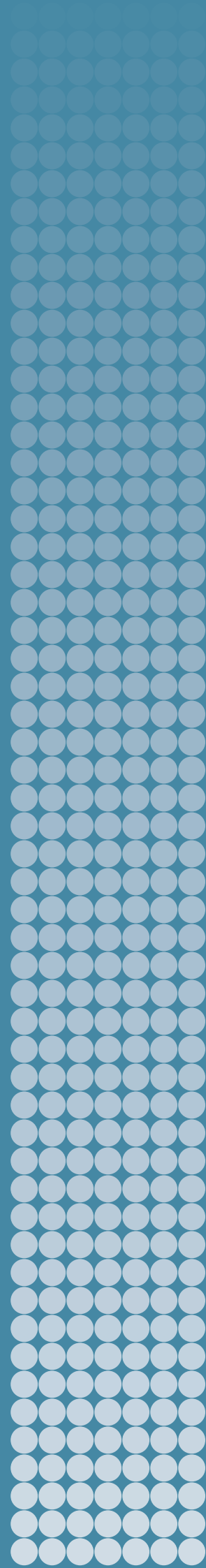


THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME'S CONTRIBUTION TO IMPROVING THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN LEBANON

KRISTINA TSCHUNKERT



**STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL
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September 2021

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Kristina Tschunkert

The SIPRI–WFP Knowledge Partnership and Disclaimer

WFP and SIPRI established a knowledge partnership in 2018 to help to strengthen WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace in the countries where it works. The research for phase I of this partnership visited four case study countries—El Salvador, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan and Mali—and produced initial findings in June 2019. The evidence from these case studies indicated that some WFP programming positively contributes to improving the prospects for peace; however, there were also issues that needed to be addressed. The preliminary report made a number of general and country-specific recommendations on how WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace could be improved.* However, further research was required to test the robustness and general applicability of the initial findings and recommendations, and to refine and add to them with more case studies. Accordingly, in phase II, the inquiry will broaden by incorporating new countries, and deepen through a focus on five thematic areas.

Eight countries have been identified for research in phase II: Colombia, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Lebanon, Nigeria, South Sudan and Sri Lanka. The five thematic areas are climate change, stabilization, gender, cash-based interventions and measurement. The research will inquire into and report on these areas in all eight countries; in addition, there will be a deep dive in each country on one or two of the thematic areas. Phase II research will result in eight country reports, five thematic reports, and a synthesis report that brings together all the evidence, findings and recommendations.

This Lebanon case study is the second country case study of phase II. For each case study, a joint team of staff from SIPRI and WFP conducted in-country research for approximately two weeks to identify possible contributions to improving the prospects for peace resulting from WFP programmes. The methodology for this analysis involved: a literature review of the country context and of WFP's programmes and those of other organizations; key informant interviews with WFP country office staff (partly remotely due to Covid-19), intended beneficiaries and local experts; focus group discussions with intended beneficiaries; and consultations with partners and experts in the country.

The findings in this report reflect the situation at the time of research, 24 May–4 June 2021. However, the context in Lebanon is extremely unstable and dynamic from a political, economic and social perspective. The report should, thus, be read with this in mind.

The findings and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the position of SIPRI, WFP or the management, executive directors or boards of these institutions. The author alone is responsible for any errors or omissions.

* Delgado, C. et al., *The World Food Programme's Contribution to Improving the Prospects for Peace* (SIPRI: Stockholm, 2019).

Executive summary

Objectives

The objectives of this case study report are to gain a better understanding of the World Food Programme's contribution to improving the prospects for peace among groups and people in communities in Lebanon where WFP works. Specifically, the report investigates where and how WFP's cash-based transfer (CBT) interventions—referring to the provision of cash transfers or vouchers to individual, household or community recipients—in the country make potential peace contributions, and further aims to show how these might be enhanced. The study forms part of a wider knowledge partnership between WFP and SIPRI, in which Lebanon is one of 12 case study countries. The research involved a desk review of programme documents, as well as in-depth interviews and field visits to project sites in Lebanon from 24 May to 4 June 2021. The findings in this report reflect the situation during that time frame. However, the context in Lebanon is extremely unstable and dynamic from a political, economic and social perspective. The report should, thus, be read with this in mind.

