

| Date | 19/2/2021 | | Time | 10:00am |
|----------------------|-------------|---|----------|-----------------|
| Facilitators | Ruba Cheaib | | Duration | 2 hours |
| Minutes Prepared by | Ruba Cheaib | | | |
| Agenda | 2. | Emergency Crisis and Covid-19 Response Social Safety Net Project (ESSN) – World Bank Sector Updates: a. BA Co-Lead Election Results b. Assistance- 2020 c. Overview of BA online dashboard d. Economic indicator e. WFP VAM Updates f. LOUISE operational updates BA 2021 Sector Annual Workplan | | |
| Agencies represented | 4. Ac | Inter-Agency Referrals and Ser | | Cooperation and |
| | | Development (ACTED); Arcenciel; Arci Cultura e Sviluppo (ARCS); Armadilla; American University of Beirut (AUB); Basmeh and Zeitooneh; Cash Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Organizational Network (CAMEALEON); Care International in Lebanon; Caritas Lebanon; Caritas Switzerland; Couloirs Humanitaires; ECHO; FAO; Foreign, Commonwealth & Developmen Office (FCDO); Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ); Himaya Daeem Aataa (HDA); Ibad Al-Rahman Association; International Rescue Committee (IRC); Lebanese Red Cross (LRC); Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF); The Lebanon Protection Consortium (LPC); LOUISE Agencies Representative; Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA); Norwegian People's Aid (NPA); OCHA; Oxfam; Relief International (RI); Save the Children (SCI); Secours Islamique France (SIF); SHEILD; Terre des Hommes (TDH); UNHCR; UNRWA; WFP; World Vision International (WVI); World Bank | | |



- 1) Emergency Crisis and Covid-19 Response Social Safety Net Project (ESSN) (presenter: Haneen Ismail Sayed, World Bank)
 - a) The Project
- There are different figures being referenced with regards to poverty in Lebanon. The World Bank, in an effort to remain consistent, has been using one data source- nowcasting and forecasting techniques from the Household Budget Survey of 2011-2012. These estimates have shown an increase in extreme poverty from 2012 to 2020 of 10% to 22% and increase in the upper poverty line from 25.6% to 45%. These figures are as of March 2020. Nowcasting is conducted from 2012 to 2019 using various techniques, and World Bank estimates are used to estimate sectoral growth and inflation in 2020. The World Bank has issued updated figures on economic growth and projections for 2020. Hence, these figures are considered to be 'estimates' and serve as the basis for the estimations in the ESSN and could be updated when new data is available.
- The ESSN is a three-year project of \$246M which provides cash transfers and access to social services as well as preserves human capital for poor and vulnerable Lebanese population effected by the COVID-19 and economic crises. One main component of the program is the system building of a social safety (i.e. supporting the building of the delivery system) to contribute to the sustainability and institutionalization of an effective and transparent SSN. Thus, while the cash transfer component of the project is over 12 months, the components of social services and systems building takes more time.
- The ESSN is support to the government's National Poverty Targeting Program (NPTP) and not a separate entity. The World Banks supports scales up and scales out the NPTP.
 - b) Beneficiaries and packages
- 147,000 Lebanese households under the extreme poverty line will be targeted (786,000 individuals) to receive monthly cash transfers for basic income support for one year. This consists of a per capita amount of 100,000 LBP (capped at six members) and a flat amount per household of 200,000 LBP. The initial component of the cash transfer is based on WFPs calculation of the food survival expenditure basket and the 200,000 LBP serves as a top up to this. This should cover around 38% of monthly consumption/expenditure of families which could be considered on a higher end in terms of development social assistance. Within the design of the project, there are mechanisms to track inflation and regularly update benefits.
- In addition, 87,000 students aged 13 to 18 years (among the extreme poor households) who will receive a top-up cash transfer to reduce school drop-out. Research as shown that this age group is particularly susceptible to dropping out, especially among boys, and thus this cash transfer will cover all direct cost of education (transport + other expenses (uniforms, textbooks, tools and equipment), in addition to direct school tuition payments.
- 100,000 individuals (among the extreme poor) will receive access to quality social services. Thus, the project will enhance the quality of services and ensure that there is referral and connection with extreme poor families.
- Capacity building for the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) social workers and social development centers to do be done in cooperation with partners, UN agencies and NGOs.
 - c) Poverty impacts and outcomes
- If the project is implemented effectively, extreme poverty is expected to be reduced from 22% to 10% and poverty gap and extreme poverty is to be reduced. These targets are based on



simulations and will depend on implementation. There will be an impact evaluation embedded into the project.

