

European Commission





Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus

DEVCO ECHO NEAR

Background to the SPaN Technical Assistance Mission

The Lebanon case study was produced as part of a Technical Assistance Mission supported by the initiative "Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus" (SPaN). It is jointly led by the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO), Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (NEAR) with the support of DEVCO Unit 04 and the MKS programme. Between November 2017 and February 2018 the initiative launched a Technical Assistance (TA) expert mission to review and develop options for how the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis (EUTF Syria) could support the development of a social assistance programme in Lebanon to help the most socio-economically vulnerable Syrian refugees and Lebanese host populations affected by the Syrian crisis. The EUTF's requirement was that the action should design systematic and long-term poverty-alleviation mechanisms which target both Syrian refugees and the Lebanese population, while also further developing the national social assistance system within an emerging national social protection framework, drawing from the lessons learnt from humanitarian cash programming in Lebanon.

The outcome was the action document "EUTF support to social assistance to vulnerable refugees and host communities affected by the Syrian crisis in Lebanon" for a 30-month programme with a budget of EUR 52 million, which was approved by the EUTF Operational Board in June 2018.

CASE STUDY

Scene setting

Lebanon has complex and deep-rooted development challenges that have been magnified by the recent spill over from the Syrian civil war and wider geopolitical events. Despite being a middle-income country, Lebanon does not have a strong tradition of wealth redistribution in support of its own citizens.

Lebanon has the highest ratio of refugees to national population in the world. Lebanon stopped registering new refugees when the number reached one million in 2015.¹ Population estimates of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon vary between one million and 1.5 million, reported by various sources including the Government of Lebanon.^{2,3,4} While Lebanese communities sympathise with the plight of refugees, their tolerance is strained by rising poverty and a worsening labour market which impedes Lebanon's capacity to host and absorb Syrians. While refugees are not segregated within camps, support for refugees and host communities operates through separate systems, and refugees and host populations receive uneven assistance. Perceptions of unfairness in the way 'others' are treated, and between those selected and excluded by an inaccurate targeting approach which uses a cut-off based on a one-time scoring of households' assets and means, give rise to socioeconomic tensions and political unease. The EUTF has responded to this by providing formal and non-formal education for Lebanese children as well as refugee children from Syria.

It also helps provide adequate medical supplies, affordable consultations and health awareness sessions, routine vaccines and related medical equipment and acute and chronic medication, access to quality, equitable and affordable health services (care and drugs), and to increase the capacities of primary and secondary health sectors with a particular focus on reducing tension among communities while accessing health services and responding to vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugees' demands.

SYRIAN REFUGEES

The proportion of registered Syrian refugee households living below the poverty line, USD 3.84 per person per day, reached 76 % in 2017⁵. Syrian refugee arrivals increased the labour supply by 30 % in 2013, the majority being low- or semi-skilled workers⁶. The refugees are restricted to 'third sector' roles in construction, agriculture and cleaning services, where there is a labour shortage, as these occupations do not match the income expectations and skills of much of the Lebanese labour force^{7.8}. The World Bank estimates that Lebanon has incurred productivity losses of USD 13.1 billion since 2012, due to the Syrian refugee influx, of which USD 5.6 billion pertains to 2015 alone⁹.

¹ See https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/02/14/lebanon-new-refugee-policy-step-forward.

² See Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon - VASyR 2017.

³ See http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Lebanon-Crisis-Response-Plan-2017-2020.pdf

⁴ See https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-crisis-response-plan-2017-2020-2018-update

⁵ Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, 2017-2020.

⁶ World Bank. 2014. Lebanon Economic Monitor - A sluggish economy in a highly volatile environment (English). Lebanon economic monitor. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/651341468047954179/ Lebanon-Economic-Monitor-A-sluggish-economy-in-a-highly-volatile-environment.

⁷ Decree 197 of the Ministry of Labour, implemented in December 2014, limits possible work for Syrian nationals to agriculture, construction and cleaning services (i.e. sectors traditionally depending on migrant workers).

⁸ European Commission Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, The Syrian Refugee Crisis: Labour Market Implications in Jordan and Lebanon, Lorenza Errighi, Jörn Griesse, Discussion Paper 029, May 2016.

⁹ See https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-crisis-response-plan-2017-2020-enar.

The presence of the high number of refugees has decreased wages, led to higher unemployment and inflated costs of goods and services^{10,11}. Unemployment in the poorest localities is nearly double the national average (7%), placing considerable strain on host communities. Youth unemployment rates throughout Lebanon are on average three to four times higher than the overall unemployment rate¹². Longstanding inequalities and deepening tensions among poorer Lebanese have also been noted¹³.