The Lebanon case study centres on WFP's CBT interventions in the current context of multiple compounding crises, including the Syrian refugee crisis (since 2011), the Lebanese financial and economic crisis (since 2019), the Covid-19 pandemic (since 2020) and the aftermath of the Beirut port explosion on 4 August 2020. The breakdown of trust in the country's leadership and political order, coupled with rapidly rising poverty rates among the whole population, due to the significant currency devaluation and high levels of inflation, present a very significant threat to Lebanon's already fragile peace. There are three main barriers to transforming the fragile peace to a more sustainable and inclusive one: (a) sectarian tensions that are the basis for the governance system in Lebanon (i.e. sectarian identity mostly overrides national identity and regulates political representation and service provision, and determines the relationship between the state and its ruling elite and their constituents); (b) people's perceptions of corruption and mismanagement by the ruling elite; and (c) deep-rooted socioeconomic inequalities and a lack of inclusion, which is also linked to the politicization of the relationships between sectarian groups as well as any resulting clientelism.

There are multiple factors, drivers, events and trends that can affect both conflict and peace—often simultaneously; this makes drawing conclusions on the specific impact of any one of these variables an inexact science, at best. Therefore, contributions to peace are not always obvious or predictable.

WFP Lebanon's contributions to peace are articulated in this report through theories of change (TOCs). These TOCs make the relationship between an activity and a desired outcome in a particular context explicit and testable, and provide a bridge between analysis and programming.

Overview of findings

This report covers four main areas where WFP Lebanon is contributing to peace and where programming shows great potential to make further important contributions. First, in the current context of local and diffuse conflict, WFP's CBTs dispersed through electronic cards (e-cards) present a lifeline to vulnerable populations in Lebanon for whom CBTs are a critical (or sometimes even the only) source of income. WFP has tracked the e-card redemption rate, which was 98 per cent continuously between October 2019 and July 2021, meaning that intended beneficiaries have been

able to access their money reliably. Notably, intended CBT beneficiaries conveyed that the transfers provide a certain sense of stability and continuity that has allowed them to continue to successfully avoid conflict. In this way, CBTs have a stabilizing effect. They uphold a 'negative peace' where there is an absence of direct violence and where people's physical safety is largely protected, factors that are vital to the prevention of further destabilization. Because of the large economic scale of the CBT intervention, WFP is in a unique position to influence debates around the economics of aid that shape the peace and conflict context in Lebanon in a situation where tensions and possible conflict are linked to economic fragility.

Second, conditional CBTs in livelihood activities (i.e. cash for work or cash transfers provided to participants for taking part either in projects to create community assets or in training sessions), in conjunction with longer-term development programming, were found to play an important role in providing the conditions for these activities to improve the prospects for peace on both an individual level and a wider systems level. WFP's conditional CBTs provide vulnerable households with short-term food assistance to close the food gap and serve as an enabler for individual participation in livelihood activities, which can enhance social cohesion through the creation of spaces for intergroup contact between Lebanese and Syrian communities. On a systems level, CBT, as a modality, is key to resilience-building in a market-based society. This is achieved through a combination of cash injections into the local economy, as well as training on marketing, finance, legal structures and equipment to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and systems strengthening cooperatives, local institutions and other local stakeholders. This decreases the likelihood of competition over resources or jobs that can trigger tensions and violent conflict. However, the proportion of intended livelihood beneficiaries receiving conditional CBTs represents only 2.5 per cent of the total number of intended CBT beneficiaries, limiting the impact of conditional CBTs on peace compared with the stabilizing effect of the much larger unconditional CBT caseload.

Third, WFP's digital cash transfer mechanisms and other digital advancements have proven to prevent large-scale aid diversion. Furthermore, as WFP is widely trusted by the population, its role in the Lebanese Government's social safety net—the National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP)—and in the related accountability measures (e.g. transparent verification of intended beneficiary selection, training of social workers on data collection and increased frequency of monitoring) has the potential to lend the NPTP a 'stamp of integrity' and a sense of legitimacy among the population. In turn, this provides an opportunity to build trust among the population in a context where a lack of trust in the ruling elite due to perceptions of corruption and mismanagement has previously fuelled people's grievances towards the government, leading to social unrest. WFP sits at the heart of important debates on building social safety nets and the evolving landscape of social safety nets in Lebanon. WFP's participation in such discussions with the government could be an opportunity to promote principles of equity, fairness and impartiality in the government-owned social safety net, which could help to counter the issues of perceived corruption and clientelism that are obstacles to progress towards sustainable and inclusive social peace.