d) New features

- The ESSN is a significant expansion of the SSN, from currently covering 1.5% of the population to covering 20%. Additionally, with support from donors (EU and Germany) there will be another 5% expansion (an additional 50,000 households) totaling a reach 200,000 households (25% of the population).
- Preserving human capital is a main objection of the project.
- A major policy shift through the design of the ESSN has been the acceptance from the government to more to cash transfers. Through pre-paid cards, families can access food through food shops but now also have access to cash through ATMs.
- The "cash plus" approach, with combines cash transfer and specialized services, is embedded in the project design.
- Building a national social registry, a grievance redress mechanism (GRM), third party monitoring and systematic validation are fundamental elements of building an SSN.
- An expert advisory group will be established with the aim to bring civil society, academics, think tanks and other non-governmental bodies as advisories to the technical committee.
- Engagement in the project is multi-sector, multi-stakeholder including many ministries and UN agencies (e.g. WFP who will ab administering the cash component).
- The project will also support the government in taking steps for subsidy reform.
- While refugees will not be benefiting from the cash transfer component of the project, the component of social services will be inclusive of refugees.
 - e) Effectiveness and Disbursement Conditions
- Effectiveness and disbursement conditions of the program includes the adoption of the project operational manual and other fundamental components of project design. In addition to the project operation manual, labor management procedures are also included as part of the World Banks safeguards that need to be adopted.
- Verification is a condition meaning that families cannot be eligible for the program unless they
 go through the PMT verification procedure and eligibility will be dependent on the cut-off score
 poverty line. This feeds in from NPTP database, IMPACT database and other new applicants.
- Establishing a GRM within MoSA is also a condition for disbursement of the cash transfer as well as appointing a third-party monitoring agent. Monitoring of the project will be very rigorous across different phases of the program and particularly for the cash transfer component. The third-party agent will also conduct re-verification after each payment. WFP as the manger of the cash transfer component will also have in place internal post-distribution monitoring.
- There is significant focus on transparency and anti-corruption measures due to weaknesses in the past.
 - f) <u>Lebanon Vulnerability Assessment Panel Survey (LVAP)</u>
- Different from the household budget survey, which the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) is planning, the LVAP is managed directly by the World Bank.
- The survey was initially set to begin last March with a nationally representative baseline survey. However, this got delayed due the COVID-19 situation and subsequent events.
- The survey includes a face-to-face baseline survey with three rounds of follow up phone surveys every three months.



- The baseline survey will fill a large gap in data for Lebanese. The survey is nationally representative and cover both Lebanese and non-Lebanese (refugees, migrants, etc.). No over sampling will be conducted for specific non-Lebanese populations.
- WFP updated that the last round of the m-VAM data collection, which is occurring in collaboration with the World Bank, is being finalized and can serve as a lesson learned for the up-coming assessment.
 - g) Online resources
- Project Document: Full Document
 http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/521601610645400941/pdf/Lebanon-Emergency-Crisis-and-COVID-19-Response-Social-Safety-Net-Project.pdf
- Project Document: Short Version:
 http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/748051608141609746/pdf/Project-Information-Document-LEBANON-EMERGENCY-CRISIS-AND-COVID-19-RESPONSE-SOCIAL-SAFETY-NET-PROJECT-P173367.pdf
- Press Release ENG: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/01/12/us246-million-to-support-poor-and-vulnerable-lebanese-households-and-build-up-the-social-safety-net-delivery-system
- Press Release ARA: https://www.albankaldawli.org/ar/news/press-release/2021/01/12/us246-million-to-support-poor-and-vulnerable-lebanese-households-and-build-up-the-social-safety-net-delivery-system
- Q&A ENG: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/brief/lebanon-emergency-crisis-and-covid-19-response-social-safety-net-project-essn
- Q&A ARA: https://www.albankaldawli.org/ar/country/lebanon/brief/lebanon-emergency-crisis-and-covid-19-response-social-safety-net-project-essn
- Factsheet ENG: http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/517791610478201970/MENA-Lebanon-ESSN-FactSheet-English.pdf
- Factsheet ARA: http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/647371610478284574/MENA-Lebanon-FactSheet-Arabic.pdf