LEBANESE SOCIAL PROTECTION

Lebanese social protection focuses on those in formal employment, consequently approximately 40 % of the population who are without formal employment have no social insurance coverage. These Lebanese must rely either on a modest Government social protection programme (see below) or charity. The small amount of charitable giving includes Islamic forms of tax and alms but this is discretionary and not reliable. As Lebanon is one of the most indebted nations globally¹⁴, the Treasury has limited 'fiscal space' to expand the targeted social protection beneficiaries.

NATIONAL POVERTY TARGETING PROGRAMME

The National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP), under the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), provides food vouchers to poor Lebanese who are not in formal employment and does not require additional contributions. NPTP also provides in-kind services to eligible beneficiaries (although these have progressively been reduced in value), which at the time of writing consist of school books and a limited range of health services, although eligible persons pay a contribution to access this service¹⁵. Following a reclassification exercise, 43 000 households receive the basic package of services, among whom some 10 000 households also obtain a debit card which is credited with USD 27/ person/month (up to five persons per household) each month and must be used to purchase food items in pre-selected supermarkets.

While evidence from other contexts proves the advantages of unconditional cash transfers over e-vouchers, there is a divergence of opinion among Lebanese officials including that receiving unrestricted cash transfers will lead to temptation expenditure by recipients rather than responsible consumption.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

People in need across the country receive relief and support from the Government through the national network of Social Development Centres (SDCs), another of MoSA's responsibilities. There are over 216 SDCs across all eight governorates. Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis and the influx of refugees many SDCs became the primary social and healthcare services outlet for Syrian refugees as well as vulnerable Lebanese. SDC primary healthcare services operate in addition to Primary Healthcare Centres under the Ministry of Public Health. SDC staff consist mainly of social workers, health and administrative professionals. The centres have a 75 % short-fall in staffing budget¹⁶. Moreover, since the arrival of refugees, SDC staff workloads have further increased as they are responsible for gathering the registration data of Lebanese nationals, used to assess a person for benefits under the NPTP, as well as providing services to Syrian refugees.

CASH TRANSFERS AND PAYMENT SYSTEMS

Although donors do not provide budget support to the Government of Lebanon, the Government of Lebanon allows international donors to provide direct support to refugees, including e-vouchers and cash transfers. Multi-purpose cash transfers are made directly via a bank debit card held by the registered householder. The provision of payment transfers to targeted groups is relatively straightforward as there is a choice of banks connected with international clearance and settlement systems and using international "chip and PIN" standard technology¹⁷, efficient banking services, a conducive regulatory environment, and locally available technical expertise.

¹⁰ Assessment of the impact of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and their employment profile / ILO Regional Office for Arab States -Beirut: ILO, 2014

European Commission Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs, The Syrian Refugee Crisis: Labour Market Implications in Jordan and Lebanon, Lorenza Errighi, Jörn Griesse, Discussion Paper 029, May 2016.
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¹² See https://www.focus-economics.com/countries/lebanon.

¹³ See https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-lebanon/lebanon-near-breaking-point-over-syrian-refugee-crisis-pm-hariri-idUSKBN1722JM.

¹⁴ See http://reports.weforum.org/global-competitiveness-index-2017-2018/competitiveness-rankings/#series=GOVDEBTGDP.

¹⁵ A preventive package recently introduced includes two annual visits for USD 12 per year per family to health centres.

¹⁶ The authorised staffing level for SDCs is around 2 800 staff members, although in the 2016 MoSA Strategic Plan it is reported that the staff level of SDCs is less than 1 000.

¹⁷ Europay, Visa and Mastercard (EMV).

DONOR COORDINATION ON SOCIAL PROTECTION

It is commonly perceived that coordination is weak between donors and development partners supporting the Government of Lebanon. Coordination needs to be strengthened and priorities mutually agreed with the government to better support meeting the social protection needs of vulnerable Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities.

To strengthen weak coordination between donors and international partners supporting the Government of Lebanon to meet social protection needs, MoSA proposed in December 2017 to convene a Ministerial Advisory Group, to focus the provision of social protection. To support and complement the work of the Advisory Group a Lebanon Social Safety Net Forum is now being formed, to be co-chaired by the EU Delegation and the World Bank, with the participation of UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, Germany, United Kingdom, and Oxfam. If the Forum becomes a Government of Lebanon led group, then MoSA will be a co-chair. Its purpose is to: (i) map relevant ongoing activities and policy orientations in Lebanon; (ii) support government systems drawing on humanitarian safety net expertise, such as: e-cards, food vouchers, data management, targeting, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and interagency coordination; and (iii) support MoSA strategy including links to social services.

