

Cash Assistance - Lebanon

May 2021

Ten years into the Syria crisis, Lebanon continues to host the largest number of refugees per capita in the world, with the Government estimating that **1.5 million** Syrian refugees are present in the country, in addition to some 14,800 refugees of other nationalities, mostly Iraqis.

The COVID-19 pandemic came at a time when Lebanon was reeling under a serious economic and financial crisis, thus exacerbating the socio-economic vulnerabilities of both Lebanese and refugees. **9 in 10** Syrians now live below the **extreme poverty** line and have fallen deeper into debt.

As refugees increasingly struggle to meet their most basic needs, cash assistance is a lifeline for the most vulnerable, allowing them to address their needs based on their own prioritization and in a **dignified** manner, while also contributing to the local economy through refugee spending.

UNHCR LEBANON'S CASH PROGRAMMES

Multi-purpose Cash Assistance Programme (MCAP)

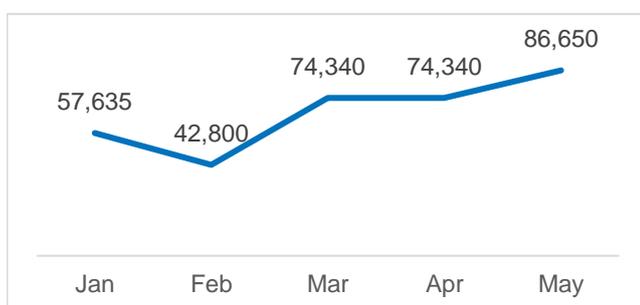
MCAP in Lebanon is one of UNHCR's largest cash assistance programmes in the world, targeting the most vulnerable refugees. It allows families to meet their essential needs while minimizing protection risks and reducing families' resort to negative coping strategies such as skipping meals and forgoing health care and education for children. It is one of the most cost-effective and cost-efficient cash programmes in Lebanon.

In response to the worsening economic situation and the dramatic rise in poverty levels, UNHCR has been increasing the number of households supported with MCAP, reaching in May a total of **86,650 refugee families**, 84,600 of whom are Syrians. The transfer amount was also gradually augmented to LBP 400,000 in July 2020 to mitigate the effects of inflation and offset the devaluation of the currency. These changes were made possible due to a humanitarian exchange rate negotiated with the financial service provider (FSP), which allowed for wider and more effective MCAP coverage with the available resources.

The most vulnerable families are identified for assistance using a regularly updated econometric formula derived from the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) and UNHCR's database.

EVOLUTION OF MCAP CASELOAD IN 2021

Beneficiary Households



* The above illustrates the evolution of the number of refugee households of all nationalities targeted for UNHCR MCAP in Lebanon in 2021.

** The decrease in beneficiary households in February coincides with the recalibration of the econometric formula. This yearly exercise ensures the update of the beneficiary lists on a yearly basis to reflect changes in the socio-economic situation of refugees.



Refugee beneficiary holding the common card on which he receives monthly cash assistance. The numbers on the card have been blurred for protection and confidentiality purposes © UNHCR

Winter assistance

For the 2020-2021 winter season, UNHCR provided winter cash assistance to more than 822,400 vulnerable refugees and 54,100 vulnerable Lebanese 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.

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.

Emergency Cash Assistance (ECA)

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.

DELIVERY AND MONITORING OF CASH ASSISTANCE

To ensure that cash assistance reaches the identified target families and helps them meet their basic needs, UNHCR has a robust system of financial control, verification and monitoring. This includes biometric identity verification and validation of beneficiary identity prior to cash-uploading for those who already possess the ATM card and secure bank upload instructions. Monitoring is also conducted through distribution and withdrawal tracking, focus group discussions and surveys. Moreover, regular contact with recipients allows UNHCR to assess and update information on refugees and monitor impact.

RESULTS AND IMPACT

Refugees who receive MCAP mainly spend the cash on food (92%), rent (54%), hygiene costs (38%) and health care (36%). Regular UNHCR monitoring exercises confirm that MCAP has contributed to significantly or moderately improving the living conditions of 66% of beneficiary households. In addition, 69% of households reported a significant or moderate reduction in their financial burden as well as a reduction in feelings of stress.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Refugees and other persons of concern are at the centre of UNHCR's operations. Since 2018 UNHCR has implemented a grievance redress mechanism (GRM) for the cash assistance programme to enhance responsiveness to refugees who have been discontinued from assistance or who were never assisted. The GRM was co-designed by refugees who, themselves, initiate a review process by placing claims through dedicated channels such as UNHCR's call centre and reception centres. In 2021, **6,100 refugee families** were selected to receive MCAP through the GRM.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

UNHCR Lebanon requires **USD 230.7 million** to continue providing MCAP to the most vulnerable refugees. [UNHCR is grateful for the support provided by donors to the cash programme in Lebanon as well as major donors of flexible and unearmarked funds in 2021:](#)

Belgium | Canada | Denmark | European Union | Finland | France | Germany | Ireland | Italy | Netherlands | Norway | Private donors | Sweden | Switzerland | United States of America

CONTACTS

Katariina Stewart, Senior External Relations Officer, Lebanon, STEWART@unhcr.org