior to data collection with a small sample (approximately 20 households) and, on the basis of feedback from the enumerators during the pilot, the evaluation team adjusted the tools appropriately to yield the required data. EDS was responsible for organising the logistics and providing staff to pre-test the tools. The revised tools were shared with UNHCR/WFP for final approval after adjustment based on findings from pre-testing.

Enumerators with previous experience in conducting this kind of research were preferentially chosen, particularly individuals with familiarity of the Lebanon cash transfer system and work with Syrian refugees. Once the tools had been finalised, evaluation team members (led remotely by the Data Specialist) held a one-day training of the ten enumerators, management staff and field managers. Training content included:

- Research ethics;
- Child and vulnerable adult safeguarding issues;<sup>259</sup>
- Review of/exercises on the survey tool;
- Sampling plan and logistics;
- Data transfer and quality control; confidentiality and security of data collected.

### *Primary data collection*

#### **Key informant interviews**

Prior to the Lebanon field data collection mission, the evaluation team identified key stakeholders with whom to conduct KIIs. The initial draft list was developed as preparations for, and data collection, took place. While specific KII requests were made prior to arriving in-country, the evaluation team adjusted these based on completed interviews which resulted in some identification of other key stakeholders not originally proposed. Data from the KIIs was collated/coded into proforma templates (MS Excel-based) for cleaning, more focused coding, and analysis, discussed further below.

#### **Focus group discussions**

The FGDs were conducted in sex-disaggregated groups in a safe space (a community location such as a centre or meeting hall) and lasted approximately one hour. The evaluation team recorded responses by detailed note-taking (in English) according to the FGD template. The evaluation team conducted 15 FGDs with Joint Action cash transfer recipients. See Appendix 5c for a detailed protocol for FGDs.

#### **Household telephone survey**

The telephone surveys were conducted by experienced and ten trained enumerators from the data collection partner, EDS between 15 and 20 August, 2022. The positive participating response rate was 96 per cent of households contacted (i.e. 96 per cent of households contacted agreed to participate in the survey).

During data collection, the EDS team entered survey data directly into the survey templates, from which data was uploaded to the central cloud-based server daily. Raw data was exported to pre-coded templates in an appropriate analysis software (Stata), for subsequent analysis by the evaluation team Data Specialist. Data was monitored by EDS supervisors and the Data Specialist to ensure respondents met representativeness and stratification criteria discussed in the sample design.

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<sup>259</sup> Note that no children will participate in this evaluation, so researchers will have no requirement to come into direct contact with children

## *Secondary data*

Primary data collection is only one source of information necessary for the quantitative analysis. As noted above, there were numerous secondary data sources for quantitative and qualitative data.

Information from qualitative sources (documents) were reviewed in line with the analytical framework sub-questions and benchmarks/indicators.

## *Data analysis methods and data analysis plan*

### **Data cleaning, coding, and analysis**

To effectively respond to the evaluation questions and provide evaluation data for the specific indicators presented in the analytical framework below, the evaluation team conducted the following data types of data analysis:

#### **Quantitative data**

On finalisation of the quantitative data collection tools, the evaluation team developed appropriate coding guides and training materials for the EDS data collection team. They were provided with a standard electronic data entry format (ActivityInfo) and information was transcribed into this format, which functioned in Arabic and English. Descriptive analysis disaggregated by the relevant subgroup was completed in Stata and MS Excel.

#### **Qualitative data**

Two sets of coding took place. First the KII/FGD notes were coded to specific sub-questions and topics within these questions, highlighting key information following each interview by prescribed theme and summarising essential information, findings, and issues to further pursue. As a second step, the raw data was entered into the data entry code sheets. This was done daily, as possible.

In addition, issues and themes were shared among the evaluation team members so that these could be further explored and analysed. At the end of the data collection period, findings under each of the evaluation questions were summarised and shared among the evaluation team. The evaluation team conducted multiple reviews of data on a rolling basis as data collection was completed, as well as at the end of the data collection field visit.

## APPENDIX 4. EVALUATION MATRIX

Evaluation questions/ sub-questions	Reference indicators/benchmarks (tools in parentheses: DR = Desk Review, KII – Key Informant Interview, FGD = Focus Group Discussion, S = Survey)	Data sources
<p><b>Sub-Q. 1.1:</b> To what extent has the Joint Action (in its multiple modalities) been able to respond to the needs of the intended beneficiaries (women and men) in the context of evolving and compounding crises (refugees, COVID-19, economic collapse)?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Joint Action (MCAP, CFF &amp; MPC) foundational documents referencing and utilising findings from up-to-date needs assessments (e.g., VASyR). (DR)</li> <li>2. Assessments, proposals, design documents have explicit engagement strategy for affected populations. (DR)</li> <li>3. Joint Action components, strategies, activities reflective of directly articulated beneficiary needs. (DR, FGD, S)</li> <li>4. Changes in/new strategies responding to refugee/economic/COVID-19 crises and adequacy of these. (DR, KII)</li> <li>5. Perceptions of refugees on the responsiveness of the Joint Action to their evolving needs and constraints and appropriateness of changes made. (FGD, S)</li> </ol>	<p>Joint Action plans, strategies, results frameworks, annual/ interim reports (including results data), implementing agencies.</p> <p>Community/refugee leaders, Joint Action beneficiaries, governmental/ non-govt. stakeholders.</p>
<p><b>Sub-Q 1.2:</b> Has the Joint Action been able to integrate gender and equity issues in its modality?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implementation of proactive strategies &amp; activities to ensure gender/equity transformative approaches in design (e.g., proposals, TOC). (DR, KII)</li> <li>2. Implementation of proactive strategies and activities to ensure gender/ equity transformative approaches in implementation. (DR, KII)</li> <li>3. Presence/completeness of specific gender &amp; equity measures/markers within Joint Action datasets. (DR)</li> </ol>	<p>Annual/interim progress reports (incl. results data), implementing agencies, other stakeholders, beneficiaries.</p>
<p><b>Sub-Q 1.3:</b> How adequate was the targeting process (SMEB, DF, GRM and SIHV), i.e., transparent, predictable, independent, impartial, gender-sensitive, and inclusive for reaching the most vulnerable?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Targeting approach reflective of directly articulated needs of refugees. (DR, FGD, S)</li> <li>2. Perceptions of stakeholders (including beneficiaries) on the appropriateness of the targeting approach and way it is implemented. (FGD, S)</li> </ol>	<p>Joint Action programme plans, strategies, results frameworks. Joint Action beneficiaries.</p>
<p><b>Sub-Q 1.4:</b> Was the overall targeting approach by proxy mean testing (followed by GRM and SIHV) and the way it was implemented by both agencies and partners, the most appropriate given the nature and the size of the programme as well as the context?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Perceptions of stakeholders on and evidence of continued relevance of the targeting approach in the changing socio-economic context and existing partnership modality. (DR, KII)</li> <li>2. Evidence of consideration of alternative targeting approaches. (DR, KII)</li> </ol>	<p>Joint Action programme plans, strategies, results frameworks, annual/interim reports (including results data), implementing agencies.</p>

Evaluation questions/ sub-questions	Reference indicators/benchmarks (tools in parentheses: DR = Desk Review, KII – Key Informant Interview, FGD = Focus Group Discussion, S = Survey)	Data sources
<p><b>Sub-Q. 2.1:</b> To what extent has the Joint Action achieved its objectives?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Outcome/impact measurement mechanisms &amp; disaggregated data available. (DR)</li> <li>2. Joint Action programme indicators are logically derived from Basic Assistance/ Joint Action theory of change, objectives and adequate to measure their achievement. (DR)</li> <li>3. Presence of attributable results to programme and/or counterfactual (results or challenges in absence of programme). (DR)</li> <li>4. Evidence of Joint Action progress towards objectives (from institutional stakeholders). (KII)</li> <li>5. Evidence from beneficiaries of relative improvements of living conditions compared to those not/no longer receiving Joint Action support. (FGD, S)</li> <li>6. Beneficiary evidence of relative reductions in negative (food and/or livelihood) coping strategies or protection risks (e.g., child labour, survival sex, evictions, premature returns) as a result of Joint Action support. (FGD, S)</li> </ol>	<p>Joint Action programme strategies/results frameworks (inc. baseline data), annual/ interim reports (incl. results data), implementing agencies, beneficiaries.</p>
<p><b>Sub-Q. 2.2:</b> Were these outcomes different between men and women?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sex-disaggregated data show differential outcomes for male/female. (DR)</li> <li>2. Evidence from stakeholders/beneficiaries on m/f differential outcomes related to living conditions &amp; coping strategies/ protection issues. (KII, S)</li> </ol>	<p>Joint Action Programme results data, implementing agencies, beneficiaries.</p>
<p><b>Sub-Q. 2.3:</b> What are the unintended positive and/ or negative outcomes of the Joint Action on protection risks affecting beneficiaries or on tensions within families, especially amongst refugee communities and with host populations?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Evidence of unintended positive or negative changes (to protection risks faced by beneficiaries, intra-household relations, or community relations) attributable to programme activities. (KII, FGD, S)</li> </ol>	<p>Annual/interim progress reports (incl. results), strategic plan revisions, implementing agencies, beneficiaries.</p>



Evaluation questions/ sub-questions	Reference indicators/benchmarks (tools in parentheses: DR = Desk Review, KII – Key Informant Interview, FGD = Focus Group Discussion, S = Survey)	Data sources
<p><b>Sub-Q. 2.4:</b> How effective were the systems and measures applied to reinforce the accountability to affected population (AAP) (MCAP monitoring processes, complaint, referral and feedback mechanism, joint call centre, communication on uploads, communication on eligibility for assistance and discontinuation,?)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Quantity/quality of data from feedback mechanisms among implementing agencies. (DR)</li> <li>2. Trends in utilisation and accessibility of call centre and response/closure rates (call centre data/complaints management data). (DR)</li> <li>3. Evidence of mechanisms influencing prog. changes/course correction (inc. for COVID-19). (DR, KII)</li> <li>4. Perceptions of effectiveness of communication/complaints and feedback processes among beneficiaries, former beneficiaries, and implementing agencies. (KII, FGD, S)</li> </ol>	<p>Annual/interim progress reports (incl. results), strategic/work plan revisions, implementing agencies, beneficiaries.</p>
<p><b>Sub-Q. 3.1:</b> Have the processes (cash delivery mechanisms including issuance, validation, delivery, monitoring, and beneficiary feedback) been efficient, secure, and accessible?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Timeliness of cash transfer mechanisms to beneficiaries (perceived &amp; actual). (DR, FGD, S)</li> <li>2. Overall cost transfer ratio per beneficiary and monetary unit (USD) – including any end-user costs (monetary, time/convenience etc.). (DR)</li> <li>3. Presence of accessibility measures, including feedback mechanisms to facilitate cash transfers. (DR, KII, FGD, S)</li> <li>4. Presence and adequacy of security measures throughout the delivery cycle (inc. use of LOUISE transfer mechanism). (DR, KII, FGD, S)</li> </ol>	<p>Joint Action prog. strategies/results frameworks (inc. baseline data), annual/interim reports (inc. results data), external studies (e.g. CAMEALEON) implementing agencies, beneficiaries, Cash task force.</p>
<p><b>Sub-Q 3.2:</b> How appropriate was the human and financial resourcing to meet the Joint Action objectives, including multi-donor financing?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stakeholder perceptions of programme resource adequacy. (KII, FGD, S)</li> <li>2. Overall # of beneficiaries reached. (DR)</li> <li>3. Presence, timeliness of changes to transfer value in response to externalities (living cost changes etc.). (DR, KII)</li> </ol>	<p>Annual/interim progress reports (incl. results data &amp; financial data), implementing agencies, rights holders.</p>
<p><b>Sub-Q 3.3:</b> Has the Joint Action succeeded in adapting to the changing context in a timely and adequate manner? What were the enabling factors and the barriers?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evidence of programme changes/course correction – inc. COVID-19, including rationale for changes. (DR, KII)</li> <li>2. Timeliness (speed/efficiency) of programme changes/corrections. (DR, KII)</li> </ol>	<p>Annual/interim progress reports (incl. results data &amp; financial data), implementing agencies, rights holders.</p>

Evaluation questions/ sub-questions	Reference indicators/benchmarks (tools in parentheses: DR = Desk Review, KII – Key Informant Interview, FGD = Focus Group Discussion, S = Survey)	Data sources
<p><b>Sub-Q 4.1:</b> How effective was the coordination between WFP and UNHCR in implementing the Joint Action and its adaptations, through the LOUISE mechanism, and coordination with donors and other stakeholders (such as CAMEALEON, Basic Assistance and Food Security Sectors, academia, etc.)? What should be maintained? What needs to be improved?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Presence and quality of coordination frameworks/agreements etc. between partners. (DR)</li> <li>2. Quantity and quality of integration of coordination mechanisms across activities. (DR, KII)</li> <li>3. Attributable results to Joint Action programme and/or counterfactual (results or challenges in absence) due to coordination mechanisms. (DR, KII)</li> <li>4. Coordination challenges noted in reporting/by key stakeholders. (KII)</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Sub-Q. 4.2:</b> How well has the Joint Action interacted with other programmes/ activities of the two organisations (e.g., PCAP, ECA, Food e-card, WINCAP etc.)?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clear definitions and explicit intention for creating synergies across different interventions in Joint Action programme strategies. (DR)</li> <li>2. Synergy measures/indicators in place, implemented &amp; measured. (DR)</li> <li>3. Stakeholder evidence of synergies/efforts to minimise initiative overlap. (KII)</li> </ol>	<p>Programme agreements, MOUs, strategies/ results frameworks (inc. baseline data).</p> <p>Annual/interim progress reports, implementing agencies.</p>
<p><b>Sub-Q. 4.3:</b> Has the Joint Action been coherent with the overall humanitarian response in Lebanon? Has it forged effective partnerships (including referrals) on the ground and allowed for making the bridge between addressing immediate needs and a longer-term approach?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clear articulation of intent to integrate prog. strategies with other hum. response mechanisms. (DR, KII)</li> <li>2. Quantity/quality of outcomes of strategies/activities integration. (KII)</li> <li>3. Assessments, proposals, design docs, reports with natl. engagement strategy. (DR)</li> <li>4. Evidence of changes in national/local capacity of partners. (DR, KII)</li> </ol>	<p>Cluster/Working Group/ CAMEALEON reports, member testimony.</p> <p>Donor and other agencies.</p>
<p><b>Sub-Q. 4.4:</b> What is the scope for aligning multipurpose cash assistance to refugees with the social protection landscape (e.g., services, livelihoods programmes, cash-plus approaches, etc.) and the humanitarian-development-nexus in Lebanon?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Engagement strategies articulated within assessments, proposals, design documents with national actors and other social protection initiatives. (DR)</li> <li>2. Evidence of/opportunities for overlaps/ potential synergies between Joint Action programming and other social protection initiatives. (DR, KII)</li> </ol>	

## APPENDIX 5. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

### Appendix 5a: Key Informant Interview Questions – Internal Respondents (WFP/UNHCR)

<b>Interviewer:</b>	
<b>Interviewee (inc. sex):</b>	
<b>Job Title:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Location:</b>	

#### Any Background Information:

1	<p>How did you ensure that the Joint Action, in its design, reflected the needs of the intended beneficiaries?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> WFP – The 2018 CAMEALEON AAP study highlighted that there was little consultation of refugees in the WFP MPC prog design. What has changed or improved since then to enhance this?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> UNHCR – your Reg. Advisory Groups, how are these engaged in the JA and in what specific ways have these informed the design? Is this for WFP as well as UNHCR?</p>	Sub-Q.1.1
2	<p>The Joint Action design and implementation has changed in several ways since 2018 in response to the different crises (Economic Crisis/Beirut Blast/COVID). Were these changes adequate to maintain the relevance of the Joint Action to address the evolving needs? Could more have been done? What factors enabled or constrained ability to adapt the programme?</p> <p>Prompt: expansion of coverage; changes to transfer values; preferential exchange rate; increase in ATMs; staggering loading dates; queue control...</p> <p><b>WFP:</b> Please can you explain the preferential exchange rate with the bank....</p>	Sub-Q.1.1
3	<p>The JA continued to provide assistance as cash, through BLF. In the face of the economic challenges (banking sector challenges; currency collapse leading to aid conversion challenges; soaring inflation), were other modalities, or other ways of delivering, assessed? What was the justification for continuing with the current way of working?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> Know you negotiated the preferential exchange rate; but according to Reuters an internal U.N. assessment in February estimated that up to half the programme's value was absorbed by banks to convert donated US dollars to Lebanese currency.. It said the U.N. could have distributed in dollars, or negotiated a better rate with Lebanon's central bank. Do you agree?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> WFP's food assistance to Lebanese in the triple crisis was provided as in kind food. Why was that decision made for one population but the JA continued as cash?</p>	Sub-Q.1.1
4	<p>To what extent was the Joint Action design (via the proposals and theory of change) informed by an explicit (or implicit) gender analysis? What about analysis of other aspects of equity (age; disability...)? When/how have these analyses been repeated?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> was this a joint exercise WFP-UNHCR?</p>	Sub-Q.1.2