MULTI-PURPOSE CASH ASSISTANCE FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES

In 2016, USD 400-500 million (30-38 % of international assistance to Lebanon) was in the form of cash, or vouchers that could be redeemed for goods at pre-selected shops. Cash and voucher programmes developed around identified needs, and developed methodologies to meet them, for example food vouchers and "winterisation" cash transfers. Unrestricted or "multipurpose" cash transfers enabled refugees to meet priority non-food needs that span humanitarian sectors.

The coordination of cash transfers from multiple agencies has been challenging. At the end of 2016, DG ECHO and DFID¹⁸ jointly launched a call for proposals to promote a more accountable, efficient and costeffective approach to cash transfers that could form the basis of a longer-term safety net, which other donors (particularly development donors) could also fund in the future¹⁹. The call highlighted the principle that refugees should receive a single transfer from one agency onto the same delivery card, rather than the approach of multiple transfers from separate agencies onto different cards. At the time of writing DG ECHO and DFID have awarded the single contract to the UN-WFP, which acts as the payment service manager. This has helped to improve the provision of cash and inkind transfers to refugees, although refugees' needs remain inadequately met.

What it might look like

VISION STATEMENT AND PRINCIPLES

Providing appropriate, equitable and coordinated social assistance support for vulnerable Lebanese and registered refugees, would help improve perceptions, ease current social tensions and have a meaningful impact on people's vulnerability, whatever the background or citizenship of those in need. Success in achieving this has clear political advantages for the Government of Lebanon and international donors.

While the Government of Lebanon does not consider that it is responsible for the provision of social assistance for Syrian refugees, there is some resistance in donor circles to support the development of a middle-income country's social assistance system. Consequently, it is not judged feasible in the short- term to operate a single scheme to assess, select, support and monitor both nationals and refugees. Two benefit distribution systems will need to operate in parallel one for Lebanese nationals and another for refugees. The components and processes of an 'integrated but differentiated' distribution system, which works for host nationals and refugees are described below.

In practical terms this means continuing with the current single payment delivery channel (currently operated by WFP) for refugees, while supporting MoSA to expand NPTP. The Social Development Centres are well placed to be the common "service window" for both schemes. This has the advantage of building on and investing in existing institutions and infrastructure. Given the sophistication of payment services and the IT infrastructure available in Lebanon it should be possible to ensure that the two systems operate in the same way at the point of use, regardless of the status of the client or beneficiary. Branding and management collaboration can make the schemes appear very

¹⁸ United Kingdom Department for International Development

¹⁹ ECHO and DFID (2016) If not now, when? Re-framing the cash-based response to the protracted refugee crisis in Lebanon.

similar whether the client is a Lebanese citizen or a Syrian refugee. The perception of even-handed treatment temporarily extended to Syrian refugees would be promoted by the same case worker staff serving both groups using similar registration forms, case management software, payment cards and (importantly) needs based transfer levels. This evenhanded needs-based approach could become a central component of a broader communications approach, which would likely ease social tensions by countering the perception of unequal treatment of refugees.

How it could be done

Stemming from common needs analysis of host populations and refugees, transfers and services can be provided to those currently in need, regardless of their legal status, through the network of Social Development Centres.

JOINT VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

It is essential to try to obtain comparable data on Lebanese and refugee needs in order to formulate a strategy towards providing a social assistance programme equitably. It is also important to maintain dialogue with the Government of Lebanon on these issues. The starting point for this proposed approach is conducting analysis of all groups' vulnerability, needs and benefits, i.e. Lebanese citizens and Syrian and Palestine refugees. The Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR) is an annual survey of refugees conducted jointly by UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP. The VASyR methodology can be extended to be more comprehensive and inclusive. Participation of Lebanese experts and resources (government and academic) in such an exercise provides an opportunity to develop a common understanding of vulnerability analysis and build capacity with Lebanese officials.

ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE: COHERENCE BETWEEN HOST COMMUNITIES AND REFUGEES

It is important to be able to justify and communicate the rationale for the benefits provided to Lebanese and refugees, on the basis of identified needs. An illustration of how this might work is set out in the table below, assuming incremental changes to the current social assistance provision.