Fourth, in the current context of Lebanon, with a high and increasing rate of economic vulnerability among its population, the peacebuilding value of communication is also growing in importance. By providing consistent, transparent and evidence-based communication, WFP has the potential to positively influence the current media landscape around humanitarian cash assistance that is traversed by rumours and misperceptions that tend to fuel social tensions.

The findings suggest that WFP’s CBT interventions can—and do—positively contribute to improving the prospects for peace in Lebanon. However, the conflict and peacebuilding environment in Lebanon is extremely complex and rife with uncertainties. Therefore, this report recognizes that there remains room for improvement and emphasizes the importance of taking conflict sensitivity concerns into account. With this in mind, the report makes 13 recommendations that are not an attempt to simplify the extreme complexity and uncertainty but can nevertheless provide actionable entry points once conflict sensitivity is mainstreamed across the spectrum of CBT activities grounded in the local experience of WFP’s programmes in Lebanon:

1. Work with peace and security-focused United Nations agencies—such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and UN Women—and local and international peacebuilding organizations to systematize evidence on the stabilizing effects of CBTs.
2. Position WFP’s large-scale CBT programmes as enhancing stability in the current fragile economic context: consider incorporating this more explicitly in programme design as an objective, including the further development of indicators designed to measure the stabilizing impact of cash.
3. Formalize knowledge gathering of field monitors on the ground and track trends in responses to and articulation of issues surrounding CBT assistance.
4. Conduct a tracer study to identify economic sectors and subsectors that have benefited from cash injections and determine the money multiplier effect of the CBTs on the local economy. Consider implementing surveys of WFP-contracted retailers, logging where they procure their items over the period of a year to understand the wider distribution of profits that CBTs generate in the local economy beyond the contracted retailers.
5. Design livelihood activities with local conflict analysis and by making use of the local conflict data available from UNDP. Prioritize conflict sensitivity and collaborate with peacebuilding actors that can support WFP in finding the capacities for peace, the connectors in each community, that WFP can leverage to find an entry point for social cohesion activities.
6. Mobilize resources from major donors for multi-year livelihood and resilience programmes to strengthen productive assets and institutions of refugee-hosting communities.
7. Use WFP’s leverage with state entities to advocate for better working conditions for both Lebanese and Syrians, and to give Syrians the right to work in sectors beyond agriculture, construction and solid waste management. This includes advocating for implementation of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which grants individuals, irrespective of status, labour rights, the right to health, the right to education and the right to an adequate standard of living.

8. In relation to the Lebanese Government's NPTP, build awareness of WFP's accountability measures beyond direct intended beneficiaries through community engagement.
9. Include an indicator in perception surveys beyond 'aid bias' to capture more concretely the impact of WFP's measures to mitigate corruption and diversion.
10. Undertake further messaging to the wider public that conveys factual, trustworthy information about WFP's assistance, striking the right balance between transparency and consistency.
11. Contribute to enhancing feedback through improved two-way communication, for instance through group discussions with trusted local actors such as local authorities and other local leaders.
12. Build on the existing complaints and feedback mechanisms. This could include regular training of cooperating partners and a template for general information sharing about common complaints raised through these mechanisms.
13. Provide conflict sensitivity training to communications officers and include them in strategic planning discussions. Make it a regular and consistent practice as operations or contexts shift so teams are ready to respond to public inquiry.

Abbreviations

3RF	Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework
3RP	Regional Refugee Resilience Plan
CBT	Cash-based transfer
CSP	Country strategic plan
E-card	Electronic card
ESSN	Emergency Social Safety Net
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFA	Food assistance for assets
FFT	Food assistance for training
GDP	Gross domestic product
ILO	International Labour Organization
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LOUISE	Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organizational System for E-cards
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MSME	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprise
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPTP	National Poverty Targeting Programme
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
SDC	Social development centre
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
TOC	Theory of change
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

1. Introduction

This case study report sets out the contribution of the World Food Programme to the prospects for peace in Lebanon. The main purpose is to show where and how WFP's programming, and specifically cash-based transfers (CBTs) as a modality in WFP's interventions in the country, contributes to improving the prospects for peace in Lebanon, and to identify whether (and if so how and where) it has unintended adverse effects that might exacerbate conflicts and tensions. CBT refers to the provision of cash transfers or vouchers to individual, household or community recipients.¹ The findings of the report are expected to inform future operational refinement.