5	<p>To what extent did these analyses influence programming? Do you feel the Joint Action has been gender or equity transformative or was it more responsive or sensitive? How so?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> previous studies earlier in the JA period highlighted that refugee MPC as a standalone has limited potential to be transformative. Do you agree? What if any opportunities for enhancing the transformative potential of the JA have been explored?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> previous studies have highlighted that, in the process of developing systems that address needs at scale, MPC has inevitably faced some challenges in being responsive/sensitive to diverse needs. Do you agree? What if any opportunities for enhancing gender/age/disability sensitive implementation have been explored?</p>	Sub-Q.1.2
6	<p>Can you comment on your organisational capacities to support the design of gender/equity sensitive or transformative approaches on your cash programmes, and how this has evolved during the Joint Action period? Has enough been done?</p>	Sub-Q.1.2
7	<p>How were the expressed needs of refugees taken into account when the Joint Action targeting approach was being designed?</p>	Sub-Q.1.3
8	<p>Since then, what refugee feedback on targeting has been considered or influenced the approach?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> several studies have confirmed that refugees do not see the targeting process as fair or understand it. And that they would help more with less. UNHCR has had similar findings from RAG feedback. So, what of these directly articulated needs hv been taken into account?</p>	Sub-Q.1.3
9	<p>All targeting approaches have advantages and limitations. What have been the key advantages and limitations of the PMT targeting approach used in the Joint Action? What evidence do you have on this?</p> <p><b>Prompt:</b> transparency; simplicity; predictability; independence/ impartiality; ability to include 'most vulnerable'.</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> the AAP (and other) studies makes the case that one of the supposed benefits of the PMT approach (the scientific accuracy in measuring and ranking vulnerability) is not in practice meaningful since thousands of households are ranked within a couple of \$ of each other.</p>	Sub-Q.1.3

10	<p>Since 2019, in what ways has the targeting approach been modified to address these limitations. Have these changes been adequate? What more could be done?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> the key weakness of the model identified in the AAP and other studies is the challenges in explaining eligibility to communities (esp in a context where vulnerability is so homogeneous). The study made recommendations for how this might be improved. Were these acted on or any other measures taken? What more is needed?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> the targeting process (PMT and GRM) hinges on the accuracy of demographic data in UNHCR's PROGRES (and other) database/s. How confident are you about this? What measures have been put in place to ensure this and what more could be done?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> Do you feel the PMT design adequately analyses all relevant variables defining vulnerability, for maximising inclusion?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> are there any key variables defining vulnerability that are NOT included in the PROGRES dashboard? And has there ever been a discussion about the possibility to incorporate these?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> is the GRM an effective mechanism to identify and address exclusion errors (how are the profiles for inclusion identified; is there any verification; what about those who were scored wrongly because their data was not up to date; and still exclusion of those who do not make an appeal)?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> why have GRM and also SHIV?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> any mechanism for reducing INCLUSION error?</p> <p>(note – Usually appeals mechanisms on PMT-targeted schemes focus on re-including those who were not assessed, and some schemes have some allowance for autonomy for case workers to include protection cases based on assessment. This GRM is re-including a % who are incorrectly predicted by the formula, but without any visits. Doesn't it call into question the whole efficacy of doing the PMT?)</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> WFP – do you have sufficient visibility of the targeting process (formula, coefficients, accuracy of the formula's implementation and scoring) to be able to critique it or have confidence in its accuracy.</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> WFP – do you have sufficient visibility of the GRM process (method for identifying profiles at risk of exclusion; application of the profiles to the appeals cases etc) to be able to critique it or have confidence in its accuracy.</p>	Sub-Q.1.3
11	<p>Given the changes to the context since the Joint Action started, is the PMT approach (linked with GRM) still an appropriate targeting model?</p> <p><b>Prompt:</b> considering the homogeneous levels of vulnerability, scale of need and scale of assistance</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> what about the appropriateness of an annual retargeting exercise in context of protracted crisis? Do you have data on the proportion of HH that have been bf year on year?</p>	Sub-Q.1.4
12	<p>Were other alternative models to the PMT/GRM/SIHV considered? If yes – which ones? What was the outcome of this – why have alternatives not been acted on? If no – why have alternatives not been considered?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> WFP – Previous studies recommended to WFP that the targeting approach of PMT be critically reviewed and alternatives considered- Have you taken any steps to do so? Are there any constraints to either considering, or acting on, alternative targeting approaches (e.g. lack of expertise; access to data; donors; political will due to investments made; standardisation of the method across cash actors...)?</p>	Sub-Q.1.4

13	<p>In this context, do you have any suggestions for what alternative targeting approaches could be more appropriate? What could be their advantages and disadvantages?</p> <p>Prompt possible options:</p> <p>Target out the top decile??</p> <p>Use demographic vulnerabilities (alignment with SSN; notions of fairness)??</p> <p>Separate caseload into 2 – one chronically vulnerable multi-annual support (so could remove need for GRM) and other that stays poverty targeted?</p> <p>Get rid of GRM</p>	Sub-Q.1.4
14	<p>To what extent do you feel that the Joint Action (via any of the three components) is meeting/has met its intended objective to (a) protect livelihoods and (b) reduce protection risks?</p> <p><b>Prompt:</b> How confident are you that changes in outcome indicators can be attributed to the JA (rather than other factors)?</p> <p><b>Prompt:</b> to what extent did the triple crisis impact on the ability of the JA to meet its objectives and have any of the adaptations you've made to the programme contributed to better ensuring that the objectives were met?</p>	Sub-Q.2.1
15	<p>Are there differences in the Joint Action results for women compared to men – in the improvements to living conditions, or the use of risky coping strategies?</p>	Sub-Q.2.2
16	<p>In your opinion, could the Joint Action have considered a differentiated design for men versus women, to ensure more equitable outcomes?</p> <p><b>Prompt:</b> e.g., women's outcomes from JA consistently lower because face greater constraints. Could the JA have provided a higher transfer value to FHH in the face of these greater needs....</p>	Sub-Q.2.2
17	<p>Has the Joint Action led to any changes in household or community relations (positive, or negative)? How do you know?</p> <p><b>Prompt:</b> relationships in the household; relationships between refugee bf and non-bf; relationships between refugees and host communities. Are there certain locations where these changes are more noticeable?</p>	Sub-Q.2.3
18	<p>Has the Joint Action design or implementation processes led to any other unintended risks or benefits for refugees?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> your additional protection risk monitoring at high-traffic ATMs, what has this shown?</p>	Sub-Q.2.3
19	<p>To what extent has the information collected through the monitoring and feedback mechanisms informed changes to the Joint Action's design or implementation? Please be specific.</p> <p><b>Prompt:</b> joint call centre; WFP call centre; RAGs; outcome monitoring/ process monitoring</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> Did feedback through these channels inform any of the modifications to the JA in response to covid?</p>	Sub-Q.2.4

20	<p>Can you comment on the effectiveness of the Joint Action’s communication mechanisms (the channels used and the information communicated)? What are the main enabling factors and constraints?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> the 2018 AAP study highlighted particular issues around the communication on targeting, contributing to stress, both the comms channels and the information that was communicated: notification of discontinuation by SMS; poor or unclear communication on the reasons for in/eligibility; lack of info leading to high simultaneous demand for call centre which became overburdened; GRM not communicated...). This made various recommendations to enhance AAP. What if any changes have been made since then and have these improved things?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> For those who appeal discontinuation and are reassessed in GRM/SHIV. What communication is provided to them? What are the reasons given for exclusion or re-inclusion?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> How does the design of the JA (through LOUISE; and separation into the 3 components) impact on your ability to communicate with beneficiaries?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> how has face to face communication through partners evolved during the course of the JA?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> how do bf prefer to receive information (SMS, call centre, face to face...)?</p>	Sub-Q.2.4
21	<p>Can you comment on the effectiveness of the Joint Action’s complaints and feedback mechanisms (accessibility and responsiveness)? What are the main enabling factors and constraints?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> the 2018 AAP study highlighted issues around effectiveness of the joint call centre: cost to call; inability to get through at busy times (period of discontinuation); some delays in responsiveness to address card and PIN issues; perception that complaints about discontinuation were not effectively addressed; . This made various recommendations to enhance AAP. What if any changes have been made since then and have these improved things?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> the main issue was how to respond to calls complaining about discontinuation. What information do you share now and how are these calls ‘closed’?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> The introduction of the new online appeals channel in 2021 – in what ways has this influenced effectiveness?</p>	Sub-Q.2.4
22	<p>WFP started the WFP-managed call centre in 2021. In what ways has this influenced the effectiveness of communication, outreach and feedback processes? Please be specific.</p>	Sub-Q.2.4
23	<p>What measures does the Joint Action take to assess and facilitate access to cash transfers?</p> <p><b>Prompt:</b> at each stage of the delivery – card issuance; payment; validation....</p>	Sub-Q.3.1
24	<p>How secure are the entitlement transfer mechanisms? How do you know this? Is there any data collected on instances of misappropriation of transfers? If so, what mitigating actions are taken?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> previous studies noticed potential risks being at the ATM cash withdrawal (handing over % to ‘helper’); in contracted shops; and misappropriation by landlords. Any effort to explore these risks or actions taken?</p>	Sub-Q.3.1
25	<p>Aside from funding, do you feel that the other resources available to UNHCR and WFP for the Joint Action were adequate?</p> <p><b>Prompt:</b> was prog adequately staffed in WFP/UNHCR and through partners; adequate resourcing for AAP, for gender/equity</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> do staff involved in the programme have sufficient understanding of econometric methods to be able to critique the targeting model used?</p>	Sub-Q.3.2

26	<p>Have the amounts/types of cash transfer changed appropriately in response to the various changes in the Lebanon context since 2018? If not, what have been the factors constraining this? What could/should be done better to respond to these?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> ways to overcome the government reluctance to increase values?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> issue of dollarisation of aid and how this affected adequacy – ways to change?</p>	Sub-Q.3.2
27	<p>The Joint Action made several changes in response to the different crises (Economic Crisis/Beirut Blast/COVID). Can you comment on the timeliness of these changes, and what influenced this?</p> <p><b>Prompt re main changes:</b> expansion of coverage; changes to transfer values; preferential exchange rate; increase in ATMs; staggering loading dates; queue control...</p> <p><b>Probe re influencers:</b> data sharing WFP-UNHCR; government will; relationships with donors/partners/FSP...</p>	Sub-Q.3.3
28	<p>Please explain the key mechanisms established for coordination of the Joint Action between WFP and UNHCR and for LOUISE. Have these been adequate? What has worked well and what needs to be improved?</p>	Sub-Q.4.1
29	<p>How well has the Joint Action coordinated with donors and other stakeholders (PROMPT: CAMEALEON, Basic Assistance, Food Security and Protection Sectors, academia, government, other orgs.)? What could be improved?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> is fact that CAMEALEON TOR is for WFP MPC only not whole JA an impediment to coord of this third party monitoring?</p>	Sub-Q.4.1
30	<p>What added value did implementing WFP's and UNHCR's assistance as a Joint Action bring? What, if anything, has been achieved through the Joint Action coordination mechanisms that would not have otherwise been possible?</p> <p><b>Prompt:</b> did it contribute to enhanced solving of problems/quicker decisions/greater influence and advocacy/cost savings?</p>	Sub-Q.4.1
31	<p>What are the key challenges in coordination of this Joint Action between WFP and UNHCR that should be addressed in the future? Do you have suggestions of how this should be addressed?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> data sharing; lack of wider joint strategy; conflicting org. positions?</p>	Sub-Q.4.1
32	<p>How well have the three initiatives of the Joint Action been coordinated with other cash or food initiatives supported by WFP/UNHCR? How effectively were duplications managed? Were any key synergies achieved?</p> <p><b>Probe:</b> extent of layering of complementary assistance for Joint Action beneficiaries.</p> <p>Has anything been achieved together that would not have been possible separately?</p>	Sub-Q.4.2



33	<p>To what extent was the Joint Action intended to align or integrate with other components or sectors of the humanitarian response in Lebanon? Was this part of a longer-term approach to refugee needs?</p> <p>Probe: Was there ever the intention for the JA response to link with or complement WFP/ UNHCR’s wider programming for enhancing refugee resilience? Was such a ToC ever set out?</p> <p>Probe: Was there ever the intention for the JA response to link with or complement wider agency programming for enhancing refugee resilience?</p> <p>Probe: Was there ever the intention for the JA response to contribute as a mechanism for referrals (protection and other services) – this was a recommendation of an FCDO funded study in 2018?</p> <p>Probe: Operationally, was there the intention for the JA design or processes to align with or link with the design of other actors’ cash interventions</p>	Sub-Q.4.3
34	<p>How well, if at all, did the Joint Action succeed in these efforts to align or integrate with other components or sectors of the humanitarian response in Lebanon?</p> <p>Probe: WFP – CSPE 2020 highlighted that while there was ambition to align strategic objectives for refugee assistance and resilience, in practice execution was limited. Made recommendations. Have these been acted on at all?</p>	Sub-Q.4.3
35	<p>To what extent has the Joint Action built the long- or short-term capacity and skills of national partners (across different sectors – cso/ngo, government, academic, private sector)?</p>	Sub-Q.4.3
36	<p>How well, if at all, has the Joint Action been aligned or integrated with longer-term social protection initiatives in Lebanon: Social Safety Nets/ National Poverty Targeting Program (NPTP) What have been the influential factors here?</p>	Sub-Q.4.4
37	<p>What opportunities are there for enhancing alignment or synergies between Joint Action cash transfers for refugees and social protection initiatives? How could this be achieved?</p>	Sub-Q.4.4
38	<p>How well, if at all, has the Joint Action been aligned or integrated with longer-term livelihoods initiatives in Lebanon? What have been the influential factors here?</p>	Sub-Q.4.4
39	<p>What opportunities are there for enhancing alignment or synergies between Joint Action cash transfers for refugees and livelihood/economic empowerment initiatives? How could this be achieved?</p>	Sub-Q.4.4

## Appendix 5b: Key Informant Interview Questions – External Respondents

<b>Interviewer:</b>	
<b>Interviewee (inc. sex):</b>	
<b>Job Title:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Location:</b>	

**Any Background Information: Note that not all external respondents were familiar with the Joint Action as a programme, but may be aware of MPC/MCAP+CFF – questions were phrased accordingly.**

1	<p>The Joint Action design and implementation has changed in several ways since 2019 in response to the different crises (Economic Crisis/Beirut Blast/COVID). Were these changes adequate to maintain the relevance of the Joint Action to address the evolving needs? Could more have been done? What factors enabled or constrained ability to adapt the programme?</p> <p>Prompt: expansion of coverage; changes to transfer values; preferential exchange rate; increase in ATMs; staggering loading dates; queue control...</p>	Sub-Q.1.1
2	<p>The JA continued to provide assistance as cash, through BLF. In the face of the economic challenges (banking sector challenges; currency collapse leading to aid conversion challenges; soaring inflation), were other modalities, or other ways of delivering, assessed? What was the justification for continuing with the current way of working?</p> <p>Probe: UNHCR negotiated the preferential exchange rate; but according to Reuters an internal U.N. assessment in February estimated that up to half the programme's value was absorbed by banks to convert donated US dollars to Lebanese currency.. It said the U.N. could have distributed in dollars, or negotiated a better rate with Lebanon's central bank. Do you agree?</p> <p>Probe: WFP's food assistance to Lebanese in the triple crisis was provided as in kind food. Why was that decision made for one population but the JA continued as cash?</p>	Sub-Q.1.1
3	<p>Do you feel the Joint Action has been gender or equity transformative or was it more responsive or sensitive? How so?</p> <p>Probe: previous studies earlier in the JA period highlighted that refugee MPC as a standalone has limited potential to be transformative. Do you agree? What if any opportunities for enhancing the transformative potential of the JA have been explored?</p> <p>Probe: previous studies have highlighted that, in the process of developing systems that address needs at scale, MPC has inevitably faced some challenges in being responsive/sensitive to diverse needs. Do you agree? What if any opportunities for enhancing gender/age/disability sensitive implementation have been explored?</p>	Sub-Q.1.2
4	<p>How are/were the expressed needs of refugees taken into account when the Joint Action targeting approach was being designed?</p>	Sub-Q.1.3
5	<p>Since then, what refugee feedback on targeting has been considered or influenced the approach?</p> <p>Probe: several studies have confirmed that refugees do not see the targeting process as fair or understand it. And that they would help more with less. So, what of these directly articulated needs hv been taken into account?</p>	Sub-Q.1.3
6	<p>To what extent do you feel that the Joint Action (via any of the three components) is meeting/has met its intended objective to (a) protect livelihoods and (b) reduce protection risks?</p>	Sub-Q.2.1