2) Sector updates

- a) Basic Assistance Co-Lead Elections
- Expression of international for national and international in late 2020 with a call for nominees in November 2020. Two agencies, Relief International (RI) and World Vision International (WVI), submitted an expression of interest for the role. Eleven NGO's registered to vote with nine votes being cast.
- Based on majority voting, RI has been voted in as the Basic Assistance Sector (BA) NGO Co-lead. Wael Khaled will serve as the focal point. RI are a current member of the BA Core Group.
- b) Assistance 2020
- Two training sessions for reporting on the BA Activity Info database have been completed and the deadline for January 2021 reporting as been extended until February 19th. Thus, January assistance will not be presented until reporting is complete.
- Assistance figures for 2020 are tentative and pending final review and validation. Final figures will be published on the End of Year report/dashboard.



- Around 107,000 families received regular monthly multi-purpose cash assistance in 2020. The bulk of this assistance went to displaced Syrians (93,000 families assisted compared to 50,000 in 2019). Around 1,300 Lebanese households and 8,500 Palestinian Refugees for Syrians (PRS) were assisted. In 2019, a similar number of PRS families were assisted (8,500 families) and 900 Lebanese families were assisted. An additional 6,313 households benefited from UNICEFS Integrated Child Wellbeing Programme.
- Close to 171,000 families (Around 160,000 Syrian, 8,000 Lebanese, 1,800 PRS and 750 Palestinian Refugees from Lebanon) were assisted with seasonal/winter cash assistance.
- Throughout the year, several agencies provided temporary cash assistance in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. Depending on the agency, assistance duration ranged from three to six months. Families assisted through these programmes are in most cases different from families that received multi-purpose cash throughout the year. 27,000 Syrian families, 2,000 Lebanese and 28,000 PRS and PRL were assisted through these interventions.
- UNICEF's year-end one-off social grant reached around 29,600 non-Lebanese households and 15,000 Lebanese households.
- For in-kind assistance, a total of around 122,000 blankets, 500 heaters, 16,000 clothing kits and 32,000 core relief item kits were distributed. These distributions mainly took place during the winter months (Jan 2020 and Nov-Dec 2020).
- Cash disbursement is presented in USD noting that assistance is being disbursed in LBP. Thus, these figures depend on various exchange rates used by partners and financial service providers throughout the year.
- In total, through the sector, around \$176M was disbursed in direct cash assistance. The needs-based appeal for 2020 (calculated based on needs in late 2019/early 2020) was just under \$500M. Funding reached by the Sector reached a 41% coverage.
- c) Overview of LCRP BA Online Dashboard (Presenter: Raffi Kouzoudjian, Inter-Agency)
- The LCRP BA Sector reporting dashboard is an online interactive dashboard linked directly to BA Sector Activity-Info reporting database. The dashboard provides insight into the figures reported and also will help users to monitor and track the different types of services provided by partners. Data is disaggregated by month, year, nationality, and location of intervention.
- To access the dashboard, the user must visit the Lebanon information hub website, under the analysis section an icon labelled "reporting dashboards" will re-direct the user to the link to access the online dashboard. Link to Lebanon information hub: http://ialebanon.unhcr.org/
- The dashboard is composed on two pages. On the landing page, the summary of BA figures is presented. Filters are available at the top of the page to filter by year and month. The top of the dashboard displays the total disbursed figures of the year selected.
- As the user scrolls, more detailed figures are presented per activity, per nationality and per agency. Graphs are also available to display trends on a monthly basis throughout the year. On the same page, figures for seasonal and COVID-19 cash assistance per nationality is displayed. Towards the bottom of the page, figures for in-kind distributions are also presented. These figures are coming directly from Activity-Info and updated on a daily basis.
- To move to the second page of the dashboard, the user must click on the "partners reporting" icon. This page provides more detailed insight into the figures. An additional filter (nationality) is available. The user can also filter figures by BA log frame activities. Next to the filters, a heat map is available to show the concentration of assistance per district.