WFP Lebanon was selected to participate in the research as one of 12 country case studies of the SIPRI–WFP Knowledge Partnership. The objectives of the case studies are to understand in each context: (a) WFP's contribution to improving the prospects for peace; (b) how WFP might enhance its contribution to improving the prospects for peace; and (c) how WFP can measure its contribution to improving the prospects for peace. The knowledge partnership explores five specific thematic areas: stabilization, climate change, gender, cash-based transfers and measurement.

This report begins with a contextual analysis of the compounding crises that Lebanon is currently facing, the present security situation that results, and the government and humanitarian responses to this situation. After a brief discussion of the research design and its limitations, the report presents the analysis of the key findings regarding WFP's interventions and its contribution to the prospects for peace in Lebanon. The analysis is centred around four theories of change (TOCs). Following the analysis supporting the TOCs, the report highlights conflict sensitivity concerns and provides recommendations on how WFP can address these concerns and strengthen its contribution to peace. The first three TOCs focus on specific strategic outcomes and activities as outlined in WFP's country strategic plan (CSP), and the report sets out the contextual background and an overview of the activities covered during research.² The fourth TOC is cross-cutting to WFP's interventions. The final point to the analysis is a critical observation on CBTs and their role in economic inclusion. While insufficient evidence was uncovered during research to support a specific TOC, this thematic observation is important to the research, given the context of a financial and economic crisis and the assumed benefit of CBTs for local economies. Finally, the report presents additional findings around the remaining thematic deep-dive areas before ending with some concluding remarks.

¹ Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP), *Glossary of Terminology for Cash and Voucher Assistance* (CaLP: 2018).

² WFP, 'Lebanon Country Strategic Plan (2018–2020)', 2017–21.

2. Lebanese context

The situation in Lebanon may be described as ‘no war, no peace’. A peace agreement, the 1989 Taif Accords, ended direct violence between the main antagonists of the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90). However, the post-civil war peace has been fragile, demonstrated by the presence of Syrian troops until 2005, the 2006 Hezbollah–Israel war, political assassinations, and intergroup political incivility and street violence. The Lebanese political elite is split between those that support the Syrian Government of Bashar al-Assad and those that oppose it.³ The Syrian Civil War (2011–present) entrenched this divide further, and resulting tensions in Lebanon led to armed clashes in Tripoli in 2014 and a series of bombings targeting Hezbollah strongholds in Beirut and the governorate of Bekaa between 2012 and 2015.⁴ Furthermore, socioeconomic disparities were an underlying cause of the Lebanese Civil War and the fruits of the economic growth that followed the peace accord are unevenly distributed. Allegations of corruption and incompetence among sections of the population are commonplace.⁵ The richest 1 per cent of the Lebanese population claimed 25 per cent of the total national income between 2005 and 2014. In addition, there is an urban–rural divide with economic and political focus on Beirut, leaving those living in the periphery feeling economically and politically disenfranchised.⁶ The disparities also intersect with the country’s religious fabric. For example, in the north of the country, 25 per cent of inhabitants in areas mostly inhabited by Christians experienced poverty in 2008 while in areas that are mostly Sunni, 57 per cent were considered poor.⁷ These inter-linkages between religion and socioeconomic disparities are also demonstrated by service provision, commonly provided by sectarian groups and political parties, who decide whom to reward or exclude, which has created and exacerbated grievances around inequalities in Lebanon.⁸

From the policy of ‘no victor, no vanquished’ that accompanied the 1989 peace agreement, a narrative of a zero-sum game emerged where the ruling elite maintain that any act destabilizing the status quo will inevitably lead to war. A sense of life ‘in the meanwhile’, in between wars, thus prevails, where political violence continues to structure people’s daily lives in supposed peacetime.⁹

Compounding crises

Since October 2019, the country has entered a period of severe political and economic instability. Lebanon is facing multiple compounding crises, including the Lebanese financial and economic crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic, the aftermath of the 2020 Beirut port explosion and the Syrian refugee crisis.

On 17 October 2019, shortly after the government announced new tax measures, mass protests swept across the country to express long-standing grievances related

³ Dionigi, F., *The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon*, LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series (LSE Middle East Centre: London, 2015).