7	Are there differences in the Joint Action results for women compared to men – in the improvements to living conditions, or the use of risky coping strategies?	Sub-Q.2.2
8	In your opinion, could the Joint Action have considered a differentiated design for men versus women, to ensure more equitable outcomes? Prompt – e.g., women’s outcomes from JA consistently lower because face greater constraints. Could the JA have provided a higher transfer value to FHH in the face of these greater needs....	Sub-Q.2.2
9	Has the Joint Action led to any changes in household or community relations (positive, or negative)? How do you know? Prompt – relationships in the household; relationships between refugee bf and non-bf; relationships between refugees and host communities. Are there certain locations where these changes are more noticeable?	Sub-Q.2.3
10	Has the Joint Action design or implementation processes led to any other unintended risks or benefits for refugees?	Sub-Q.2.3
11	Can you comment on the effectiveness of the Joint Action’s communication mechanisms (the channels used and the information communicated)? What are the main enabling factors and constraints? Probe: the 2018 AAP study highlighted particular issues around the communication on targeting, contributing to stress, both the comms channels and the information that was communicated: notification of discontinuation by SMS; poor or unclear communication on the reasons for in/eligibility; lack of info leading to high simultaneous demand for call centre which became overburdened; GRM not communicated...). This made various recommendations to enhance AAP. What if any changes have been made since then and have these improved things? Probe: For those who appeal discontinuation and are reassessed in GRM/SHIV. What communication is provided to them? What are the reasons given for exclusion or re-inclusion? Probe: How does the design of the JA (through LOUISE; and separation into the 3 components) impact on communication with beneficiaries? Probe: how has face to face communication through partners evolved during the course of the JA? Probe: how do bf prefer to receive information (SMS, call centre, face to face...)?	Sub-Q.2.4
12	Can you comment on the effectiveness of the Joint Action’s complaints and feedback mechanisms (accessibility, and responsiveness)? What are the main enabling factors and constraints? Probe: the 2018 AAP study highlighted issues around effectiveness of the joint call centre: cost to call; inability to get through at busy times (period of discontinuation); some delays in responsiveness to address card and PIN issues; perception that complaints about discontinuation were not effectively addressed; . This made various recommendations to enhance AAP. What if any changes have been made since then and have these improved things? Probe: The introduction of the new online appeals channel in 2021 – in what ways has this influenced effectiveness?	Sub-Q.2.4
13	WFP started the WFP-managed call centre in 2021. In what ways has this influenced the effectiveness of communication, outreach and feedback processes? Please be specific.	Sub-Q.2.4
14	What measures does the Joint Action take to assess and facilitate access to cash transfers? Prompt: at each stage of the delivery – card issuance; payment; validation....	Sub-Q.3.1

15	<p>How secure are the entitlement transfer mechanisms? How do you know this? Is there any data collected on instances of misappropriation of transfers? If so, what mitigating actions are taken?</p> <p>Probe: previous studies noticed potential risks being at the ATM cash withdrawal (handing over % to ‘helper’); in contracted shops; and misappropriation by landlords. Any effort to explore these risks or actions taken?</p>	Sub-Q.3.1
16	<p>Aside from funding shortfalls, do you feel that the other resources available to UNHCR and WFP for the Joint Action were adequate?</p> <p>Prompt: was prog adequately staffed in WFP/UNHCR and through partners; adequate resourcing for AAP, for gender/equity</p> <p>Probe: do staff involved in the programme have sufficient understanding of econometric methods to be able to critique the targeting model used?</p>	Sub-Q.3.2
17	<p>Have the amounts/types of cash transfer changed appropriately in response to the various changes in the Lebanon context since 2018? If not, what have been the factors constraining this? What could/should be done better to respond to these?</p> <p>Probe: ways to overcome the government reluctance to increase values?</p> <p>Probe: issue of dollarisation of aid and how this affected adequacy – ways to change?</p>	Sub-Q.3.2
18	<p>Please explain the key mechanisms established for coordination of the Joint Action between WFP and UNHCR and for LOUISE. Have these been adequate? What has worked well and what needs to be improved?</p>	Sub-Q.4.1
19	<p>How well has the Joint Action coordinated with donors and other stakeholders (PROMPT: CAMEALEON, Basic Assistance and Food Security and Protection Sectors, academia, government, other orgs.)? What could be improved?</p> <p>Probe – is fact that CAMEALEON TOR is for WFP MPC only not whole JA an impediment to coord of this third party monitoring?</p>	Sub-Q.4.1
20	<p>What added value did implementing WFP’s and UNHCR’s assistance as a Joint Action bring? What, if anything, has been achieved through the Joint Action coordination mechanisms that would not have otherwise been possible?</p> <p>Prompt – did it contribute to enhanced solving of problems/quicker decisions/greater influence and advocacy/cost savings?</p>	Sub-Q.4.1
21	<p>What are the key challenges in coordination of this Joint Action between WFP and UNHCR that should be addressed in the future? Do you have suggestions of how this should be addressed?</p> <p>Probe – data sharing; lack of wider joint strategy; conflicting org. positions?</p>	Sub-Q.4.1
22	<p>How well have the three initiatives of the Joint Action been coordinated with other cash or food initiatives supported by WFP/UNHCR? How effectively were duplications managed? Were any key synergies achieved?</p> <p>Probe – extent of layering of complementary assistance for Joint Action beneficiaries. Has anything been achieved together that would not have been possible separately?</p>	Sub-Q.4.2
23	<p>How well, if at all, did the Joint Action succeed in these efforts to align or integrate with other components or sectors of the humanitarian response in Lebanon?</p>	Sub-Q.4.3
24	<p>To what extent has the Joint Action built the long- or short-term capacity and skills of national partners (across different sectors - cso/ngo, government, academic, private sector)?</p>	Sub-Q.4.3

25	How well, if at all, has the Joint Action been aligned or integrated with longer-term social protection initiatives in Lebanon (social safety nets/NPTP/social care services)? What have been the influential factors here?	Sub-Q.4.4
26	What opportunities are there for enhancing alignment or synergies between Joint Action cash transfers for refugees and social protection initiatives? How could this be achieved?	Sub-Q.4.4
27	How well, if at all, has the Joint Action been aligned or integrated with longer-term livelihoods initiatives in Lebanon? What have been the influential factors here?	Sub-Q.4.4
28	What opportunities are there for enhancing alignment or synergies between Joint Action cash transfers for refugees and livelihood/economic empowerment initiatives? How could this be achieved?	Sub-Q.4.4

## Appendix 5c: Focus Group Discussion Questions

Note: socio-demographic information related to age gender, gender of HH, geographical location, family size, shelter type etc. were collected from all participants.

Questions for active cash recipients	Alternate Questions [for discontinued respondents]	Ref
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you know which organisations provide you with the multi-purpose cash assistance that you receive on the ATM card [Onecard]?</li> <li>2. Have you ever discussed your needs with a representative of these organisations that manage the cash programme?</li> <li>3. (for those responding positively) how did you do this – in person or with a phone call? What did you talk about?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are you currently receiving any type of support? What is it and who is providing it?</li> <li>2. When you were on the multi-purpose cash assistance programme that you received on the ATM card, did you know which organisations provided you with the assistance?</li> </ol>	Sub-Q.1.1
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. (For those responding positively) Do you feel that these discussions led to any changes or improvements to the cash programme. If so, what types of changes? (for example - to the type of assistance, or the amount of assistance, or in the way that the assistance is provided, or some other change?)</li> <li>5. During the time that the programme has been providing cash assistance there were new problems in Lebanon (COVID restrictions, increasing costs of goods, the Port explosion). Did you see any changes to the cash programme to help address these challenges – how did this help? And what changes were needed that have not taken place? (prompt – more ATMs; providing payments in batches to reduce ATM overcrowding; crowd control ATMs; increasing transfer value; adding more people into the programme.....)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. During the time that the programme has been providing cash assistance there were new problems in Lebanon (COVID restrictions, increasing costs of goods, the Port explosion). Did you see any changes to the cash programme to help address these challenges – how did this help? And what changes were needed that have not taken place? (prompt – more ATMs; providing payments in batches to reduce ATM overcrowding; crowd control ATMs; increasing transfer value; adding more people into the programme.....)</li> </ol>	Sub-Q.1.1
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. How did you find out that you were eligible for the cash assistance?</li> <li>7. Do you know the reasons why you are eligible to receive the cash assistance? What were you told?</li> <li>8. Do you know how the organisations managing the programme decided which households should be included or excluded from the programme?</li> <li>9. Did anybody here get told they were going to be DISCONTINUED from the cash assistance, but then got re-included?</li> <li>10. (if so) what did you do in order to get re-included?</li> <li>11. (Did you call the call centre or did you register by following the link sent in the SMS?)</li> <li>12. (if so) Do you know why you were re-included? What were you told? And how did you find out?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. How did you find out that you were no longer eligible for the cash assistance?</li> <li>5. Do you know the reasons why you are no longer eligible to receive the cash assistance? What were you told?</li> <li>6. Do you know how the organisations managing the programme decided which households should be included or excluded from the programme?</li> </ol>	Sub-Q.1.3

<p>13. How satisfied are you with this current approach to including or excluding households from the cash assistance programme? What do you think should change?</p>	<p>7. Do you agree that you are not eligible for the cash assistance anymore? Why/why not?</p> <p>8. After you found out you were being discontinued, what did you do, did you appeal and ask to be reincluded?</p> <p>9. (if not) why did you not do this?</p> <p>10. (if so) Did you call the call centre or did you register by following the link sent in the SMS?)</p> <p>11. (if so) What was the response to your appeal? What were you told? And how did you find out?</p> <p>12. How satisfied are you with this current approach to including or excluding households from the cash assistance programme? What do you think should change?</p>	<p>Sub-Q.1.3</p>
<p>14. What are the main needs which this cash goes to meet? Are there any needs that you typically don't manage to meet?</p> <p>15. Do you see any changes in your living conditions compared to those families that do not receive the cash assistance? Please explain the most significant changes.</p>	<p>13. Have you seen any changes in your living conditions since the cash assistance stopped? Please explain the most significant changes.</p> <p>14. Since the cash support got discontinued, how are you managing to cope?</p>	<p>Sub-Q.2.1</p>
<p>16. Does the cash assistance help you to avoid using risky coping strategies? Please explain. (Prompt: skipping meals, selling assets, taking on debt, sending children to work, living in shared/ substandard accommodation...).</p> <p>17. If the support got discontinued, what would you do? how would you manage to meet your needs?</p> <p>18. What do you hear from people who do not received the cash support? How are they coping now? Prompt – Do you hear of households facing protection risks because of their difficult financial situation (for example, relying on child labour, early marriage, or survival sex, or GBV, or facing eviction, or cases of premature return to Syria)?</p>	<p>15. Do you hear of any households facing protection risks because of their difficult financial situation Prompt: relying on child labour, early marriage, or survival sex , or GBV, or facing eviction, or cases of premature return to Syria?</p>	<p>Sub-Q.2.1</p>

<p>20. Has the cash assistance led to any changes in relations in your household? Please explain.</p> <p>21. Does the cash programme affect relations in your community, between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries?</p> <p>22. Has the cash programme led to any changes in your relations with the Lebanese host community?</p> <p>23. (prompt – for example, jealousy/tensions with poor Lebanese; tensions at ATMs....)</p> <p>24. Have you been aware of any ‘sensitive issues’ occurring on the programme in your community – for example, cases of poor behaviour/threats/abuse/extortion/theft of cash from programme staff, staff at the bank, the shops, or others in the community?</p>	<p>17. Has the cash programme affected relations in your community, between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries?</p>	<p>Sub-Q.2.3</p>
<p>25. Do you feel that you receive enough information about the programme? Which areas would you like more information on?</p> <p>26. Do you get told how long you will receive assistance for?</p> <p>27. Who here has tried to use the call centre? [PROMPT WITH NUMBER OF CALL CENTRE: UNHCR 01758158 / WFP 1526] Can you tell us about your experience? Did you face any difficulties (cost, wait time, cannot get through...)?</p> <p>28. Why did you call, and did you receive a satisfactory response?</p> <p>29. How useful do you think the call centre is for dealing with problems and complaints on the programme?</p> <p>30. In the last year the managers of the cash programme opened a second call centre with another number [WFP: 1526]. Were you aware of this? Has this helped with any of the problems you have mentioned?</p>	<p>18. Do you feel that you received enough information about the programme? Which areas would you have liked more information on?</p> <p>19. Who here tried to use the call centre? [PROMPT WITH NUMBER OF CALL CENTRE: UNHCR 01758158 / WFP 1526] Can you tell us about your experience? Did you face any difficulties (cost, wait time, cannot get through...)?</p> <p>20. Why did you call, and did you receive a satisfactory response?</p> <p>21. How useful do you think the call centre is for dealing with problems and complaints on the programme?</p>	<p>Sub-Q.2.4</p>



<p>31. After you received the information in November that you were going to be a beneficiary of the programme, when was it that you received the first payment?</p> <p>32. Does the assistance come through on time for you every month? Have there been any delays and how were these addressed?</p> <p>33. How long does it take you to travel to the ATM? And how long must you queue for?</p> <p>34. Has anyone had to receive a replacement ATM card and PIN? How long did this take?</p>	n/a	Sub-Q.3.1
<p>35. How easy is it for you to access your cash assistance via the ATM cards? DO you have any problems? (Prompt – distance, mobility, queuing time, difficulty completing ATM transaction...) (Prompt – how much do you need to pay in transportation?)</p> <p>36. If you have problems, is there someone there to help you?</p> <p>37. Have you seen any changes on the programme to improve any of these problems?</p>	n/a	Sub-Q.3.1
<p>38. Do you feel safe when you go to collect your cash at the ATM? Is there anything that could be done to make you or others feel safer?</p> <p>39. DO you receive the full amount of cash that you are supposed to receive?</p>	n/a	Sub-Q.3.1
<p>40. The organisations managing the cash assistance programme have a limited amount of money to go around all those who are in need. Do you think it would be better to share the existing resources among more families, with everyone receiving a smaller amount, keep things as they are, or give more assistance to a smaller number of families?</p>	<p>22. The organisations managing the cash assistance programme have a limited amount of money to go around all those who are in need. Do you think it would be better to share the existing resources among more families, with everyone receiving a smaller amount, or give more assistance to a smaller number of families?</p>	Sub-Q.3.2

## Appendix 5d: Telephone Survey Questions

Note : socio-demographic information related to age gender, gender of HH, geographical location, family size, shelter type etc. were collected from all participants

### Telephone Survey Questions

Questions for ALL RESPONDENTS	Answers/Prompts
0.1 Is respondent the household head? [SELECT ONE]	Yes No
0.2 Gender of respondent [SELECT ONE]	Male Female Other/not disclosed
0.3 Gender of household head [SELECT ONE]	Male Female Other/not disclosed
0.4 Age of respondent (in years)	
0.5 Geographical location of respondent [SELECT ONE]	Akkar Governorate North Governorate Baalbek-Hermel Governorate Bekaa Governate Beirut-Mount Lebanon (BML) Governorate South Governorate
0.6 Number of people currently living (full-time) in household	
0.7 Type of shelter/dwelling of the household [SELECT ONE]	a. Active construction site b. Agricultural/engine/pump room c1. Apartment/house/room SHARED with other HH c2. Apartment/house UNSHARED with other HH d. Concierge's room in residential building e. Factory f. Farm g. Garage h. Hotel room i. Prefab unit j. School k. Shop l. Tent m. Warehouse n. Workshop

Questions for active cash recipients	Answers/Prompts	Alternate Questions [for discontinued respondents]
<p>1.1 What are the agencies from which you receive cash via the ATM cards? (if not known, ask amount &amp; time) [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]</p> <p>1.1b Are there any other organizations from which you receive benefits?</p>	<p>UNHCR</p> <p>WFP</p> <p>UNICEF</p> <p>«UN»</p> <p>NGO</p> <p>Government</p> <p>Other (specify)</p> <p>Don't know</p>	<p>1.1 What are the agencies from which you received cash via the ATM cards? (if not known, ask amount &amp; time) [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]</p> <p>1.1b Are there any other organizations from which you were receiving benefits last year?</p> <p>1.1c From what organizations are you currently receiving support?</p>
<p>1.2 Is the current received transfer value adequate to your needs [SELECT ONE]</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>I have never received any cash transfer</p>	<p>1.2 Was the value of the transfer you last received adequate to your needs? [SELECT ONE]</p>
<p>1.3 What are the top 3 needs which this cash goes to meet? [DO NOT PROMPT. SELECT UP TO THREE. IF RESPONDENT STATES MORE, ASK «Which are the three most important?]</p>	<p>Food</p> <p>Health</p>	<p>1.3 What are the top 3 needs which this cash went to meet? [DO NOT PROMPT. SELECT UP TO THREE. IF RESPONDENT STATES MORE, ASK «Which are the three most important?]</p> <p>1.4a What are the needs that you didn't manage to meet when receiving cash?[DO NOT PROMPT. SELECT UP TO THREE. IF RESPONDENT STATES MORE, ASK «Which are the three most important?]</p>
<p>1.4 What are the needs that you typically don't manage to meet? [DO NOT PROMPT. SELECT UP TO THREE. IF RESPONDENT STATES MORE, ASK «Which are the three most important?»]</p>	<p>Education</p> <p>Non-food items</p> <p>Water</p> <p>Electricity</p> <p>Rent</p> <p>Communications (e.g. phone, internet)</p> <p>Transportation (e.g. fuel, taxi, bus)</p> <p>Paying Debt</p> <p>Livelihood assets (e.g. goods for sale, agricultural inputs)</p>	<p>1.4b What needs are you not meeting now you aren't receiving cash any more? [DO NOT PROMPT. SELECT UP TO THREE. IF RESPONDENT STATES MORE, ASK «Which are the three most important?]</p>
<p>1.5 Overall, to what extent are you currently able to meet the basic needs of your household? [SELECT ONE]</p>	<p>All</p> <p>More than half (but not all)</p> <p>Half</p> <p>Less than half</p> <p>Not at all</p> <p>Don't know</p>	<p>1.5 Overall, to what extent are you currently able to meet the basic needs of your household? [SELECT ONE]</p>