Refugee support	Lebanese essential services and referrals				
Referrals and fee waivers	Referrals and fee waivers				
Fee waivers for Syrian refugees ²⁰	Free for Lebanese (Government of Lebanon -financed or donor-funded)				
Right to work and access to employment on agreed terms	Social security access – for Lebanese in employment only				
Cash transfers for vulnerable groups	Cash transfers or e-vouchers for vulnerable groups				
Activities and infrastructure in common to both delivery channels					

Illustration of differentiated benefits

SDC network: office space, equipment, transport for staff for on site visits, communication networks, staffing, training, information and communication technology

School feeding; school bus assistance

20 UNHCR is planning to introduce a type of health insurance arrangement whereby Syrian refugees will be able to receive basic health-care services from the SDCs for free. The UNHCR will meet the LBP 7 000-charge that SDCs apply for such visits Activities and infrastructure in common to both delivery channels

Winter cash assistance²¹

Health services provided under the MoPH network

JOINT POST-DISTRIBUTION AND OUTCOME MONITORING

A Joint Post-Distribution Monitoring approach would include monitoring the outcomes to see if the programmes are effective or need revision, using comparable measures. An independent evaluation function was established in late 2017 with a focus on distributions to refugees. This could be broadened to include Post-Distribution Monitoring for Lebanese social assistance. A joint assessment of implementation and impact is likewise an opportunity to strengthen discussion and agreement between stakeholders.

SUPPORT FOR THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Donor finance and technical assistance could be critical in sustainably supporting a transition towards meeting the needs of all vulnerable people in Lebanon. The obvious vehicle for scaling up support for vulnerable Lebanese citizens is the development of the National Poverty Targeting Programme in MoSA. Several international donors and implementing agencies are willing to fund the expansion of NPTP, albeit proposing differing approaches. It would be more efficient if potential donors were to first agree with the Government of Lebanon a coherent mutually supported government-led vision, strategy and policy as a starting point to reduce the degree of fragmentation and incompatible project initiatives. Support could be given to support a range of functions: Strategic planning; Social assistance policy; Contracting and procurement; Financial management; Management Information System (MIS) management, including registration, payroll, case management, monitoring and evaluation; and Communication across all MoSA activities to enhance awareness of the NPTP and how to claim benefits

Although Social Development Centres are a focal point of service provision for Lebanese and Syrians they are resource poor and without further investment would struggle to meet increased demand (along with municipalities, primary health centres and water establishments). Detailed assessment and inventory of the capacity and physical infrastructure needs of the SDCs is required.

It is technically feasible to support an integrated approach; the challenges are political and institutional. A single social registry would enable SDC staff to manage referrals between other social services, such as: disability; safeguards; protection, health and education. Further discussion with MoSA is required on what range and quality of services SDCs should provide and what is referred to other specialist providers.

JOINT GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON -DONOR FINANCIAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING

To facilitate adequate and sustainable funding, good data, modelling and forecasting is required to anticipate the costs. A regular medium-term expenditure planning and budgeting exercise is required between the Government of Lebanon (including Treasury and Ministries implementing social protection i.e. Labour, Social Affairs, Education and Higher Education, and Public Health) and major donors (including the EU, World Bank, UK, Germany, Norway, and US).

²¹

The UNHCR has been assisting 870 000 Syrian refugees (174 000 families) living below the poverty line with a five-month winter assistance package from November 2017 to March 2018. This includes seasonal cash assistance of USD 147 per family per month for 139 000 highly and severely vulnerable families for five months and an additional USD 75 per family per month for 35 000 families already receiving monthly multi-purpose cash assistance. The UNICEF winter assistance package is smaller. It provides USD 40 to the poorest Lebanese who are already in receipt of the NPTP. It benefited about 26 000 families in 2016/2017.

Summary of assessed response options

The outcomes matrix shown below has been proposed in the concept paper "Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus" as a tool to help planning and decision-making when assessing the status quo and designing response options for working through existing social protection systems. The main criteria and values that the programme seeks to meet are listed in the left hand column while the core distilled criteria which are indicative of the respective value are listed to the right. It is important to note that the matrix provides only a heuristic ranking to assist the policy/programme maker in their planning and should be complemented by further analysis and adjusted to the particular country context at a specific time. Context specific values and criteria may be added and further disaggregated, to include, for example, values of transparency and accountability, and criteria of improved donor - government dialogue, and predicable development cooperation, and coordination, to achieve common goals. The model based on Eugene Bardach's Policy Analysis Model (2012)²² and is part of the OPM Toolkit to Shock-Responsive Social Protection (2018)²³. It has been modified from the version in the concept paper with regard to the criteria and the ranking system.