⁴ Rabih, H., ‘The Beirut bombings and the Islamic State’s threat to Lebanon’, *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 8, no. 11 (Nov./Dec. 2015), pp. 37–39.

⁵ Mac Ginty, R., ‘No war, no peace: Why so many peace processes fail to deliver peace’, *International Politics*, vol. 47, no. 2 (Mar. 2010), pp. 145–62; and Tfaily, R., Diab, H. and Kulczycki, A., ‘Educational disparities and conflict: Evidence from Lebanon’, *Research in Comparative and International Education*, vol. 8, no. 1 (Jan. 2013), pp. 55–72.

⁶ Salti, N., ‘No country for poor men: How Lebanon’s debt has exacerbated inequality’, Carnegie Middle East Center, 17 Sep. 2019.

⁷ Lefèvre, R., *The Roots of Crisis in Northern Lebanon* (Carnegie Middle East Center/Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Lebanon/Washington, DC, 2014).

⁸ Cammett, M., *Compassionate Communalism: Welfare and Sectarianism in Lebanon* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, NY, and London, 2014).

⁹ Hermez, S., *War is Coming: Between Past and Future Violence in Lebanon* (University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, PA, 2017).

to social and economic rights. On 29 October 2019 the Prime Minister, Saad al-Hariri, announced his resignation. His successor, Hassan Diab, officially declared a state of economic collapse on 7 March 2020 and announced that Lebanon would default, for the first time in its history, on its nearly US\$90 billion debt. In the same month, the country entered a state of health emergency in reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁰ The unrest demonstrated that the population's trust in either the leadership or the political order established after the Lebanese Civil War had reached a low point.¹¹ A 2020 survey of around 1800 participants in Lebanon showed that only 26 per cent trusted the government.¹² Other sources indicate that trust in the government is far lower: around 4 per cent among the approximately 1000 respondents to a survey conducted in March–April 2021.¹³

The Beirut port explosion occurred on 4 August 2020 as the country was already experiencing significant socioeconomic and pandemic crises. At least 218 people were killed and more than 7000 were injured. People's houses as well as key infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and the silos with grain reserves were destroyed.¹⁴ Many Lebanese claim that the explosion is a catastrophic example of the apparent political negligence, incompetence and corruption, further deepening Lebanon's political crisis and exacerbating the distrust towards the ruling elite.¹⁵ Diab resigned as Prime Minister in August 2020 in the face of mounting pressure, public fury and a breakdown in citizen–government trust. Since then, Lebanon has lacked a fully functioning government. Lebanon is currently in the process of forming its third government in a little over a year, this time under the premiership of the former Prime Minister, Najib Mikati. A year after the explosion, the people of Lebanon are still waiting for an attribution of accountability for the incident.¹⁶

As a result of the financial and economic crisis, Lebanon's gross domestic product (GDP) declined by just over 20 per cent in 2020 and is projected to decrease by a further 9.5 per cent in 2021. The Lebanese pound, meanwhile, devalued by over 90 per cent between 2019 and 2021. The real market value of the Lebanese pound plummeted from the decades-long rate of LL 1507.5 to the US dollar to above LL 15 000 at the time of research in June 2021, and has since been fluctuating wildly, even reaching more than LL 20 000 in July 2021.¹⁷ The 12-month inflation rate—which has particularly affected the prices of food—reached just under 158 per cent in March 2021. Simultaneously, the unemployment rate has soared, reaching at least 40 per cent in 2020.¹⁸

The burden of these compounding crises is disproportionately felt by people with lower or middle incomes, the local labour force that is paid in Lebanese pounds and smaller businesses. Between 2019 and 2020, the poverty rate is estimated to have doubled to over 55 per cent, while the rate of extreme poverty tripled, to reach 23 per cent. The poverty rate continued to increase in 2021, with one estimate putting

¹⁰ Amnesty International, 'Lebanon: Punishing the October protest movement', Public Statement, MDE 18/2628/2020, 6 July 2020.

¹¹ International Crisis Group (ICG), *Pulling Lebanon Out of the Pit*, Middle East Report no. 214 (ICG: Brussels, 2020).

¹² Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), 'Trust in political institutions in the Middle East and North Africa: What are the perceptions in the region?', KAS PolDiMed Survey 2020, Feb. 2021.

¹³ Kayyali, A.-W., 'Arab public opinion on domestic conditions: Findings from the sixth wave of Arab Barometer', Presentation, Arab Barometer, Princeton University, Princeton, 2021.