<p>1.6 What is your average monthly income level (excluding any type of assistance received) [SELECT ONE]</p>	<p>Less than 500,000 LBP  500,000- 999,999 LBP  1,000,000 LBP – 1,499,999 LBP  1,500,000 LBP – 1,999,999 LBP  2,000,000 LBP – 2,499,999 LBP  2,500,000 LBP – 3,000, 000 LBP  More than 3 million</p>	<p>What is your average monthly income level (excluding any type of assistance received) [SELECT ONE]</p>
<p>n/a</p>	<p>Yes  No  Maybe/Not sure</p>	<p>2.1 Do you agree that you are not eligible for the cash assistance any more? [SELECT ONE]</p>
<p>n/a</p>	<p>Open ended</p>	<p>2.2 Why/why not?</p>
<p>3.1 Do you feel that the allocations have resulted in improvements in living conditions compared to those families that do not receive any support from the agencies? [SELECT ONE]</p>	<p>Large improvement  Medium improvement  Little improvement  No improvement  Don't know</p>	<p>3.1 Do you feel that the allocations, when you received them improved your living conditions compared to now? [SELECT ONE]</p>
<p>4.1 For each of the following, please tell me if your household has used any of them now or over the past few months - note if they are CURRENT, NOT NOW or NOT EVER   [SELECT ONE FOR EACH: YES/NOW, NO/NOT NOW, or NO/NEVER]</p>	<p><b>Food</b>  Relied on less preferred/less expensive food  Reduced portion size of meals  Reduced the number of meals eaten per day  Borrowed food or relied on help from friends or relatives  Restricted consumption by adults in order for children to eat  Restricted food consumption of female members of households  Send household members to eat elsewhere  Spent days without eating</p> <p><b>Non-Food</b>  Begged  Sold house or land  Accepted high risk jobs  Involved school children in income generation  Marriage of children under 18  Sold productive assets  Withdrew children from school  Reduced education expenditures  Reduced health expenditures  Sold household goods  Spent savings  Bought food on credit  Household has debt</p>	<p>4.1 For each of the following, please tell me if your household has used any of them now or over the past few months - note if they are CURRENT, NOT NOW or NOT EVER   [SELECT ONE FOR EACH: YES/NOW, NO/NOT NOW, or NO/NEVER]</p>

5.1 Do you know the reasons why you are eligible to receive the cash assistance? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]	Economically vulnerable Person with disability in household Single parent Female headed household Other (specify)	n/a
n/a	Yes No	5.1a Do you know what changed to make you NO LONGER eligible to receive the cash assistance?
n/a	Economic situation improved No vulnerable (e.g. with disabilities) people in household No longer single parent No longer female-headed household Other (specify)	If YES to 5.1a: What changed? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]
5.2 How satisfied are you with this current approach to including or excluding households from the cash assistance programme? [SELECT ONE]	Very satisfied Somewhat satisfied A little dissatisfied Very dissatisfied Don't know	n/a
5.3. Do you know how long you will receive assistance for? [SELECT ONE]	Yes (specify how long in months/ years) No	n/a
5.4 How often, if at all, do you discuss your needs with a representative of the agencies that manage the cash distributions? [SELECT ONE]	I have never discussed my needs with an agency representative Rarely (less than once per year) Once a year Every few months Every month or more	5.4 How often, if at all, did you discuss your needs with a representative of the agencies that manage the cash distributions? [SELECT ONE]
5.5 [IF ANSWER ABOVE IS POSITIVE] Do you feel that these discussions result in any changes or improvements to the cash programme? [SELECT ONE]	Often Sometimes Rarely Never Don't know	5.5 [IF ANSWER ABOVE IS POSITIVE] DID you feel that these discussions resulted in any changes or improvements to the cash programme? [SELECT ONE]
5.6a If you have a problem or a complaint about the cash assistance programme, which of the following do you think can you use to resolve it? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY - INDICATE YES/NO FOR EACH]	Call the UNHCR Call Centre Call the WFP Call Centre Call [unspecified] Call Centre Go to UNHCR Registration Centre Call Bank Call UN representative directly Call NGO representative directly Speak to government representative Other (specify) No	n/a

5.6b Have you ever contacted the call center with a question or to resolve an issue?	Yes No	n/a
5.6c Were they able to help answer the question or resolve the issue?	Yes No	n/a
5.7 How satisfied are you with the call centre for managing complaints on the programme? [SELECT ONE]	Very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Neutral A little dissatisfied Very dissatisfied	n/a
6.1 Since starting to receive the assistance, , have you been able to access it on time every month? [SELECT ONE]	Yes, always No, I sometimes have not received it on time No, I frequently have not received it on time.	n/a
7.0 How do you normally access your cash assistance from the ATM? [IF «NEVER MYSELF», SKIP TO QUESTION 8.3]	I always access it myself I sometimes access myself, sometimes use a family member I sometimes access myself, sometimes use a non-family member Never myself, always a family member Never myself, always a non-family member	n/a
7.1 How easy is it for you to access the assistance via the ATM? [SELECT ONE]	Easy Neither easy nor difficult Not easy	n/a
7.2 What are the main problems you face when accessing the cash assistance via the ATM cards? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]	No problems faced Distance to ATM Cost of transport to reach ATM Queuing time at ATM Difficulty in using the ATM No money in/closure of the ATM; PIN doesn't work Card lost in ATM Mistreatment by bank staff Poor treatment by Lebanese customers Other (specify)	n/a
7.3 If you have problems, is there someone from the agency managing the cash assistance there to help you? [SELECT ONE]	Always Sometimes Rarely Never Don't know	n/a

7.4 Do you think the agencies are working to improve any of these problems? [SELECT ONE]	Definitely Somewhat Only a little Not at all Don't know	n/a
8.1 Do you feel safe using the atm cards for the assistance? [SELECT ONE]	Very safe Moderately safe Neither safe nor unsafe Moderately UNSafe Very unsafe	n/a
8.2 Is there anything that could be done to make you or others feel safer?	Open ended	n/a
8.3 Do you pay anything to the person who collects your cash from the ATM?	Yes No	n/a
8.4 If you pay, how much (in LBP) do you pay? [INDICATE AMOUNT IN LBP]		n/a
9.1 The agencies have a limited amount of resources to go around all those who are in need. Do you think it would be better to share the existing resources among <b>more families</b> that are in need, keep things as they are, or give <b>more assistance to a smaller number of families</b> ? [SELECT ONE]	Less assistance among more people Keep same Fewer people more assistance  Don't know	9.1 The agencies have a limited amount of resources to go around all those who are in need. Do you think it would be better to share the existing resources among <b>more families</b> that are in need, keep things as they are, or give <b>more assistance to a smaller number of families</b> ? [SELECT ONE]

Thank you for responding to these questions. If you do have any issues with the programme, you can call the UNHCR National Call Center 01-903014 (Monday to Friday from 8:00 – 17:00) or WFP's hotline 1526 (Monday to Saturday from 8:00 – 19:00)

## Appendix 5e. Obtaining Consent

### Telephone Household Surveys

Prior to beginning the survey, ensure that the respondent on the call is

- a) An adult over 18 years old, and
- b) Eligible/willing to speak about cash transfers

Orally confirm consent by reading the following out loud:

“My name is..... I’m working for EDS, a research company working on behalf of UNHCR and WFP in Lebanon. We are working with UNHCR and WFP to assess how the cash transfers that they distribute to refugees in Lebanon are working and what is not working. As a beneficiary/former beneficiary [USE THE APPROPRIATE FORM] you have been selected randomly from a list of all beneficiaries to participate in the study and your input is important for us.

**Before we begin**, I want you to know that:

- Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You can stop at any time without giving a reason.
- We are interested in your opinion. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers to our questions.
- If you stop the interview, all data collected will be destroyed. There is no penalty for stopping.
- You can also request to skip answers to questions.
- Information you provide will be analysed and may be included in a report for UNHCR and WFP leadership, funders, and other people interested in the cash transfer programmes.
- The evaluation team will see the information directly. We will report it in a way that no one can know the name of the person who shared this information. We will not be using names.
- Your participation in this activity will not impact your receipt of any cash or other items in any way at any time.
- Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected to your name. This information may be important for designing future studies and helping other people in Lebanon and elsewhere.
- You can ask any additional questions before beginning the interview.
- If you have any concerns about the research, please share and discuss them with me or with the officers of the organisations that manage the cash transfers.

Clarify questions the respondents may have. Say that if someone is concerned, they are welcome to leave without penalty. You will also be available afterwards to answer any questions they may have.

Ask: “Do you agree to participate in this interview as part of this study?”

If “NO,” STOP immediately, thank them for their time and let them go.

If “YES,” fill in the section on the cover sheet related to consent/assent (not included here).



## Focus Group Discussions

Orally confirm consent by reading the following out loud:

“My name is..... I’m working for IMC Worldwide, a research company working on behalf of UNHCR and WFP in Lebanon. We are working with UNHCR and WFP to assess how the cash transfers that they distribute to refugees in Lebanon are working and what is not working. As a beneficiary/former beneficiary [USE THE APPROPRIATE FORM] you all have been selected randomly from a list of all beneficiaries to participate in the study and your input is important for us.

**Before we begin**, I want you to know that:

- Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You can stop at any time without giving a reason.
- We are interested in your opinion. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers to our questions.
- If you stop the interview, no more data will be collected from you. There is no penalty for stopping.
- You can also request to skip answers to questions.
- Information you provide will be analysed and may be included in a report for UNHCR and WFP leadership, funders, and other people interested in the cash transfer programmes.
- The evaluation team will see the information directly. We will report it in a way that no one can know the name of the person who shared this information. We will not be using names.
- Your participation in this discussion will not impact your receipt of any cash or other items in any way at any time.
- Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected to your name. This information may be important for designing future studies and helping other people in Lebanon and elsewhere.
- You can ask any additional questions before beginning the discussion.
- If you have any concerns about the research, please share and discuss them with me or with the officers of the organisations that manage the cash transfers.

Clarify questions the respondents may have. Say that if someone is concerned, they are welcome to leave without penalty. You will also be available afterwards to answer any questions they may have.

Ask: “Do you agree to participate in this discussion as part of this study?”

If “NO,” STOP immediately, thank them for their time and let them go.

If “YES,” fill in the section on the cover sheet related to consent/assent.

Throughout this process be aware of any accommodations that the participant(s) may need and make reasonable adjustments.

## APPENDIX 6. FIELDWORK AGENDA

### Field Visit Schedule and Protocols

Day 1–2	Travel to destination (Team Leader only)	In-country mission approvals in place and key respondents/stakeholders/site visits and interviews confirmed with country team focal point
Days 2–4	UNHCR/WFP Country Office security briefing Meeting with UNHCR/WFP Country Director/management staff Meeting/KIIs with Joint Action programme staff, from UNHCR/WFP Meetings with key project partners KII with national-level stakeholders, government representatives	Based on agreed agenda and schedule with in-country team. Site selection and agenda developed in close coordination with UNHCR/WFP and partners
Day 5–10	Field visits and interviews/FGDs (Team Lead and National Specialist)	UNHCR/WFP provided guidance on travel time and logistics for field visits. UNHCR to obtain clearance to visit beneficiary sites/communities in advance of field work.
Day 10	Return to Beirut	
Day 11–12	Remaining national-level KIIs. Meetings with remaining stakeholders/ partners, follow-up meetings with stakeholders	
Day 12	UNHCR/WFP Country Office debrief with evaluator on findings to date	
Day 13	Departure	

In advance of departure, the evaluation team, with the assistance of UNHCR and WFP Lebanon finalised the details around the data collection, including the list of key individuals to be interviewed, and specified any logistical requirements of the team in coordination with the programme office and programme unit staff, particularly with respect to preparations/authorisations for engaging with communities and households (e.g., authorisations from/with UNHCR/WFP or Joint Action partners).

The point persons appointed by UNHCR and WFP were responsible for arranging meetings, both those to be held in UNHCR and WFP Country Offices and during the fieldwork, and for informing staff, partners, government officials and any other parties as necessary, regarding the planned evaluation activities and requesting their full participation.

The details of the evaluation team's activities in-country, in terms of facilities and communities to be visited during the evaluation and persons/sites/groups already identified for KIIs and FGDs were drafted and sent no later than ten days prior to arrival in-country.

The evaluation team spent time with the UNHCR/WFP evaluation co-managers and other steering committee members in the country office at the beginning and end of the field work period, initially to interview staff and at the end to provide feedback on initial key findings and to obtain any further information needed from the team.

## APPENDIX 7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## APPENDIX 8. LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Job Title	Agency	Duty Station
Head of Field Office	UNHCR	Tripoli/North
Field Officer	UNHCR	Tyre/South
Country Representative	UNHCR	Beirut
Executive Director	SHEILD	Beirut
Assistant Professor of Political Science	Bryn Mawr College/ Development Analytics	
ICT officer (database)	UNHCR	Beirut
LCRP Senior Interagency Coordination Officer	UNHCR	Beirut
Community-Based Protection Officer	UNHCR	Beirut
Programme Policy Officer (Cash-based transfers)	WFP	Beirut
Consortium Manager (fmr MEAL Specialist)	CAMEALEON	Beirut
Protection Sector Coordinator	UNHCR	Beirut
Deputy Head of Beirut, Mount Lebanon and South Field Office	WFP	BML
Acting head of livelihoods	WFP	Beirut
Associate Registration officer	UNHCR	Beirut
2019-2021 2.5 year was the LOUISE project manager, ex Cash Taskforce Chair	UNHCR/WFP	Beirut
Protection Coordinator	Caritas Liban	Beirut
Field Officer	UNHCR	Tripoli/North
Head of Office	DG-ECHO	Beirut
Food Security Coordinator	WFP	Beirut
Project Coordinator for Basic Assistance	Caritas Liban	North
Head of Bekaa Sub-office	UNHCR	Bekaa
Basic Assistance Sector Coordinator	Ministry of Social Affairs, Government of Lebanon	Beirut
Programme Associate, Basic Assistance	UNHCR	Beirut
Lead SP specialist	World Bank	Beirut
Senior Grants Coordinator	Caritas Liban	Beirut
Deputy Representative - Operations	UNHCR	Beirut
Assistant Representative - Programs	UNHCR	Beirut
Regional Data Management Officer	UNHCR	Beirut
Program CBI Associate	UNHCR	Beirut
Head of Partnerships and Communications	WFP	Beirut
CBI Officer	UNHCR	Beirut
Programme Coordinator	Lebanese Red Cross	Tripoli/North
Protection Officer	UNHCR	Beirut
Head of ER	WFP	Beirut
Former Consortium Manager	CAMEALEON	UK
Programme Officer Targeting BA	UNHCR	Beirut
Head of RAM	WFP	Beirut
Senior field Officer	UNHCR	Bekaa

Deputy field office head	WFP	Bekaa
Senior Grants Coordinator	Caritas Liban	Beirut
Head of Prog Support	WFP	Beirut
Head of grants management	Caritas Liban	Beirut
Program Officer	PRM (USA)	Beirut
Assistant General Manager	Bank Libano Francaise	Beirut
Senior Programme Officer CBI	UNHCR	Beirut
Head of Card Services	Bank Libano Francaise	Beirut
DepRep	WFP	Beirut
Assistant CBI Program Officer (Operations)	UNHCR	Beirut
Assistant Professor of Economics	Bentley University (Development Analytics)	Beirut
General Supervisor of LCRP	Ministry of Social Affairs, Government of Lebanon	
Logistics and Procurement Supervisor	Makhzoumi Foundation	Beirut
Programme Coordinator	World Vision	Beirut
Senior Program Officer	UNHCR	Beirut
Assitant Econometrican Officer (Targeting)	UNHCR	Beirut
Head of Field Office	Lebanese Red Cross	Tripoli/North
Basic Assistance Working Group Coordinator	Basic Assistance Working Group	Beirut
Senior Field Associate	UNHCR	Tyre/South
Chief of Policy	UNICEF	Beirut
Protection Officer	UNHCR	Beirut
Protection, Gender and Accountability to Affected Populations Officer	WFP	Beirut
External Relations Officer	UNHCR	Beirut
Associate Professor of Economics	Emory University/ Development Analytics	USA
Project Coordinator	World Vision	Bekaa
Deputy Representative (Protection)	UNHCR	Beirut
Field Office Manager	WFP	Tripoli/North
Assitant Field Officer	UNHCR	Bekaa
Programme Coordinator	Makhzoumi Foundation	Beirut
Senior Refugee & Humanitarian Specialist	PRM (USA)	Beirut
Graduate Teaching Assistant	Northeastern University/ Development Analytics	Beirut

## APPENDIX 9. TERMS OF REFERENCE

# EVALUATION OF UNHCR/WFP's JOINT ACTION FOR MULTIPURPOSE CASH ASSISTANCE UNDER ECHO IN LEBANON (2019–2021)

### Key information at a glance about the evaluation

Title of the evaluation: EVALUATION OF UNHCR/WFP's JOINT ACTION FOR MULTIPURPOSE CASH ASSISTANCE UNDER ECHO IN LEBANON (2019–2021)
Time frame of evaluation: 2019–2021
Type of evaluation: Decentralized Evaluation
Evaluation commissioned by: UNHCR and WFP
Evaluation Co-Managers
contact:
Date: December 2021

### *I. Introduction*

The following Terms of Reference (ToR) were prepared by the UNHCR and WFP Country Offices based upon an initial concept note prepared and reviewed by the team in consultation with the donor, the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO). The purpose of the ToR is to outline key expectations, deliverables, and processes associated with the evaluation.

The Joint Action for Multipurpose Cash Assistance was initiated in 2018 by UNHCR and WFP with the aim of improving the living conditions for the most vulnerable and reducing the susceptibility of vulnerable families to exploitation and other protection risks such as child labour, survival sex, evictions, and premature returns. The evaluation intends to propose, as needed, actionable and contextualized recommendations to strengthen performance regarding programme design, targeting, programme delivery, cooperation, advocacy, and accountability.