- Below the graph, more detailed information on cash disbursed, total number of beneficiaries and reporting partners is available. Assistance amount in USD is calculated by dividing the total USD disbursed per month by the number of households assisted. Graphs per district are also available.
- Partners that are reporting on Activity-info also need to be reporting on RAIS as these two databases serve different objectives. RAIS primarily allows us to avoid duplication of assistance, which is not tracked through Activity-Info.

d) Economic Indicators

- The Lebanese Pound dropped over the past few days almost reaching the maximum drop that was witnessed over the summer (9,500LBP/USD) whereas it has been around 8,000LBP/USD earlier in the week.
- This is a key indicator and used as a proxy for purchasing power of beneficiaries. It also plays into different fluctuations noted in prices of key commodities in the market.
- The latest Consumer Price index (CPI) was released by the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) earlier in the months covering prices of December 2020. The monthly change from November 2020 to December 2020 was eight per cent, the highest monthly increase since July. The yearly change from December 2019- 2020 was noted at 146%.
- The largest components in terms of weight for the overall CPI are housing, water, electricity, gas and food and non-alcoholic beverages. It is important to keep in mind the weight each component has on the overall CPI when examining the individual changes. Food and non-alcoholic beverages increased by 2.15% percent since November 2020, housing and associated components increased by 4.8%. Clothing and foot ware increased substantially by 17% and transportation had a large increase of around 44%. The high increase in transportation is mainly driven by a sub-component that tracks prices of new cars.
- In Mid-2020, a technical group revised the Survival and Minimum Expenditure Baskets (SMEB)
 and presented the results and methodology to the BA working group. The group committed to
 monitoring and updated prices of the SMEB on a monthly basis with new data as it becomes
 available.
- The SMEB has been updates to reflect prices up until December 2020 since some components of the basket rely on CPI-based adjustments.
- The total SMEB can be divided into three components: the food basket, the non-food basket and other non-food services (includes health, education, communication, transportations, etc.).
- When the group presented the results prior, the basket based on August 2020 prices was estimated to be around 1,500,000LBP. Since then, a slight decrease of around 10,000LBP is noted and this is mainly driven by the "other non-food services" component. These components of SMEB were updated based on expenditure data from the 2020 vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees (VASyR) and adjusted using the CPI. While overall expenditure has increased as per the 2020 VASyR, due to inflation, some of the components (e.g. clothing, health, and rent) that are part of the SMEB have decreased. These figures are based on a household of five individuals.
- e) <u>WFP VAM and Retail/Supply Unit Lebanon- Situational Analysis</u> (Presenter: Abdallah SOUHANI, WFP)
- Changes in the exchange rate over the past year and half has been a driving indicator of developments in the country. A high volatility has been noticed in the past few days with the