¹⁴ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), *The Humanitarian Response to the Beirut Port Explosions: Lebanon Flash Appeal 2020: End Report* (UN OCHA: Beirut, 30 Apr. 2021); and Human Rights Watch, *They Killed Us from the Inside: An Investigation into the August 4 Beirut Blast* (Human Rights Watch: Washington, DC, Aug. 2021).

¹⁵ Atrache, S., 'Doing no harm in Lebanon: The need for an aid paradigm shift', Issue Brief, Refugees International, 4 Mar. 2021.

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch (note 14).

¹⁷ World Bank, *Lebanon Economic Monitor: Lebanon Sinking (To the Top 3)* (World Bank: Washington, DC, 2021).

¹⁸ Karasapan, O. and Shah, S., 'Why Syrian refugees in Lebanon are a crisis within a crisis', Future Development, Brookings, 15 Apr. 2021; and World Bank (note 17).

it at 82 per cent. Meanwhile, the situation for Syrian refugees in Lebanon is even more acute, with an estimated 90 per cent living in extreme poverty in 2020 (up from 55 per cent in early 2019), and it remained at that level in 2021.¹⁹

What these numbers do not reflect are the various structural scars of the economic implosions, namely (a) the human capital drain, as highly skilled labourers seek employment opportunities abroad, (b) the loss of physical productive capacity resulting from large-scale business closures, and (c) the security consequences caused by Lebanon's long history of conflict.²⁰ The World Bank had already identified Lebanon as a 'Fragility, Conflict and Violence State' (i.e. deep governance issues and state institutional weakness; situations of active conflict; and high levels of interpersonal and/or gang violence) in 2006 when the classification was introduced. In its 2021 report on Lebanon, the World Bank states that the economic depression and attendant dire socioeconomic conditions 'risk systematic national failings with regional and potentially global consequences' with no clear turning point in sight given the 'disastrous deliberate policy inaction'.²¹ The situation presents a very significant threat to Lebanon's already fragile peace.

At the time of research in May and June 2021, violence remained largely at a low level, precipitated by individual conflicts over food, petrol and other essential goods, petty and violent crime, and the occasional escalation of personal disputes involving firearms.²² However, the frequency of such incidents has increased. Between 2019 and 2020, the number of non-vehicle-related robberies rose by 147 per cent, vehicle robberies by 102 per cent and homicides by 50 per cent.²³ The widespread and easy availability of weapons and explosives due to previous conflicts and the ongoing neighbouring Syrian Civil War (discussed in more detail below) further increases the risk of rapid escalation if violent conflict does break out. Furthermore, and as evidence of the stresses on families and communities, there have been reports of increases in violence against children and women.²⁴

In the current financial and economic crisis, subsidies of wheat, bread, flour, fuel, medicine and other basic commodities reintroduced by the Lebanese Government in response to a significant increase in global commodity prices in 2007–2008 have become untenable.²⁵ These subsidies cost Lebanon more than 10 per cent of its GDP, depleting the country's foreign currency reserves. Without a strong social safety net in place, further withdrawal of subsidies that a large part of the population depends on for their food security could trigger more anti-government protests and social unrest.²⁶ A ration card programme, approved by parliament in June 2021, is meant to support 500 000 families with \$93 per month. However, it is still unclear where the funds for this programme will be sourced from.

¹⁹ World Bank (note 17); Karasapan and Shah (note 18); United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 'Multidimensional poverty in Lebanon (2019–2021): Painful reality and uncertain prospects', Policy Brief, 2021; and United Nations, 'Around 1.5 million Lebanese in need, top UN humanitarian official there warns', UN News, 14 June 2021.

²⁰ Bisat, A., Cassard, M. and Diwan, I., 'Lebanon's economic crisis: A tragedy in the making', Middle East Institute, 29 Mar. 2021.

²¹ World Bank (note 17).

²² Insecurity Insight, 'Lebanon: Vigil InSight Situation Report', 13 May 2021.

²³ Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), Lebanon Country Security Report, updated 20 July 2021; and Sheibani, A., 'ISF source: Lebanon facing a "worrying" increase in crime rates', Beirut Today, 13 Jan. 2021.

²⁴ United Nations and Lebanese Government, Inter-agency Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) Situation Update: Current Operational Environment in Lebanon (Dec 2020), 25 Feb. 2021.