### *II. Subject of the evaluation and its context*

The Syria crisis has led to the displacement of approx. 1.5 million refugees into Lebanon, 54 percent of whom are children. At the end of December 2020, 865,531 Syrians were registered with UNHCR in Lebanon. However, the total number of Syrians in need of international protection in Lebanon is estimated at 1.5 million by the Government of Lebanon, who suspended the registration of Syrians in 2015. With limited employment possibilities and a context of protracted economic and financial crisis aggravated by the COVID-19 situation, the socio-economic vulnerability of the refugees has sharply increased over the past year, as many have lost their sources of income while prices for basic goods and services have increased with inflation.

The 2021 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) showed that the proportion of Syrian refugee households living under the extreme poverty line reached 88 percent in 2021, up from 55 percent in 2019 and similar to the 2020 level (89 percent). The transfer value of cash assistance for the food component increased from LBP 40,500 to LBP 300,000 between January 2020 and September 2021, while the transfer value for the non-food component increased from LBP 262,500 to 800,000 during the same period to compensate for inflation. In September 2021, the cost of the monthly survival minimum expenditure basket (SMEB) for a household of five reached LBP 3,730,000 (LBP 2,077,000 for food and LBP 1,653,000 for non-food). The economic downturn, steep inflation, COVID-19, and the socioeconomic situation resulting from the Beirut Blast have pushed vulnerable communities in Lebanon - including Syrian refugees - to the brink, with thousands of families sinking further into poverty and vulnerability. Almost the entire Syrian refugee population cannot afford the survival minimum expenditure basket. Inflation impacted food prices significantly. Between October 2019 and October 2021, the cost of food SMEB increased by 728 per cent, resulting in worrisome food insecurity levels among Syrian refugee families. In June 2021, 50 percent of Syrian refugee families were

food insecure. About two-thirds of the families had to limit food portion sizes or reduce the number of meals consumed per day. Nine out of ten Syrian refugees were found to be still living in extreme poverty.

The situation analysis in the LCRP states that among Syrian refugees, households headed by women are slightly less affected by poverty compared to those headed by men (89 per cent vs 92 per cent). The income of female-headed families is eight per cent lower than the income of their male-headed counterparts, and women are more likely to have lower levels of education. Increase of debt, coupled with less access to legal residency and other civil documentation restricting mobility and access to jobs, have created barriers to sustainable improvements. Gender norms and risks of gender-based violence further restrict mobility. Female-headed households are also more often living in non-permanent shelters than male-headed households.

Refugee households depend heavily on markets to meet their food and other essential needs, including housing; given the high living costs and unstable income sources that make them vulnerable to shocks, forcing households to choose between different essential needs in times of hardship. Therefore, providing cash assistance to support basic food and non-food needs for Syrian refugees in Lebanon is important as food security and nutrition objectives can only be tackled if other basic needs - such as water, hygiene, shelter, education and health – are also met. This is because all these essential (or survival) needs are interlinked, including food security – whether by competing for limited resources or by reinforcing a household's ability to achieve food security and nutrition. WFP provides multipurpose cash assistance for food and other essential needs, thus providing a holistic response which addresses multiple and interconnected needs. Multi-purpose cash assistance (MCAP) is an integral part of UNHCR's comprehensive protection response to refugees in Lebanon, aimed at preserving a dignified protection space for the refugees – in an increasingly dire socioeconomic environment – while working to enable their attainment of durable solutions outside the country. As such, it mainstreams protection and supports refugees' ability to effectively benefit from other programs, such as legal aid and documentation, individual case management, health, and shelter. MCAP is provided in conjunction with Food assistance (CFF) provided by WFP; WFP Multi-Purpose Cash (MPC) and Extended Protection Cash Assistance (PCAP) are mutually exclusive.

In addition to MCAP, UNHCR delivers other cash programs to meet the various needs of refugees. This includes emergency cash assistance (ECA), protection cash assistance (PCAP), Cash for rent (CFR), and seasonal or ad-hoc cash assistance such as winter cash assistance (WinCAP).

1. ECA is provided as a one-off lump sum to address or mitigate an emergency following a protection incident (detention of a family member, forced eviction, etc.) or an accumulation of factors that expose an individual to immediate harm, violence, abuse or exploitation. ECA is used alongside referrals to other services.

2. Protection Cash Assistance Programme (PCAP) UNHCR also provides time-bound cash assistance to refugees facing a temporary protection risk, as well as those experiencing abuse, exploitation or harm as a result of their protection profile, such as persons with disabilities, GBV survivors, child labourers and LGBTI persons. PCAP is used as a complementary tool alongside services already offered such as shelter, medical, legal, psychosocial, or other assistance.

3. Cash for rent: The aim of CFR is to offset the risk of eviction and secondary displacement and allow the targeted vulnerable POCs to adjust to deteriorating economic situations, to overcome shocks, and to stabilize their stay in adequate shelters.

4. Winter assistance for the 2021-2022 winter season, UNHCR is planning to provide winter cash assistance to more than 270,000 vulnerable refugee households and 40,000 vulnerable Lebanese households to help them meet additional needs during the harsh winter months. UNHCR's winter support also included in-kind assistance to refugees and Lebanese in need, as well as community support such as fuel/gas for heating for schools and medical facilities.

In addition to the CFF/MCAP and MPC assistance, WFP supports Syrian refugees with unconditional and restricted resource transfers to support access to food through the food e-cards modality. Food e-cards can be redeemed from any of the WFP-contracted shops network located across Lebanon. Beneficiaries utilize their assistance to purchase food items only.

This Joint Action is not a stand-alone activity but is part of the overall WFP and UNHCR cash assistance for refugees in Lebanon. The joint action is funded by multiple donors including ECHO. UNHCR and WFP



have been benefitting from ECHO Action ECHO/SYR/BUD/2018/91042 supporting up to 56,000 severely vulnerable Syrian refugee families with cash-based assistance. The Action started in July 2018 and ended in April 2021. A new one-year Action is now funding the same activities until April 2022 intended to serve 110,121 households (ECHO/SYR/BUD/2021/91000).

Multi-purpose cash aims at decreasing economic and social vulnerabilities and reducing multi-dimensional poverty, in addition to income poverty. The goal of multi-purpose cash beyond meeting basic needs such as food, shelter, and water/sanitation is to reduce the susceptibility of the most vulnerable refugee families to exploitation and other protection risks. Targeting for assistance under the Action is based on an econometric model developed using data from the annual VASyR exercise. Since 2018 the Joint Targeting Working Group comprised of UNHCR and WFP have been working with a consultancy firm (Development Analytics) to recalibrate the targeting formula and criteria on a yearly basis.

The joint action is also in line with the priorities of the Food Security Sector and the Basic Assistance Working Groups, which aim to support vulnerable households unable to meet the SMEB through cash assistance for basic food and non-food needs. The Joint Action covers WFP Cash for food (CFF) and UNHCR Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MCAP), in addition to WFP's multi-purpose cash modality (MPC). The joint action has supported about 347,000 beneficiaries in 2018, 362,000 beneficiaries in 2019, and 371,000 until May 2020. The caseload increased to almost 564,000 beneficiaries in the second half of 2020. The initial target for 2021 cycle was about 527,000 Syrian refugees. Yet, due to the increase in the exchange rate there were several expansions for the program, WFP and UNHCR were able to increase their coverage to reach almost 237,000 HH by October 2021 with an average household size of 5 individuals per household.

The Joint Action is aligned with the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (2017-2021)<sup>1</sup>, the UN Strategic Framework for Lebanon (2017-2020)<sup>2</sup>, and WFP Lebanon's Country Strategic Plan 2018-2023, as well as UNHCR's Strategic Objectives and 2021 Operations Plan<sup>4</sup>, and UNHCR's Strategy for Cash-Based Interventions 2016-2020<sup>5</sup>. Programmes in the Joint Action are implemented through the Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organizational System for E-cards (LOUISE) platform established in 2016 and bringing together UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, as well as other NGO partners involved in cash transfer activities. LOUISE as an inter-organizational platform oversees the majority of cash-based assistance in Lebanon and provides coordinated and coherent cash-based assistance to Syrian refugees. The joint action translates operationally into the following joint activities: 1) targeting, 2) validation, 3) transfer of entitlements, 4) monitoring, and 5) joint call centre.

## **1) Targeting**

Beneficiary identification and targeting of Syrian refugees is based on socio-economic vulnerability levels of the population of concern. A regression model, an econometric formula, predicting expenditure (Proxy Means Test) of refugee households is used. The PMT is a standard approach used in development settings by national governments to determine eligibility for assistance. It does so by using observable characteristics of a family to proxy for a measure of their level of expenditure. The formula yields a welfare score which indicates each refugee family's socio-economic vulnerability on a scale of most severely to least vulnerable. The formula is derived from VASyR data and is applied to UNHCR's database to generate welfare scores and rank the Syrian population of concern.

The Grievances Redress Mechanism (GRM) introduced in 2019 is an accountability mechanism to enhance responsiveness to refugees who were either discontinued from assistance or who were never assisted. It is founded on the principle of self-selection whereby affected refugees initiate a review process by placing claims. GRM eligibility criteria then seek to complement the targeting formula by focusing on profiles with compounded protection vulnerabilities that are statistically rare in the population and thus more difficult for the targeting formula to capture. During GRM time, refugees who had been discontinued from assistance or were never previously assisted can lodge a claim through a range of channels including the call centre.

Additionally, and in order to complement the use of the targeting formula and the GRM, in 2019 UNHCR and WFP piloted a third pillar of the targeting system, the so-called score improving household visits (SIHV). The main goal of the SIHV is to address targeting errors from the formula. Based on the final scores, the team of researchers working on the pilot, investigate the calculated targeting error for specific subpopulations based on specific vulnerabilities in the Registration data. While the targeting model performs reasonably well on average, there may be specific subsegments of the population who are underserved by econometric targeting in general because the most meaningful differentiators for those households are among the data fields that are not available for the modelling process.

Unfortunately, the profiles that exhibit above average exclusion error could not be visited this year due to extended lockdown and limited freedom of movement to collect new expenditure data to assess their inclusion for assistance.

## **2) Validation**

UNHCR Lebanon has been using a biometrics system with iris scans (mandatory for refugees starting 7 years of age) as part of the registration and identity management process since 2013 and this during the registration, renewal and verification interviews. This relates to the capture of refugees' data by UNHCR upon initial and subsequent contacts and is used as a basis for all its services, and in the context of this action, for the targeting.

UNHCR and WFP also use iris scanning for the regular validation process for multipurpose cash assistance. Through validation, the identity of a member of the household that is nominated as an official cardholder is confirmed when presenting the card. This allows UNHCR and WFP to make sure the card remains within the household to whom it belongs. Validation by iris scan is done regularly (on quarterly basis) upon request or can be done when refugees approach UNHCR's reception centers for other services. Failure to undergo validation will lead to the suspension of assistance. For refugees with specific needs who are not able to approach the centers due to immobility, a mobile validation using iris scans will be organized by UNHCR field offices on a regular basis.

## **3) Transfer of entitlement:**

Under the extended Joint action, UNHCR and WFP aimed initially to provide to 110,121 of the most severely vulnerable Syrian refugee families (below SMEB, average family size of 6 members) an average monthly assistance of around USD 168.31 per month (58.33 USD/family for non-food and 18.33 USD/person for food). Yet, the amounts transferred to beneficiaries are fixed starting September 2021 to 800,000LBP for non-food component and 300,000 LBP/Person for food. Assistance is transferred through the Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organizational System for E-cards (LOUISE). Assistance is provided in LBP at levels limited by the Government and at an exchange that fluctuates based on operational rates provided weekly by the bank.

UNHCR and WFP continue to advocate with the Government to ensure that the transfer value matches the SMEB and that the exchange rate granted for multi-purpose cash assistance reflects the real value of the dollar. UNHCR and WFP are working with a single banking institution to provide a single common card to all targeted households through which assistance is channelled. As per WFP's monitoring data, the average cost of reaching an ATM reached LBP 47,000 in October 2021, a tripling from the January 2021 value.

In October 2020, an open loop wallet option was introduced, in collaboration with the financial service provider which enables MCAP-CFF beneficiaries to redeem the funds available on such wallet on any ATM and/or any merchant equipped with

POS terminal without restrictions on the items or services to be purchased, in addition to cash withdrawals in ATMs.

## **4) Monitoring**

A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system ensures quality assistance. As part of WFP corporate monitoring requirements, WFP multi-purpose cash for essential needs assistance and cash for food assistance are monitored at output, process and outcome levels throughout the programme life cycle. WFP field monitors and NGO cooperating partners conduct monthly process monitoring households' visits (or phone calls if the sanitary and/pr security situation does not allow in person visits) to ensure programme implementation and beneficiaries' ability to redeem and utilize their assistance, and quarterly focus group discussions to provide beneficiaries additional ability to provide feedback on their assistance experience. WFP will ensure that its assistance does no harm to the safety, dignity and integrity of the women, men, girls and boys receiving it, and that it is provided in ways that respect all people's rights

## **5) Joint Call Center**

UNHCR and WFP are committed to ensuring accountability to affected populations by enabling people benefiting from food assistance to influence decisions on the design and implementation of activities. Accountability to affected populations is operationalized in three core areas: information provision, consultations and complaints and feedback mechanisms.

UNHCR and WFP Lebanon have put in place a number of complaint and feedback channels to engage the affected populations in the programme including a joint call centre. In line with the delivering as one approach, WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF established a Common Call Centre in 2017 to better address concerns related to the assistance channelled through the Common Card. The joint call centre is intended to enhance two-way communication with targeted refugees, facilitate access to the appropriate agency within one call and provide quick solutions.

### *III. Purpose and scope*

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the evaluation is to generate evidence to inform joint UNHCR and WFP's future programming for cash interventions, with a view to strengthen gender-sensitive programme delivery in a context of continuing socio-economic crisis. This evaluation aims to provide organizational learning, specifically the jointness and complementarity of the activities and following the evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and connectedness as outlined in the evaluation questions below. The contractor is expected to produce an evaluation report and operational recommendations for the Joint Action, using the evaluation findings as the principal evidence base.

The evaluation is expected to build on existing evidence relating to cash transfers performed as joint endeavours in Lebanon, namely the CAMEALEON reports, the WFP Country Strategic Plan Evaluation, the VASYR 2021 report, the basic needs outcome monitoring reports (2020), the development analytics cash impact study (2020), and other relevant studies. The main evaluation criteria against which the Joint Action will be assessed are relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and coherence. The evaluation will provide an in-depth understanding of enabling and constraining factors in the achievement of results. By looking at key challenges, lessons, as well as opportunities, the evaluation will propose practical and strategic recommendations that will feed into the 2023 Cash Transfer Programmes.

#### **SCOPE**

The evaluation will focus on operational years 2019-2021, which coincide with the socio-economic downturn, inflation, and devaluation of the local currency during which UNHCR and WFP have taken a number of measures to adapt to the situation and mitigate emerging risks. The evaluation will consider the joint action covering WFP Cash for food (CFF) and UNHCR Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MCAP), in addition to WFP's multi-purpose cash modality (MPC).

**USERS** The evaluation's primary audience are UNHCR, WFP, and ECHO. The secondary audience includes other donors, Government of Lebanon counterparts, as well as other national and international counterparts and partners.

### *IV. Evaluation Questions*

#### **1. How relevant was the Joint Action to the needs of the target population?**

- a. To what extent has the joint action (in its multiple modalities) been able to respond to the needs of the intended beneficiaries (women and men) in the context of evolving and compounding crises (refugees, covid-19, economic collapse)? (RELEVANCE)
- b. Has it been able to integrate gender and equity issues in its modality? (APPROPRIATENESS)
- c. How adequate was the targeting process, i.e., transparent, predictable, independent, impartial, gender-sensitive, and inclusive for reaching the most vulnerable? (APPROPRIATENESS)
- d. Was the overall targeting approach by Proxy mean testing (PMT) (followed by GRM and SHIV) and the way it is implemented by both agencies and partners, the most appropriate and cost-efficient given the nature and the size of the programme as well as the context? (EFFICIENCY and APPROPRIATENESS)

## **2. How effective was the joint action in meeting its objectives?**

- a. To what extent has the joint action achieved its objectives “ to improve living conditions for the most vulnerable and reduce the susceptibility of vulnerable families to exploitation and other protection risks such as child labour, survival sex, evictions, and premature returns”? (EFFECTIVENESS)
- b. Were these outcomes different between men and women? (EFFECTIVENESS)
- c. What are the unintended positive and/or negative outcomes of the joint action on protection risks affecting beneficiaries or on tensions within families, especially amongst refugee communities and with host populations? (EFFECTIVENESS)
- d. How effective were the systems and measures applied to reinforce the accountability to affected population (AAP) (MPCA monitoring processes, complaint, referral and feedback mechanism, joint call centre, communication on targeting, discontinuation)? (EFFECTIVENESS)

## **3. How efficient were the design and implementation of the Joint Action?**

- a. Have the processes (cash delivery mechanisms including issuance, validation, delivery, monitoring and beneficiary feedback) been efficient, secure, and accessible? (EFFICIENCY)
- b. How appropriate was the human and financial resourcing to meet the Joint Action objectives (EFFICIENCY/APPROPRIATENESS)?
- c. Has the joint action succeeded in adapting to the changing context in a timely and adequate manner? What were the enabling factors and the barriers? (ADAPTABILITY and SHOCK-RESPONSIVENESS)
- d. What are the implications of separate multi-donor financing on the overall coherence of the joint action? (COHERENCE)

## **4. How effective was the coordination between WFP and UNHCR, and with other actors, in implementing the Joint Action?**

- a. How effective was the coordination between WFP and UNHCR in implementing the Joint Action and its adaptations, through the LOUISE mechanism, and coordination with donors and other stakeholders (such as CAMEALEON, Basic Assistance and Food Security Sectors, academia, etc.)? What should be maintained? What needs to be improved? (EFFECTIVENESS, CONNECTEDNESS).
- b. How well the joint action has been interacting with the other programmes/ activities of the two organizations (e.g., PCAP, ECA, Food e-card, WINCAP etc.) (COHERENCE)
- c. Has the joint action been coherent with the overall humanitarian response in Lebanon? Has it forged effective partnerships (including referrals) on the ground and allowed for making the bridge between addressing immediate needs and a longer- term approach? (COHERENCE/CONNECTEDNESS)
- d. What is the scope for aligning multipurpose cash assistance to refugees with the social protection landscape (e.g., services, livelihoods programmes, cash-plus approaches, etc.) and humanitarian development nexus in Lebanon? (SUSTAINABILITY; Nexus)

## ***V. Approach and methodology***

The evaluation team will use a combination of secondary literature reviews and quantitative/qualitative data collection methods. UNHCR and WFP welcome the use of diverse and innovative methods. Data from a wide range of sources and a representative range of stakeholders will need to be triangulated and cross-validated to ensure the credibility of evaluation findings and conclusions. A preliminary stakeholders' analysis is available in Annex 1.