The matrix provides a short overview of options that have been identified to reach the following objective: the most vulnerable Syrian refugees and Lebanese host populations receive a package of social assistance that results in reduced vulnerability and increased resilience.²⁴

The SPaN approach applied is to facilitate the transition or transformation of a short-term emergency safety net into a systemic and longer-term poverty alleviation mechanism by aligning service provision through NPTP and MCPA to foster complementary national safety nets able to cover socio-economic vulnerabilities of both, Lebanese and non-Lebanese.

			Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6	Option 7
Value	Criteria	Example of country specific criteria	Status quo	(Shadow) Alignment: Stand-alone humanitarian programme aligning with existing or future GoL SP programme	Vertical Expansion: Work with GoL towards NPTP increasing benefit value or duration	Horizontal Expansion: Work with GoL towards NPTP adding new beneficiaries	Piggybacking: Use elements of the existing MPCA WFP operated programme and MoSA NPTP	Design Tweaks: Adjusting the design of routine SP programmes	Tailored approach (if applicable)
	Effectiveness of targeting approach		0	3	3	3	3	3	
Meeting needs	Relevance/ appropriateness of nature of support / volume of support	Needs-based household benefits MPCA and NPTP	0	3	2	2	2	3	
	Adequacy of benefit modality	Uncondi-tional Cash Transfer	0	3	1	1	3	3	
Coverage	Proportion of coverage of the targeted population reached			3		1			
Timeliness (prior to programme start)	Predicted speed of response to the beneficiary		0	3	0	3	1	3	

Social Protection Systems Research: Synthesis Report, Oxford Policy Management, Oxford, UK

24 The Lebanon case study matrix has been developed retroactively for the purpose of the SPaN Guidance Package.

Bardach, E (2012) A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving Fourth Edition
O'Brien, C., Scott, Z., Smith, G., Barca, V., Kardan, A., Holmes, R., Watson, C. and Congrave, J. (2018c) Shock-Responsive

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National ownership	Extent to which it supports/enables Government-led coordination with long-term development partners		0	3	2	2	3		
	Level of inter- linkages with existing SP schemes	Long-term MoSA, SDC, NSSF organisational capacity strengthening	0	3	1	1	3		
	Minimising duplication of delivery systems and processes								
Long-term sustainability	Extent of government or long- term institutional strengthening	Extent of government or long- term MoSA, SDC, NSSF organisational capacity building	0	3	1	1	3	3	
	Participatory phasing-out strategy in place	Extent to which embedded in government systems to increase resilience and cost efficiency	0	1	1	1	3 (NPTP is led by MoSA)	3	
TOTAL			0	31	13	17	25	21	n/a

Notes: SP: social protection;

Scoring system:

High	= 3 Great improvement
Medium	= 2 Some improvement
Low	= 1 Slight improvement
No change	= 0 No change
Negative low	= -1 Slight decline
Negative medium	= -2 Some decline
Negative high	= -3 Great decline
Not applicable	= n.a.

Source: Authors, building on Eugene Bardach (2012) and O'Brien et al. (2018c).

What happens next

SHORT TO MEDIUM TERM

- EUTF Syria has now approved EUR 52 million including support for MoSA to reform and strengthen NPTP²⁵;
- Dialogue established through Social Safety Nets Forum to align separate donor efforts and support MoSA leadership; Discuss a preliminary financial commitment from the Government of Lebanon to progressively establish a social assistance scheme for all Lebanese, regardless of the reason for their need;
- Modify the VASyR to include Lebanese, including participating Government of Lebanon officers throughout the process;
- Plan for scaling up the NPTP defined (including design and management of the NPTP MIS, payment systems, and IT investment plan), the payment service provider is contracted, and the expansion plan is agreed;
- Support to build SDC capacity, including organisational development, business processes, assessment of ICT needs, staffing levels and staff training (initially for those involved in direct contact with vulnerable Lebanese and/or Syrian refugees at SDCs); and
- Strategy and policy development for Lebanon social protection defined through a sector review and investment plan to progressively increase the share and volume of Government of Lebanon contributions, thereby reducing international donor financing.

LONG-TERM VISION

- Lebanon social protection strategy defined; policy approved and implemented;
- Social protection floor established via a social assistance scheme introduced to cover all vulnerable Lebanese;
- Government of Lebanon financing for social assistance progressively increasing;
- Lebanon develops a social assistance scheme provided and perceived as fair, reducing inequality;
- Transfers to all vulnerable people in Lebanon are calculated on the basis of needs;
- The Government of Lebanon contributes to increasing the amount and proportion of financing for Lebanese recipients, through adequately resourced SDCs;
- The SDCs manage caseloads and referrals using a MIS managed by the MoSA.

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