- rate hitting 9,500LBP/USD. Other exchange rates remain stable including the platform exchange rate (3,900LBP/USD) and the official exchange rate being used for the subsidization mechanism.
- A decreasing trend is noted in the port of Beirut goods movement over the past year (a decrease of 16% in unloaded food). Examining trends after the blast, a decrease of 24% in noted for the period from August 2020 to January 2021. Comparing January 2021 to January 2020, a decrease of 33% is registered.
- Lebanese customs imports statistics are updated as of October 2020. Cereal imports have increase by 6% from 2019 (January- October) and is mainly linked to wheat imports which are subsidized at 85%. Total food (excluding cereals) has decreased by 15% and including cereals has decreased by 6%. Total imports (food and non-food) has decreased by 35% compared to the same period in 2019.
- Two sources are presented for wheat import evolutions- Lebanese customs data and data from a shipment company. A large increase is noted after the blast in August due to a push to import wheat to cover market needs. Lebanese customs data shows a 28% increase between January and October 2020, compared to the same period in 2019. Based on WFP shipment data, Lebanon imported 622,000 tons of wheat in 2020. Between August 2020 and January 2021, Lebanon imported 282,000 tons of wheat, which is 3% less than the same period in the previous year. In January 2020, a 75% decrease is noted compared to 2019.
- By the week of February 4th, 23% of WFP contracted shops were being charged more than 9,000LBP/USD by suppliers while 77% were charged between 8,000 and 9,000LBP/USD.
- The newly revised food SMEB of 19 commodities was based on VASyR 2019 data. Between December 2020 and January 2021, a 7% increase in the food SMEB basket is noted reaching approximately 140,000LBP. Between August 2020 and January 2021, an increase of 17% is noted, following a similar trend with the unofficial exchange rate.
- CAS released inflation rates for 2020 reaching 85%, compared to 3% in 2019.
- At the beginning of February, the price of bread was increased reaching 2,250LBP for a 900g loaf and 1,500LBP for a 400g loaf. The decision was taken based on three factors:1) rise in global wheat price, 2) wheat donations ran out 3) higher exchanging rate.
- Ministerial consultations were held in December 2020 regarding import subsidies, the details of which had not been shared. Scenarios, including ration card for 600,000 Lebanese families were discussed in Parliament. Additional meetings took place in February as well.
- Removal of all subsidies is not expected, but rather a modification of include elements.
- Since December, a gradual increase in subsidized fuel has been noted. Between December 2020 and January 2021, gasoline tank prices have increased by 20%, Diesel tank prices have increased by 25% and cooking gas by 31%.
- Analysis on the potential impact of subsidies removal shows that bread prices could increase up to 3.5 times current price. Prices of combustible fuel could increase up to 5 times. The subsidized food basket could increase by 131%, noting that bread represents around 30% of the overall food SMEB. In the case of medical equipment and medicine, prices could increase up to 241%.
- f) LOUISE Update (Presenter: Dima Krayem, LOUISE)
- The preferential exchange for LOUISE agencies provided by the contracted financial service provider is now at 6,240LBP/USD.



- Staggering of uploads in North and Bekaa occurred over 10 days and in South and BML over 7 days. No uploads are planned over the weekend. ATM monitoring activities were resumed after having been suspended due to the lockdown.
- In January 2021, the majority of redemption occurred at BLF ATMs, with seven other banks still accepting LOUISE cards at negligible amount. Redemption rates for January 2021 stood at 99.9%.
- Expansion plans by UNHCR and WFP starting March 2021. UNHCR is planning an increase in the Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance Program (MCAP) caseload by 31,000 households. These are all un-assisted households, in order to reduce to gap of un-assisted populations. Another 6,000 households will be added through the GRM in April.
- WFP will be expanding the Multi-Purpose Cash (MPC) caseload to reach 950,000 individuals in March 2021. Further expansion to reach 970,000 individuals by April 2021 and reach an aggregate increase of 150,000 individuals.
- An additional payment through UNICEF's one-off social grant for Lebanese and Non-Lebanese in February reached 15,000 Syrian and Lebanese children. UNICEF's Reaching School Program was resumed in February, covering transportation costs for the month of December 2020. The program will be suspended until new children are registered and/or decision to further finance data bundle for children moving forward.
- Terre Des Hommes MCAP assistance completed the final payment to 200 households in January 2021 and are currently in the final phase of their post-distribution monitoring.
- SHEILD Association is rolling out two cash for work projects in response to the COVID-19 Outbreak. The first project has been completed in December 2020 and the second is on-going until May 2021.
- Food and MCAP/MPC transfer values remain at 100,000LBP/person 400,000LBP/household, respectively. WFP and UNHCR are in discussion with MoSA to increase transfer values to 130,000LBP and 480,000LBP respectively.
- Integrated Child Well-being Program (ICWBG) transfer value has been increased to 380,000 LBP/child (capped at 2 children); the Reaching School Program, has a transfer value of 50,000 LBP/child (uncapped) and the one-off social grant payment to 15,000 Syrian and Lebanese children has a transfer value 380,000-500,000/child (capped at 3 children).