The evaluators will be responsible for proposing and implementing an appropriate methodology to address the key evaluation questions. Such evaluation methodology may include but is not limited to the following: 1) desk review and content analysis of relevant background as well as programmatic data and documents; 2) focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and rapid surveys (as appropriate) with UNHCR and WFP staff

and beneficiaries, implementing and operational partners, key interagency stakeholders, and key donors, 3) Analysis of existing quantitative datasets such as process monitoring, outcome monitoring, and hotline calls content, grievance redress mechanisms and 4) field data collection. involving a mixed-method approach, which in addition to the above may also include paired interviews, participatory appraisals, outcome mapping, and problem ranking exercises, etc., The evaluation team will be expected to refine the methodology and final evaluation questions following the initial desk review, in-country inception mission (if feasible), and key informant interviews undertaken during the inception phase. The inception report will include a comprehensive stakeholder mapping component, an evaluability assessment of evaluation questions, and an evaluation matrix detailing the sources of data for each question and their judgement criteria, as well as an overview of the data collection tools, and a data collection plan. The final inception report will specify the evaluation methodology and the refined focus and scope of the evaluation, including final key evaluation questions and data collection tools.

The evaluation methodology is expected to reflect an Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) perspective in all primary data collection activities carried out as part of the evaluation (particularly with persons of concern and affected populations, if applicable). An overview of the Logic of the Intervention is available in Annex 2.

The evaluation team is responsible for collecting, analysing, and triangulating data to demonstrate impartiality of the analysis, minimise bias, and ensure the credibility of evaluation findings and conclusions. The use of local consultants is encouraged in order to ensure access to key stakeholders in Lebanon.

In this proposal the evaluation team is expected to provide two scenarios of methodologies. The first scenario would present the methodology used when travel to Lebanon is possible, while the second would focus on remote data collection in case travel restrictions were in place.

It is expected that all UNHCR evaluations should follow and be consistent with:

- UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation
- Code of Conduct for Evaluations in the UN system
- UNHCR Data protection policy
- UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity policy

### **Risks and security**

There are several contextual risks and challenges to be considered by the evaluation team while planning for this evaluation which include the volatile political and economic situation, COVID-19 government related closures (if applies), civil unrest, possible security incidents and road closures.

UNHCR and WFP acknowledge the security constraints involved in carrying out evaluations in the Lebanon context and will share information and provide support to the contractor in making travel and visit arrangements. If the contracting firm foresees specific travel restrictions to Lebanon for one or more of its team members, these should be indicated in the proposal. The contractor should also explain in the proposal how remote management would be successfully carried out in case applies.

### **Available data and information sources (data and reports)**

- VASyR 2018- 2021 data and reports (annual reports)
- CAMEALEON studies and reports since 2018 to present
- Targeting data and Development Analytics reports (annual reports)
- Country strategy evaluation for WFP (2016-2019)
- Process and Outcome monitoring data and reports from WFP and UNHCR (monthly
- process monitoring and quarterly outcome monitoring from WFP and bi-annually from UNHCR)
- SMEB monitoring (food and non-foods prices monitoring; monthly)
- KeyAid Consulting (2020) Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organizational System for E-cards
- (LOUISE) Learning Review
- Output level data (monthly)
- Other relevant documents and data sources

## VI. Management of the Evaluation

In line with established standards for evaluation in the UN system, and the UN Ethical Guidelines for evaluations, evaluation in UNHCR and WFP is founded on the fundamental principles of independence, impartiality, credibility, and utility. These inter-connected principles subsume a number of specific norms that will guide the commissioning, conducting, and supporting the use of the evaluation. This includes protecting sources and data, informed consent, respect for dignity and diversity, and the minimisation of risk, harm, and burden upon those who are the subject of or participating in the evaluation, while at the same time not compromising the integrity of the evaluation. The Evaluation Team will be required to sign the UNHCR and WFP Code of Conduct, complete UNHCR's introductory protection training module, and respect UNHCR's and WFP's confidentiality requirements.

The UNHCR and WFP evaluation quality assurance system sets out processes with steps for quality assurance and templates for evaluation products based on a set of Quality Assurance Checklists. The quality assurance will be systematically applied during this evaluation, and relevant documents will be provided to the evaluation team. This includes checklists for feedback on quality for each of the evaluation products. The relevant checklist will be applied at each stage to ensure the quality of the evaluation process and outputs.

The UNHCR and WFP Decentralized Evaluation guidelines are based on the UNEG norms and standards and good practice of the international evaluation community and aim to ensure that the evaluation process and products conform to best practice. This quality assurance process does not interfere with the views or independence of the evaluation team but ensures that the report provides credible evidence and analysis in a clear and convincing way and draws its conclusions on that basis.

To enhance the quality and credibility of decentralized evaluations, an outsourced quality support (QS) service directly managed by WFP Evaluation services review the draft ToR, the draft inception, and evaluation report.

**The management group** consists of the UNHCR WFP evaluation co-managers. They will be the main point of contact for the evaluation and will ensure day-to-day support and consistency throughout the evaluation process. They will also be the contact person for administrative and organizational issues and will coordinate activities of the different stakeholders involved in the evaluation, including communication and learning.

The management group will be responsible for: (i) managing administrative day to day aspects of the evaluation process (ii) acting as the main interlocutor with the Evaluation Team (iii) facilitating communication with relevant stakeholders to ensure evaluators receive the required data (iv) facilitating communication with relevant stakeholders to ensure technical guidance on content, and (v) reviewing the interim deliverables and final reports to ensure quality, with inputs from the UNHCR/ WFP Lebanon and other HQ entities. The management group will be responsible to propose a communications plan as part of the inception phase.

The management group will share and provide an orientation for the evaluation team to the EQA at the start of the evaluation, including the QS template and review criteria. Adherence to the EQA will be overseen by the evaluation co-managers with support from the UNHCR and WFP Evaluation Service as needed.

The evaluation team will be required to ensure the quality of data (reliability, consistency, and accuracy) throughout the data collection, synthesis, analysis, and reporting phases. The evaluation team should be assured of the accessibility of all relevant documentation within the provisions of the directive on disclosure of information.

**An internal Steering Committee** for UNHCR and WFP will help ensure the independence and impartiality of the evaluation. It will support the evaluation managers in making decisions, reviewing draft deliverables (ToR, inception report, and evaluation report), and submitting them for approval by the Representatives/ Deputy representatives who will be the co-chairs of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will be composed of the following staff from both agencies:

- Country Representatives/ Deputy Representatives (co-chairs of the Steering Committee)  
Heads of External Relations (Steering Committee Secretariat)
- Head of Operations from both organizations directly in charge of the Joint Action
- Heads of Evaluation in the country
- Evaluation co-managers (Observers)

**An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG)** will act as an advisory body with representation from internal and external stakeholders. These can include EU (DG ECHO, DG NEAR), WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, CAMEALEON, MoSA, LCRP, BAWG Coordinator, Food Security Coordinator, 1 or 2 NGOs implementing cash assistance.

The evaluation reference group members will review and comment on the draft evaluation products and act as key informants in order to contribute to the relevance, impartiality, and credibility of the evaluation by offering a range of viewpoints and ensuring a transparent process.

The Reference Group will play an important role in the evaluation design, validating findings, as well as shaping recommendations to ensure that they are useful and implementable. Reference Groups are typically composed of key interlocutors from within UNHCR and WFP (regional bureau, headquarters divisions (if relevant)), as well as government and other key UNHCR/WFP partners in Lebanon.

Upon completion, the final evaluation report will be published on the UNHCR and WFP websites and will be shared with the Head of the CBI Unit at UNHCR and WFP HQ, and UNHCR Representative and Senior Management Team in the UNHCR and WFP Lebanon Country Office, with the request to formulate the formal management response. The completed Management Response Matrix will also be made available in the public domain.

## *VI. Timeline*

The request for Expressions of Interest will be issued in December 2021, and the selection process and signing of contracts is expected to be completed by February 7th, 2022. We anticipate the inception phase for this evaluation would commence in February 2022. An indicative timeline for the evaluation is outlined below. The evaluation is expected to be completed in a maximum of 6-7 months.

## *VII. Evaluation team qualifications*

The evaluation will be undertaken by a team of qualified independent evaluation consultants, comprising of at least four people including a designated Team Leader. Evaluation Teams are expected to demonstrate evaluation expertise as well as expertise in cash-based interventions and experience in refugee response and humanitarian operations. They should also have good knowledge of UNHCR and WFP's mandates and operational platforms. To the extent possible, the evaluation will be conducted by a gender-balanced, geographically and culturally diverse team with appropriate skills to assess gender dimensions of the subject as specified in the scope, approach and methodology sections of the ToR. All members of the Evaluation Team must be willing and able to travel to Lebanon and be able to work fluently in English. Arabic language skills would be highly desirable. Further required skills and qualifications are outlined below:

### **Evaluation Team Leader**

- A post-graduate or Master's degree in social science, development studies, international relations, economics, or relevant fields plus a minimum of 12 years of relevant professional experience in humanitarian and/or refugee response settings.
- Minimum of 10 years of evaluation experience with demonstrated ability in mixed research methodologies in humanitarian and/or refugee operations.
- Proven experience in evaluation of cash-based assistance is essential, and of protection-related evaluation(s) in humanitarian and/or refugee settings, highly desirable.
- Proven track record in successfully leading an evaluation team and managing fieldwork in humanitarian and/or refugee response environments.
- Demonstrable technical expertise in cash-based interventions, refugee assistance, basic needs, and protection work, including relevant analytical frameworks and programming approaches and standards.
- In-depth knowledge of and proven experience with various qualitative and quantitative data collection, analytical methods, and techniques – including statistical analysis - used in evaluation and operational research. Proven experience with relevant software packages (e.g., Nvivo, Stata, SPSS) essential.
- Experience in generating useful and action-oriented recommendations to senior management and programming staff.
- Previous experience in UN Evaluation is an asset

### **Evaluation Team Member: Cash-based programming expert and gender/protection expert**

- A post-graduate or Master’s degree in social sciences, development studies, international relations, or economics plus a minimum of 5 years of relevant professional experience, ideally in humanitarian and/or refugee response settings.
- Minimum of 4 years of experience supporting quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for evaluation purposes (preferable) or operational research in humanitarian and/or refugee response settings.
- Demonstrable knowledge and experience in programming, design, and evaluation of cash-based interventions (cash expert).
- Experience in econometric models, Proxy mean testing and targeting approaches (Cash programming expert or team leader).
- Demonstrable knowledge and experience of gender and protection analysis, programming/mainstreaming, and evaluation (gender and protection expert).
- Good knowledge of humanitarian and/or refugee response programming, relevant analytical frameworks, and programming approaches and standards.
- In-depth knowledge of various data collection and analytical methods and techniques used in evaluation and operational research.
- Proven expertise in facilitating participatory workshops involving different groups and participants.
- Excellent communication and presentation skills.
- At least one of the team members speaks Arabic

### **Evaluation Team Member: Data analyst**

- A post-graduate or Master’s degree in social sciences, development studies, international relations, or economics plus a minimum of 4 years of relevant professional experience, ideally in humanitarian and/or refugee response settings.
- Minimum of 3 years of experience supporting quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for evaluation purposes (preferable) or operational research in humanitarian and/or refugee response settings.
- Experience in econometric models and Proxy mean testing models
- Good knowledge of humanitarian and/or refugee response programming, relevant analytical frameworks, and programming approaches and standards.
- In-depth knowledge of various data collection and analytical methods and techniques used in evaluation and operational research.
- Excellent communication and presentation skills.

## ***VIII. Application process***

UNHCR will be reaching out to evaluation companies that have LTAs with UNHCR/WFP at the global level. A request for proposal (RFP) will be sent to the list of pre-identified companies. Applications can be submitted only by pre-identified firms. Indicative budgets should be prepared in line with the expected deliverables outlined in the timeline and should include any anticipated overhead costs (e.g., translations services) and in-country data collection costs, which are expected to be sub-contracted by the Team Leader directly and remain subject to requisite nondisclosure arrangement.

Interested firms should submit three separate supporting documents:

1. Cover letter (1-page) with the reference “Application for Joint Action Evaluation Lebanon”, briefly outlining how the applicants match the required skills and experience.
2. Technical offer (15 pages excluding annexes). The technical offer should include the following components:
  - a) Capability and suitability of the firm,
  - b) Team composition and qualifications,
  - c) Understanding of the ToR,



- d) Evaluation design/approach,
  - e) Annexes:
    - i. CVs of team members (P11 form)
    - ii. work plan.
3. Financial Offer:
- a) Overview of consultant fees per activity
  - b) Overview of expenses and administrative costs including accommodation, travel, and overhead costs.

Any clarification questions on the TOR or application process should also be submitted electronically to the UNHCR Beirut Supply unit at [HABCHY@unhcr.org](mailto:HABCHY@unhcr.org) with cc to [OMARYT@unhcr.org](mailto:OMARYT@unhcr.org) no later than 18:00 Hrs Lebanon Local Time on January 10th, 2022.

Full applications should be submitted electronically to the UNHCR Beirut at [LEBBETENDERS@unhcr.org](mailto:LEBBETENDERS@unhcr.org) with the subject line “SB/2021/011 – Evaluation of the Joint UNHCR/WFP Action Lebanon”. The deadline for applications is **on Monday, January 17th, 2022 - 18:00 Hrs Lebanon Local Time.**

## TOR ANNEX 1 – Stakeholder Analysis

### Stakeholders Interest and involvement in the evaluation

#### Internal (UNHCR and WFP) stakeholders

**UNHCR and WFP country offices (CO) in Lebanon Key informant and primary stakeholder** - Responsible for the planning and implementation of MPCA interventions at country level. The country offices have an interest in learning from experience to inform decision-making. It is also called upon to account internally as well as to its beneficiaries and partners for performance and results of its programmes. The country offices will be involved in using evaluation findings for programme implementation and/or in deciding on the next programme and partnerships.

**UNHCR and WFP field offices in Lebanon Key informant and primary stakeholder**- Responsible for day-to-day programme implementation. The field offices liaise with stakeholders at decentralized levels and has direct beneficiary contact. It will be affected by the outcome of the evaluation.

**Regional and HQ bureau (RB) and HQ Key informant and primary stakeholder**- Responsible for both oversight of country offices and technical guidance and support, the regional bureau management has an interest in an independent/impartial account of operational performance as well as in learning from the evaluation findings to apply this learning to other country offices. The regional bureau will be involved in the planning of the next programme; thus it is expected to use the evaluation findings to provide strategic guidance, programme support, and oversight.

UNHCR and WFP headquarters divisions are responsible for issuing and overseeing the rollout of normative guidance on corporate programme themes, activities and modalities, as well as of overarching corporate policies and strategies. They also have an interest in the lessons that emerge from evaluations, as many may have relevance beyond the geographical area of focus. Relevant headquarters units should be consulted from the planning phase to ensure that key policy, strategic and programmatic considerations are understood from the onset of the evaluation. They may use the evaluation for wider organizational learning and accountability.

**UNHCR and WFP Offices of Evaluation (OEV) Primary stakeholder** – The Offices of Evaluation have a stake in ensuring that decentralized evaluations deliver quality, credible and useful evaluations respecting provisions for impartiality as well as roles and accountabilities of various decentralized evaluation stakeholders as identified in the evaluation policy. It may use the evaluation findings, as appropriate, to feed into centralized evaluations, evaluation syntheses or other learning products.

**WFP Executive Board (EB) Primary stakeholder** – the Executive Board provides final oversight of WFP programmes and guidance to programmes. The WFP governing body has an interest in being informed about the effectiveness of WFP programmes. This evaluation will not be presented to the Executive Board, but its findings may feed into thematic and/or regional syntheses and corporate learning processes.

#### External stakeholders

**Beneficiaries Key informants and primary/secondary stakeholders** -As the ultimate recipients of multipurpose cash assistance, beneficiaries have a stake in UNHCR and WFP determining whether its assistance is appropriate and effective. As such, the level of participation in the evaluation of women, men, boys, and girls from different groups will be determined and their respective perspectives will be sought.

**Government Key informants and primary stakeholder** – The Government has a direct interest in knowing whether UNHCR and WFP activities in the country are aligned with its priorities, harmonized with the action of other partners and meet the expected results. Issues related to capacity development, handover and sustainability will be of particular interest. **Financial Service Provider Primary stakeholder** –The financial service providers (FSP) enable beneficiaries to redeem the funds available in their wallets through the FSP's ATM and through /or any merchant equipped with POS terminal without restrictions on the items or services to be purchased

**United Nations country team (UNCT) Secondary stakeholder** – The harmonized action of the UNCT should contribute to the realization of the government developmental objectives. It has therefore an interest in ensuring that UNHCR and WFP programmes are effective in contributing to the United Nations concerted efforts.

**Non- governmental Partner organizations (NGOs) [WVI, SHIELD, Caritas, Makhzoumi] Key informants and primary stakeholder** - NGOs are UNHCR and WFP partners for the implementation of some activities while at the same time having their own interventions. The results of the evaluation might affect future implementation modalities, strategic orientations, and partnerships. They will be involved in using evaluation findings for programme implementation.

**Donors Primary/secondary stakeholders** – UNHCR and WFP interventions are voluntarily

funded by a number of donors including ECHO for this intervention. Donors have an interest in knowing whether their funds have been spent efficiently and if UNHCR and WFP work has been effective and contributed to their own strategies and programmes. Donors are working on a new strategy for cash programs linking cash assistance to resilience and social protection framework. Donors are interested to see the evaluation results to inform their new strategy

**Basic assistance and food security working groups Secondary stakeholder:** The basic assistance and food security working groups involves a wide variety of NGOs, UN agencies and government agencies using cash interventions to achieve food security and basic needs objectives. This evaluation would inform the working groups members about the largest cash assistance intervention in Lebanon, which would influence their programming and action plan

## ANNEX 2 – Logic of the Joint Action

**Objective:** Protect livelihoods and reduce protection risks in emergencies by improving the living conditions of the most severely vulnerable refugees in Lebanon through predictable and dignified support addressing food and other basic needs.

**Specific objective:** This Action will contribute to the provision of cash-based assistance for 110,121 severely vulnerable Syrian refugee families with monthly cash assistance averaging to cover their survival needs. The overall goal of UNHCR and WFP is to improve living conditions for the most vulnerable and reduce the susceptibility of vulnerable families to exploitation and other protection risks such as child labour, survival sex, evictions, and premature returns.

**Indicators:** 1. Average Livelihoods Coping Strategies Index (CSI) score for the target population. 2. % of the target population with acceptable Food Consumption Score (FCS). 3. % of households not incurring new debt to meet basic needs. 4. % of beneficiaries (disaggregated by sex) reporting that humanitarian assistance is delivered

in a safe, accessible, accountable manner. 5. Number of consultations held with refugee representatives which informed the programmatic decisions and tools of multipurpose cash programme.

### Results

Severely vulnerable Syrian refugee families in Lebanon receive multi-purpose cash assistance for their basic needs

**Indicators:** 1. # of severely vulnerable Syrian refugee families receiving multipurpose cash assistance 2. % of households with per-capita expenditures equal to or below the survival minimum expenditure basket 3. Households' expenditure share of key basic needs (food, rent health transport etc.) 4. % of surveyed beneficiaries who are informed about key aspects of the programme including awareness of their entitlements and how to reach WFP and UNHCR with complaints 5. % of complaints received through the call centre and addressed in adequate timeframes 6. % of cases received through the call center and referred to other sectors (including breakdown of sectors) 7. Average cost (in LBP) incurred by beneficiaries to access cash assistance. 8. % of beneficiaries self-reporting being able to redeem assistance through household surveys 9. % of amount redeemed by beneficiaries

**Activities** 1. Identification and targeting 2. Validation of beneficiaries 3. Transfer 4. Monitoring 5. Joint call center

### Risks and Assumptions

– Security conditions - Sanitary conditions – Strains on households' purchasing power: rapid depreciation of the national currency (LBP), rising costs of food and basic items, job losses, underemployment and reduced incomes, removal of import – Food availability: reduced food imports – Strains on ATMs and WFP's retail network: curfews, limited movement, bank transaction restrictions, reduced liquidity in ATMs, increased informal exchange rate fluctuation against the USD, and limited ATMs' access – Tensions between refugees and Lebanese: long queues at ATMs, job competition, reduced livelihoods opportunities – Positive working relationship with the Government of Lebanon – Host community supportive of displaced persons – Low number of spontaneous refugee returnees to Syria – Funding cuts in key sectors

## APPENDIX 10. RECONSTRUCTED JOINT ACTION THEORY OF CHANGE

The TOC of the Joint Action has been articulated using the overall Basic Assistance Theory of Change that covers a variety of initiatives, primarily MCAP as a standalone initiative, but also including WinCAP, PCAP, ECA and non-food items. The elements relevant to the Joint Action have been isolated from this wider theory of change and presented in the chart on the following page.

MCAP/CFF and MPC provide persons of concern (PoC) with the ability to make consumer choices with dignity, allowing them to allocate the cash received according to needs, on items such as clothes/house-holds items, health, rent/shelter, food, education, and debt repayment. In doing so, PoC will experience:

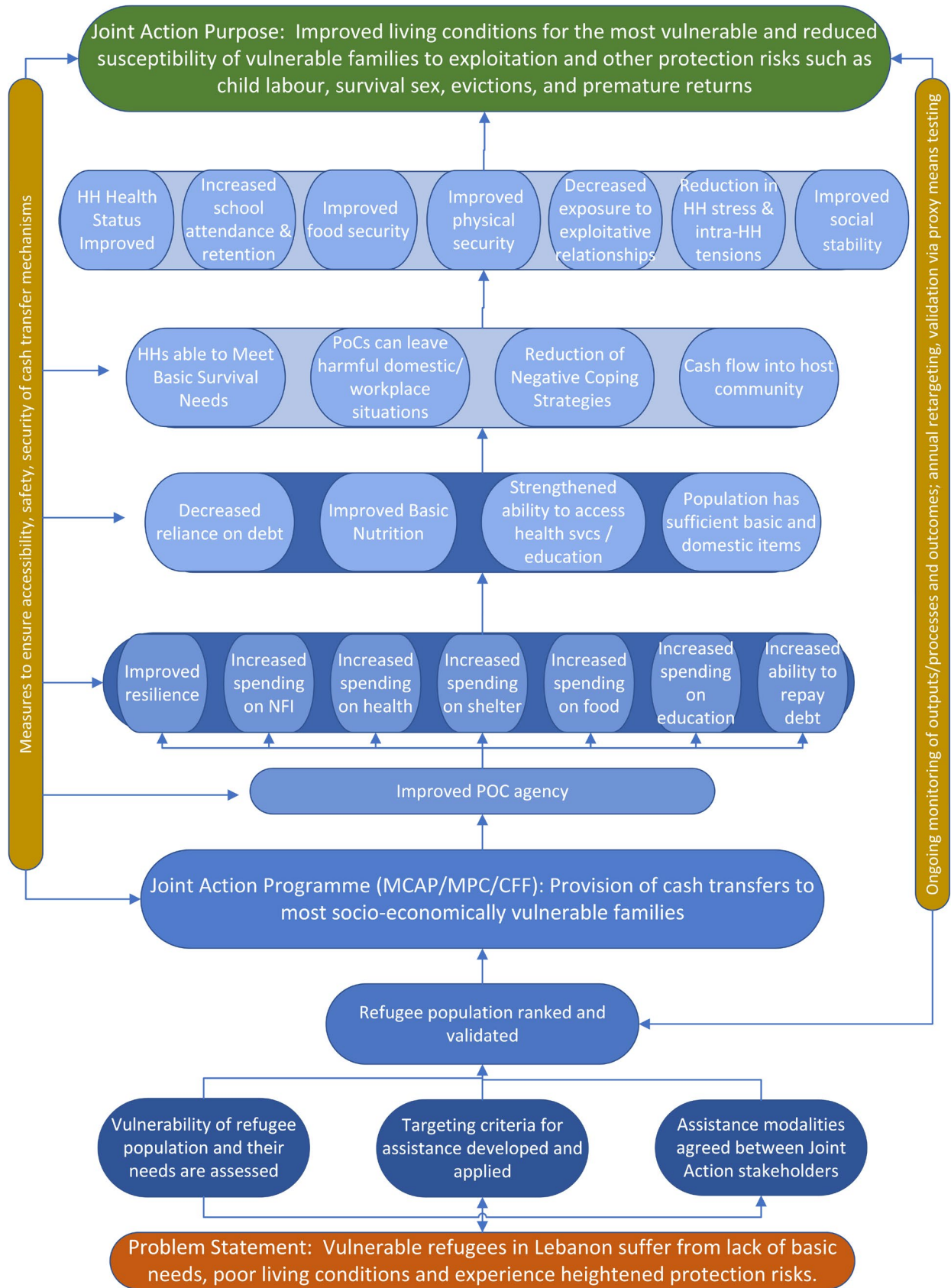
- decreased reliance on debt and thus have the capacity to remove themselves from harmful domestic/workplace situations and reduce reliance on negative coping mechanisms;
- improved capacity to pay rent, purchase basic and domestic items, upgrade their shelter, access health services and education, and cope with seasonal socio-economic shocks and thus meet basic survival needs; and
- improved nutritional and thus health status.

The above will result in:

- improved household health status;
- improved enrollment, attendance and retention in formal schooling for children;
- improved household food security;
- improved household physical security;
- decreased exposure to exploitative relationships; and
- reduced house-hold stress and intra house-hold tension.

The provision of MCAP, MPC and CFF also provides cash flow into the community and is expected to result in improved host community receptiveness to hosting refugees, a decrease in inter-communal tensions, this resulting in improved social stability.

Figure 36: Joint Action Theory of Change



## APPENDIX 11. JOINT ACTION BENEFICIARIES REACHED

The following text from the Joint Action proposal to ECHO in 2018 (Annex 1, page 2) provides a breakdown of the total planned number of beneficiaries (put at 336,000 in the proposal text, page 4):

“Through this Action, WFP and UNHCR aim to jointly support 336,000 severely vulnerable refugees with a full package of assistance covering food and non-food basic needs. WFP will cover 23,000 families with a full assistance package and will provide 33,000 families with assistance covering only the food component. UNHCR will complement the assistance to the 33,000 families with the non-food component. Overall, 56,000 severely vulnerable refugee families will be supported with a full assistance package under this Action.”

Breaking this down into component initiatives (and assuming 6 persons/hh<sup>260</sup>- 56,000x6 = 336,000):

- WFP with “full package” – assumes MPC+CFF: 23,000 x 6 = 138,000
- WFP with CFF – 33,000 x 6 = 198,000
- UNHCR complements CFF with MCAP – 33,000 x 6 = 198,000

Therefore, ALL beneficiaries received CFF, with 23,000 receiving MPC as an addition, and 33,000 receiving MCAP as an addition.

The following table describes the number of beneficiaries of the Joint Action using data presented in Annex 4 to the final (phase 1) report to ECHO from 2021.

**Table 13: Joint Action Total Beneficiaries and Transfers per Modality**

Total 2018–2021				
	# HH benefiting	#individuals	USD transferred	Final Budget
<b>CFF</b>	49,169	314,545	\$194,320,031	
<b>MPC</b>	57,427	307,357	\$259,824,399	
<b>MCAP</b>	53,737	316,855	\$171,590,346	
<b>Total</b>	99,643	624,212	\$625,734,778	\$569,658,333

The annual breakdown is as follows:

**Table 14: Joint Action Beneficiaries and Transfers 2018-2021**

	# HH benefiting	#individuals	USD transferred
<b>2018</b>	55,564	347,316	\$107,323,990
<b>2019</b>	55,440	361,916	\$228,477,533
<b>2020</b>	91,599	511,039	\$223,761,700
<b>2021</b>	99,643	624,212	\$66,171,555

The final beneficiary number – 624,212, summed by the evaluation team from the annexed annual beneficiary data – corresponds exactly to that presented in the main text of the final report. This total number was calculated by the evaluation team by:

- Taking the MAXIMUM monthly number of beneficiaries for a given initiative in a given year (2018-2021).
- Taking the MAXIMUM annual number of the three years covered to arrive at an annual total for each year.
- Summing the annual maximums for MPC and MCAP ONLY to arrive at annual totals.
- Taking the MAXIMUM number of individuals reached by MPC and MCAP together across 2018-2021 – the highest number (624,212) is the total reached. This corresponds exactly to the number reported to ECHO in the final report.

<sup>260</sup> The Joint Action proposal notes (page 3, para 3) that while the SMEB calculation is based on a household size of five, “the average household size of beneficiaries currently receiving MCA in Lebanon is 6 and the number of individuals benefiting from this Action is therefore based on the average household size of this caseload.”

Issues (assuming that UNHCR/WFP used the same method to calculate beneficiary #s):

- The total number (642,212) does not account for individuals that were dropped and new entrants – these should all be counted separately, and thus the total # of beneficiaries should be higher.
- Summing only MCAP and MPC to arrive at a total # of beneficiaries assumes that all CFF beneficiaries are part of MCAP (and thus should not be included to avoid double counting). However, across 35 months of data, 11 times there were more CFF beneficiaries than MCAP beneficiaries. This discrepancy is small, averaging 1,800, but ranging from 136 to 6,159 individuals, so potentially over 6,000 beneficiaries are missed here.

Finally, the TOR for the Joint Action evaluation notes 110,121 beneficiary households (Annex 2), presumably a beneficiary total of 660,726 – also not in line with above numbers. Subsequent to finalization of these TORs, a cost extension was granted, extending the joint action for another year (until April 2023). The extension is based on a Modification Request (final version submitted in June 2022) that includes 121,663 refugee households as beneficiaries, leading to this inconsistency.

## APPENDIX 12. JOINT ACTION OBJECTIVES, RESULT, INDICATORS AND MONITORING PROCESSES

The objectives and intended result of the Joint Action are as follows:

**Joint Action Principal Objective:** Protect livelihoods and reduce protection risks in emergencies by improving the living conditions of the most severely vulnerable refugees in Lebanon through predictable and dignified support addressing food and other basic needs.

**Joint Action Specific Objective:** Stabilise or improve access to assistance for basic needs and reduce protection risks through the provision of cash assistance.

**Joint Action Result:** Severely vulnerable Syrian refugee families in Lebanon receive multi-purpose cash assistance for their basic needs.

The Joint Action programme logic<sup>261</sup> consists of a “principal objective”, a specific objective, results, and a selection of indicators. These have varied in number from beginning of the Joint Action in 2019 to the conclusion of the 2021 funding period, with the addition of two additional “objective indicators” (analogous to outcome indicators) and six new “results indicators” (analogous to output indicators).

Further, baselines and targets for several of these indicators changed periodically (changes noted in successive annual progress reports) from their initial values set in the Joint Action 2018 proposal. These changes are itemised in the tables below:

**Table 15: Original Joint Action Objective and Result Indicators**

Specific Objective Indicators										Baseline	Target
Average Coping Strategies Index (CSI) score for the target population										21	15.58 <sup>262</sup>
% of the target population with acceptable Food Consumption Score (FCS)										61%	70%
Percentage of households not incurring new debts to meet basic needs.										37%	Increase in HHs not incurring new debts
Results Indicators											
Number of severely-vulnerable Syrian families receiving multi-purpose cash assistance for basic needs										0	56k HH
Percentage of households with per-capita expenditure equal to or below the survival minimum expenditure basket.										35%	0%
Household expenditure shares of key basic needs (food, rent, health, transport, etc.)										See below	Largest share remains on basic needs
Food	Rent	Medical expenses	Electricity	NFIs	Communication	Transport	Debt repayment	Gas	other		
54%	11%	8%	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	6%	6%		

<sup>261</sup> As articulated in the original DG-ECHO proposal for the Joint Action (eSINGLE FORM FOR HUMANITARIAN AID ACTIONS, 2018/00890/RQ/01/01), Section 4.

<sup>262</sup> The original proposal reversed baseline & target values in error. This was amended in subsequent annual reports



**Table 16: Revisions to Joint Action Indicators, Baselines and Targets**

Change	Specific Objective Indicators	Baseline	Target
Baseline/target change 2021	Average Coping Strategies Index (CSI) score for the target population	9.5 (from 21)	9.0 <sup>263</sup> (from 15.58)
Target change 2021	Percentage of households not incurring new debts to meet basic needs.	37%	40% (previously not specified)
New indicators 2021 <sup>264</sup>	% of beneficiaries (disaggregated by sex) reporting that humanitarian assistance is delivered in a safe, accessible, accountable manner	91%	91%
	Number of consultations held with refugees representatives which informed the programmatic decisions and tools of multipurpose cash programme	0	30
	Results Indicators		
Baseline change 2021	Percentage of households with per-capita expenditure equal to or below the survival minimum expenditure basket.	68%	0%
Baseline/target change 2021 <sup>265</sup>	Household expenditure shares of key basic needs (food, rent, health, transport, etc.)	59%	60%
New indicators 2020 <sup>266</sup> , baseline/target changes 2021 <sup>267</sup>	% of surveyed beneficiaries who are informed about key aspects of the programme including awareness of their entitlements and how to reach WFP, UNHCR with complaints	83% (2020) 85% (2021)	0% (2020) 90% (2021)
	% of complaints received through the call centre and addressed in adequate timeframes	0% (2020) 87% (2021)	0% (2020) 90% (2021)
	% of cases received through the call centre and referred to other sectors (including breakdown of sectors)	Not set	Not set
New indicators 2021 <sup>268</sup>	Average cost (in LBP) incurred by beneficiaries to access cash assistance.	17,250	Not set
	% of beneficiaries self-reporting being able to redeem assistance through household surveys	63%	Not set
	% of amount redeemed by beneficiaries	99%	100%

263 Baseline and target values for this indicator were revised “upon request” in 2021 (Third Interim Report - 2018\_00890\_IR\_03\_01\_16-Mar-2021) to reflect the situation at December 2019.