3) BA 2021 Sector Annual Workplan

- The BA annual work plan is intended to provide a summary of the key priorities and main actions that the Sector is looking achieve in the coming year. The work plan has been drafted and reviewed by the Core Group and Field level coordinators.
- VASyR: While not necessarily a Sector specific activity, it is included in the work plan to keep track on progress as it has key implications on the identification of needs as well as on targeting for multi-purpose cash. Two main actions are listed regarding the review of the analysis plan and when we would expect to see results.
- Monitoring of the SMEB: The sector plans to continue monitoring the value of the basket, make the details accessible and present to the inter-sector.
- Targeting for multi-purpose cash: Activities listed are mainly with regards to the recalibration of the econometric model. A key activity listed as a starting point is a discussion on the 2021 targeting process given the changing context, followed by standard activities linked to the recalibration, developing the communications plan with relevant stakeholders (including the



BAWG), dissemination of findings, updates to the GRM and appeals, as well as implementation. The timeline for targeting follows that of the VASyR, for which data collection should be occurring towards the end of the second quarter.

- Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E): Following a workshop held in 2020, key M&E tools need to be updated starting the second quarter. Regular review of research questions to the inter-sector should be on-going throughout the year. Research questions will be shared with the working group soon.
- Updating the protection risk assessment (PRA): Sessions at the field level should be happening during March, following which an action plan would be developed to monitor and mitigate risks.
 Results from the field level discussions will be presented the Core Group and the Working Group.
- Complaints and Feedback mechanisms (CFM): Actions listed relate to mainstreaming of accountability within the sector. The sector aims to support partner in enhancing CFMs that are in place with a specific focus on accessibility of reporting cases of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Winter Assistance: In the third quarter of the year, preparations for winter should commence through a dedicated session on lessons learned and winter activity planning.
- Strengthening interagency referrals: Details mentioned in the next section
- National Social Protection Strategy: To be finalized and adopted.
- Advocacy: Two main areas for advocacy have been identified: 1) Transfer values, exchange rates and related issues to be discussed within the working group and the core group and 2) monitoring of key economic indicators.
- Mainstreaming: Three areas, conflict sensitivity, protection, and accountability, have been identified as key priorities for mainstreaming in 2021. The sector will work closely with the social stability sector to ensure that cash implementation is carried out in conflict sensitive approach and how we can ensure access to assistance in areas of conflict. Related to key recommendations that came out of the PRA review, a priority area for mainstreaming protection will be to ensure inclusive access to assistance for marginalized groups as well as enhancing communication with communities.

4) Inter-Agency Referrals and Service Mapping

- One quarter (24%) of all referrals went to BA in Q4, totaling over 10,000 referrals. The largest shares of referrals to BA were in Bekaa and Mount Lebanon.
- Around two thirds of referrals to BA were accepted, a relatively good statistic. Accepted does not
 mean that the person of families received a service, but rather that the receiving agency
 committed to proving a service. There were 16% of referrals where no feedback was received,
 lower than the overall average (25%).
- Snapshot from RIMS: Comparing January 2021 to 2020, a larger number of referrals is noticed for BA. This could be due to more partners referring, higher needs and other reasons.
- Three main areas for next steps:
 - Ensure accurate data on service mapping: Bilaterally following up partners to confirm information on service mapping.
 - Mapping of BA partner capacity for referrals
 - Ensure proper communication to other sectors namely on eligibility and services that fall under BA. Discussions on developing a "cash" specific module on the service mapping tool for more tailored referrals.



- Link to service mapping tool: http://ialebanon.unhcr.org/#ServiceMapping
- Follow up on having a specific session on referrals.

5) AOB

- Raluca from EU Delegation announced that invitations to the civil society had been sent out for the Syria Conference this year. Consultations to take place on the 23rd and 25th of March. A specific session will be held on basic assistance, social protection, and livelihoods on the 23rd. Invitations will be shared with BA working group.
- The Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) networks has put out a sourcing request for any evidence of cash or voucher programming and interventions and health outcomes. Feel free to reach out to Ruba to provide any examples you would like showcase.
- ECHO, on behalf of the Donor Cash Forum, is developing a good practice review document on CVA in high inflation/depreciation contexts and, through CALP are requesting feedback to the development of the tool. The document and feedback template are shared along with the minutes. Partners can feed inputs to me or directly to CALP if preferred.