264 First reported in the Third Interim Report for the Joint Action: 2018\_00890\_IR\_03\_01\_16-Mar-2021

265 Baseline and target values for this indicator were revised “upon request” in 2021 (Third Interim Report - 2018\_00890\_IR\_03\_01\_16-Mar-2021) to reflect the situation at December 2019.

266 First reported in the Second Interim Report for the Joint Action: 2018\_00890\_IR\_02\_01\_02-Mar-2020

267 Reported in the Third Interim Report for the Joint Action: 2018\_00890\_IR\_03\_01\_16-Mar-2021

268 First reported in the Third Interim Report for the Joint Action: 2018\_00890\_IR\_03\_01\_16-Mar-2021

Data to measure and report against the Joint Action indicators is collected via a range of systematic and ad-hoc mechanisms:

- WFP Food Security Outcome Monitoring (FSOM) which started in 2016, measured food security outcome trends among beneficiaries and non-beneficiary households on a quarterly basis. This was renamed Basic Needs Outcome Monitoring (BNOM) in 2020.<sup>269</sup>
- WFP Focus Group Discussions and consultations held with refugees on ad-hoc basis, usually with a target of 12 FGDs during every round of BNOM, to provide context and qualitative data to support the BNOM data. In 2020, no FGDs were undertaken as a result of the COVID-19 safety restrictions.
- UNHCR regular protection monitoring via NGO partners to analyse trends in the protection environment and risks facing refugees. Approximately 6000-7000 households are interviewed on a quarterly basis about specific protection risks faced by them.<sup>270</sup> In 2020, this tool was expanded to include questions related to knowledge, attitudes and practices related to COVID-19.
- UNHCR Post Distribution Monitoring (from 2019) on output and outcome-level aspects of UNHCR assistance modalities (MCAP and Winter Assistance, primarily) among a sample of households via telephone.
- UNHCR Outcome Monitoring covers a range of approaches and samples, from a panel survey<sup>271</sup> in 2019, to ad-hoc surveys of sample of households reincluded via the GRM (also in 2019). These monitoring processes, conducted by NGO partners by phone, investigate household characteristics, specific needs, living conditions, debt, livelihoods, food consumption, expenditures, wellbeing and means of access to assistance and any risks or challenges faced.
- WFP monthly process monitoring (via partners) of distributions among a sample of approximately 200-500 Syrian refugee households, cash withdrawal ATMs and validation sites (in addition to in-kind distributions sites and designated shops participating in the WFP food e-card modality). The surveys investigate how and for what beneficiaries redeem their assistance from ATMs and shops and if they faced any issues during redemption of their aid.

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269 Joint Action Extension Proposal, 2021, 2021\_00724\_RQ\_01\_06\_06-Jul-2021, Section 7.2

270 Average calculated from Protection Monitoring Reports

271 A longitudinal study that measures the behaviour of people over time

## APPENDIX 13: COMPILATION OF LESSONS LEARNED/GOOD PRACTICES

The following is a non-exhaustive list of good practices noted by the evaluation exhibited by, or associated with, the Joint Action and its implementing partners:

- **Use of existing cash transfer approaches and experience:** The integration of the Joint Action into the LOUISE interagency platform enabled rapid scale up of cash distributions and deployment of a tested solution that built on almost a decade of experience in managing cash and voucher assistance. The technological basis of the LOUISE platform means that it is flexible, adaptable, secure and easily adopted by users.
- **Usage of and participation in the VASyR** The VASyR has proven to be a robust, well-designed and consistent annual source of data on the needs and vulnerabilities of the Syrian population in Lebanon. As well as being the basis for amendments to the Joint Action’s coverage targets and basic needs via informed calibration of the SMEB and transfer value, it represents a body of consistent time-series impartial data that is of considerable value in tracking a range of outcomes (e.g. prevalence of negative coping strategies) across a statistically valid sample of households.
- Good efforts to ensure inclusion of marginalised or at-risk groups in implementation activities via:
  - a) Ensuring distributions, meeting locations, information and awareness raising sessions with beneficiaries are gender sensitive and considerate to cultural preferences.
  - b) At-home delivery of LOUISE cards to elderly and people with disabilities to mitigate their inability to be present at distribution sites.
  - c) Use of community outreach volunteers, SMS and helpdesks to keep lines of communication open.
  - d) Inclusion of vulnerability (e.g. disability) variables into the targeting formulae.
- **Targeting:** Use of systematic and data-driven approaches to targeting, exemplified by the PMT and associated GRM, while with challenges, are a timely and cost-efficient way of targeting support to a population of some 1.5 million Syrians in Lebanon. Such an approach is more efficient than the previously-used labour-intensive, costly and exclusion-prone process of door-to-door assessments.
- **Commitment to addressing inaccuracies or changing dynamics:** the considerable efforts by the Joint Targeting Working Group to improve accuracy of targeting on and work with Development Analytics to annually re-calibrate the targeting formula and weightings, is a good practice. Development Analytics has also proven itself a competent and impartial partner, leading analyses of weaknesses in the model, with various changes and corrective measures being tested or introduced.
- **Programme reach to a substantially higher population than originally planned:** One area where the programme has surpassed targets is in terms of the number of households provided a cash transfer. Although UNHCR and WFP stakeholders noted misgivings about adopting this approach and that it was, in part, imposed by the challenges inherent in increasing the transfer values, part of the rationale for it was on the basis of feedback from Syrians (via periodic FGDs conducted by implementing partners) who expressed a preference for reaching more people with less resources. Given the ongoing deterioration in the economic circumstances for all in Lebanon, bringing more Syrians under the poverty line, it is likely to have been the optimal approach.
- **Quick measures to mitigate security concerns at ATMs:** Despite challenges to the effectiveness of the ATM distribution modality overall, UNHCR and WFP acted quickly and effectively to implement measures around tensions and risks caused by the increases in numbers attending ATMs and the banking crisis, forestalling any significant incidents and providing a further means of assistance to Syrians.
- **Use of appropriate technologies to generate savings and synergies at-scale:** The use of the LOUISE card platform, iris-scanning for validation, SMS channel, call centre improvements, online GRM facility, social media for communication, programmatic information systems (ProjectX, RAIS etc.) are all good examples of how technology can be leveraged to, on the one hand, generate programme savings over more labour-intensive approaches, and on the other to facilitate the substantial scale-up of the Joint Action. It also generates flexibility in facilitating movement of programme participants to and from different types of assistance. Further, these measures are resilient in the face of challenges

such as COVID. Overall, the UNHCR/WFP teams have demonstrated fluency and expertise in the consideration and usage of innovative approaches noted above.

- **Willingness to recognise what is not working and adapt:** The division of the call centre is a strong example of where both UNHCR and WFP recognised that an approach to programming was not working effectively and implemented a solution that benefitted both parties. Even with the separation of the call centres, interoperability via referrals remains to ensure the benefits of a joint call centre are retained while its disadvantages mitigated.
- **Good intra and inter-agency coordination:** The Joint Action links to and complements the variety of other cash transfer modalities in a non-duplicative and layered manner and coordinates with other agencies to avoid duplication and share good practices. The BAWG has been noted as a positive and welcomed coordination body, in addition to a range of less-formal side meetings to ensure complementarity across the Basic Assistance, Health, WASH, GBV, Child Protection, Food Security, Social Stability/livelihoods, Shelter sectors, the Lebanese International Humanitarian NGO forum – all these groups were reported to regularly meet to address issues, get updates, identify areas of collaboration, trends, needs etc

## APPENDIX 14: KEY COORDINATION/COOPERATION INSTRUMENTS BETWEEN UNHCR AND WFP

UNHCR and WFP have a history of coordination and cooperation at a global scale dating back several decades. A 1985 MoU between UNHCR and WFP formalised a close partnership in the service of refugees. A revised MoU was initiated in 1994 and further revised in 1997 and again in 2002, reflecting both organisation's experience in implementing the provisions of the previous iterations of the MoU.<sup>272</sup>

The MoU was again updated in 2011, and a series of addenda were signed over the succeeding decade, with the key provisions as follows:

1. **2011 Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and WFP on joint programming:** This global MoU is a foundational cooperation agreement (building on, and superseding a 2002 agreement) between the two organisations with a focus on ensuring that the “food security and related needs of PoCs [persons of concern] are adequately addressed”.<sup>273</sup> It covers the following areas of cooperation:
  - a) Preparedness planning
  - b) Registration/verification
  - c) Needs assessment
  - d) Self reliance/durable solutions
  - e) Nutrition
  - f) HIV and AIDS
  - g) Gender, age and diversity
  - h) Education
  - i) Information Management

The MoU includes a range of specific provisions related to coordination between the two agencies at country level (Section 9), to be the responsibility of the country offices, including:

- a) Appointment of key focal points in field offices.
  - b) Country office coordination and joint consultation with donors, NGOs and other UN agencies.
  - c) Joint monitoring arrangements with host governments on joint programmes.
  - d) Avoidance of duplication in humanitarian response activities.
  - e) Collaboration on transport, logistics arrangements where possible.
  - f) Sharing of information related to safety and security of staff and beneficiaries.
  - g) Collaboration on communications and information technology.
  - h) Joint meetings with Government or similar stakeholders where necessary.
  - i) Higher level coordination at regional, divisional and headquarters levels and ensuring, as part of LOUISE partnership, joint accountability of staff to agreed codes of conduct and accountability principles.
2. **2017 UNHCR WFP Global MoU Addendum on Cash Assistance to Refugees:** In light of an increased use of cash assistance, including unrestricted or multi-purpose cash grants, for humanitarian programming, UNHCR and WFP recognised a need for enhanced mechanisms for collaboration that sought to create synergies and avoid duplication. The 2017 addendum to the 2011 MoU committed to the following principles in joint work:
    - a) A focus on protection as the key contribution of cash.
    - b) Consultation and collaboration with communities, while balancing the risks and protection benefits of cash.
    - c) Simple and easily accessible cash transfers that avoid parallel and inefficient distribution systems.
    - d) Engagement with partners to agree, in advance, on the key results they seek to achieve collectively in the immediate and longer-term.

272 MoU between UNHCR and WFP, 2002, preamble.

273 MoU between UNHCR and WFP, 2011, Section 2.

- e) utilise, complement, support and leverage existing country social protection and safety nets and delivery systems.

Further, the addendum commits to the following joint operational approaches:

- a) Early warning and preparedness
- b) Situational analysis and needs assessment
- c) Targeting
- d) Data sharing
- e) Managing of funding in specific circumstances (such as donor operational/management requirements)
- f) Preference of private sector delivery mechanisms
- g) Shared cash delivery arrangements
- h) Joint Monitoring
- i) AAP through integrating a gender, age and diversity approach and complaints/feedback mechanisms

**3. 2018 Addendum on Data Sharing to the 2011 MoU:** Although the 2011 global MoU contained a provision on sharing of data on beneficiaries (with a view to verification of identities, monitoring of well-being and integrity of assistance provision<sup>274</sup>) it was not extensive and committed to joint work on defining data sharing standards and mechanism outside the MoU itself. The 2017 addendum on cash programming noted the need for additional guidance on data-sharing, so committed to a “further addendum to the Global MoU on data sharing, based upon jointly agreed technical and programmatic requirements, the principles of purpose specificity and proportionality, and accountability to the interests and protection of refugees.”<sup>275</sup> Thus, in 2018, an addendum to the MoU was published specific to data-sharing. The addendum focuses on the collaborative approach to data, in particular with respect to supporting country offices. It sets out processes for sharing of personal and non-personal data (and other information) with the following specific objectives:

- i) To ensure timely provision of relevant data for improved protection, programmatic coherence and efficiency;
- ii) To ensure security of data;
- iii) Encourage interoperable systems and joint platforms;
- iv) To enhance accountability mechanisms | Persons of Concern; and
- v) Where possible, to reduce duplicate data-collection and overlapping of other data-related activities between the Agencies.<sup>276</sup>

The addendum contains clear processes for sharing of data, with grounds for refusal to share limited to:

- breaches of contract with a third party;
- not having access to the data
- if such sharing is likely to pose risks to Persons of Concern, humanitarian actors or other stakeholders.

It further commits each agency to endeavouring to ensure that no reason to reject a request for the sharing of Non-Personal Data or information arises.

Although slightly peripheral to the joint UNHCR/WFP cash programming initiative, this agreement between UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF builds on (and makes explicit reference to) the 2018 WFP/UNHCR data sharing agreement, and is thus worthy of note here.

#### **4. 2020 UNHCR WFP UNICEF Trilateral Data-Sharing Agreement for Cash Assistance-Global:**

This agreement aims to harmonise data management and tracking between the three agencies through common beneficiary lists and easy access to beneficiary identification, thereby avoiding duplication. It covers refugee and non-refugee contexts and limits data to personal data and non-personal data processed or to

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274 MoU between UNHCR and WFP, 2011, Section 3.37

275 2017 Addendum on Cash Assistance to Refugees to the January 2011 MoU UNHCR and the WFP, Section 4.3.3

276 2018 Addendum on Data Sharing to the January 2011 MoU Between UNHCR and WFP, Section 3

be processed within the scope of UNICEF's humanitarian cash programming activities. It also specifies that UNICEF should have an appropriate data management system in place in the relevant country before any such data can be shared.

The scope of the memorandums of understanding and the agreements, and particularly noting the longevity of the partnership between UNHCR and WFP, mean that there is a solid policy and strategic basis for cooperation and coordination between the two organisations in implementation of the Joint Action. In particular, the joint work principles and the operational approaches set out in the 2017 addendum to MoU cover the key dynamics of operation of the cash programming.

These formal agreements of cooperation have been cited by a variety of internal WFP/UNHCR stakeholders interviewed as governing the relationship between the two country offices' programming. The data-sharing amendment to the global MoU was noted in particular as relevant, given the data-intensive nature of the Joint Action.<sup>277</sup>

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277 UN key informants.

## APPENDIX 15: EVALUATION STEERING AND MANAGEMENT

Oversight of the evaluation took place at several levels:

1. On a day-to-day basis, the evaluation was co-managed by monitoring and evaluation specialists from UNHCR and WFP: **the evaluation co-managers**. The evaluation co-managers were responsible for:
  - i) Managing administrative day to day aspects of the evaluation process.
  - ii) Acting as the main interlocutor with the Evaluation Team
  - iii) Facilitating communication with relevant stakeholders to ensure evaluators receive the required data
  - iv) Facilitating communication with relevant stakeholders to ensure technical guidance on content, and
  - v) Reviewing the interim deliverables and final reports to ensure quality, with inputs from UNHCR/WFP Lebanon and other HQ entities. T
  - vi) Proposing a communications plan as part of the inception phase.
  - vii) Providing an orientation for the evaluation team to the evaluation quality assurance (EQA) process at the start of the evaluation, including the quality assurance template and review criteria.
  - viii) Overseeing adherence to the EQA (with support from the UNHCR and WFP Evaluation Service as needed).
  
2. An internal **Steering Committee** (SC) for UNHCR and WFP helped ensure the independence and impartiality of the evaluation. It supported the evaluation co-managers in making decisions, reviewing draft deliverables (ToR, inception report, and evaluation report), and submitting them for approval by the Representatives/Deputy Representatives who are the co-chairs of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee was composed of the following staff from both agencies:

UNHCR	WFP
Ayaki Ito, Representative	Abdallah Al-Wardat, Country Director
Ioli Kimyaci, Deputy Representative	Nicolas Oberlin, Deputy Country Director
Hinako Toki, Assistant Representative	Marco Principi, Head of Research, Assessment and Monitoring
Katarina Stewart, Senior External Relations Officer	Julie Martinez, Head of Partnerships and Communications, WFP
Milos Terzan, Head of Basic assistance unit	Leila Meilouh, Head of Emergency Response, WFP
Sarah Osmane , Associate Monitoring and Evaluation Office (Observer), Evaluation co-manager	Soha Moussa, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, (Observer) Evaluation co-manager

3. Finally, an **Evaluation Reference Group** (ERG) acted as an advisory body with representation from internal and external stakeholders. These included EU (DG ECHO, DG NEAR), WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, CAMEALEON, MoSA, Lebanese Red Cross (LRC), BAWG Coordinator, Food Security Coordinator, NGOs implementing cash assistance.

The ERG members reviewed and commented on the draft evaluation products and acted as key informants in order to contribute to the relevance, impartiality, and credibility of the evaluation by offering a range of viewpoints and ensuring a transparent process. The ERG played an important role in the evaluation design, validating findings, as well as shaping recommendations to ensure that they were useful and implementable.



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