²⁵ Chehayeb, K. and Sewell, A., 'A year after the Beirut blast, subsidy cuts compound Lebanon's desperation', New Humanitarian, 4 Aug. 2021; and Abi-Nassif, C., 'Lebanon's socioeconomic implosion', Middle East Institute, 18 Mar. 2021.

²⁶ Yacoubian, M., 'Lebanon on the brink of historic breakdown', Analysis and Commentary, United States Institute of Peace, 9 June 2021.

Lebanon is facing extraordinary uncertainty. Due to a lack of policymaking, leadership and reforms, the recession is likely to be arduous and prolonged.²⁷

The Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon: A crisis within a crisis

As of May 2021, the estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon (including around 852 000 registered with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR) represented approximately 20 per cent of Lebanon's population of around 6.8 million. This is among the highest concentration of refugees per capita globally.²⁸

In economically more stable times, there was widespread understanding that not many Lebanese wanted to do manual jobs and Syrian migrant workers were traditionally employed in these sectors.²⁹ However, with the Lebanese financial and economic crisis, competition over jobs has led to rising tensions between Lebanese and Syrian communities, especially in rural areas where Lebanese workers are now increasingly seeking work in the three sectors that Syrians are allowed to work in, namely agriculture, construction and solid waste management.³⁰

In the early years of the Syrian Civil War (from 2012 until around 2015), the international response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon primarily focused on the refugees themselves. As circumstances deteriorated inside Lebanon, frustration grew among host communities that local and international aid was being channelled exclusively to Syrians, eliciting a growing sense of discontent in many communities.³¹ According to research by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), 'unfair distribution of aid' as a source of tension has declined since 2015 when aid was also offered to vulnerable Lebanese. However, the perception among Lebanese that 'refugees receive more than us' persists.³²

In 2020 positive intercommunal relations were at their lowest level since 2018. Clashes between Lebanese and Syrian communities are reportedly becoming more aggravated, often based on competition over resources, political differences, and general communal insecurity.³³

To fully understand the existing dynamics between host and refugee communities, relations between Syria and Lebanon need to be analysed in the context of historical developments in the region. Up until the late 1970s and the early years of the Lebanese Civil War, there was widespread understanding, both from the government of Lebanon and its citizens, that Syrian workers were a much-needed resource. As the country faced economic hardship and protracted conflict, Syrian migrant workers were increasingly seen as part of an 'invasion'.³⁴

Syria became the guardian of the 1989 Taif Accords that formally ended the Lebanese Civil War. The peace agreement granted legitimacy to Syrian territorial control, especially within the Bekaa Valley.³⁵ However, in February 2005 a former

²⁷ World Bank (note 17).

²⁸ UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 'Syria regional refugee response: Lebanon: Total registered refugees', Operational Data Portal, accessed May 2021; and Christophersen, E., 'These 10 countries receive the most refugees', Norwegian Refugee Council, 1 Nov. 2020.

²⁹ Bou Khater, L., 'Labour policy and practice', *Peacebuilding in Lebanon*, no. 16, UN Development Programme (UNDP), Aug. 2017.

³⁰ United Nations and Lebanese Government (note 24).

³¹ Midgley, T. and Eldebo, J., *Under Pressure: The Impact of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Host Communities in Lebanon*, Advocacy Report (World Vision: Beirut, July 2013).

³² Saferworld, *Building Peace into Refugee Responses: Syrian Refugees in Lebanon* (Saferworld: London, Apr. 2018).

³³ United Nations and Lebanese Government (note 24).

³⁴ Chalcraft, J., *Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon: The Limits of Transnational Integration, Communitarian Solidarity, and Popular Agency*, EUI Working Paper, RSCAS no. 2006/26 (European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies: San Domenico di Fiesole, 2006).

³⁵ Obeid, M., 'Searching for the "Ideal Face of the State" in a Lebanese border town', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 16, no. 2 (June 2010), pp. 330–46.

Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafik al-Hariri, was killed in a car bomb. There were strong suspicions of Syrian involvement in the assassination and mounting local, regional and international pressure on the Syrian Government led to the final withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon on 26 April 2005, marking the end of the 29-year military occupation.³⁶

The government response

At first, the Lebanese Government reportedly referred to Syrian refugees as 'our brothers and sisters from Syria who are visiting us'.³⁷ After years of an open-door policy, special entry procedures for Syrians were established in the 2014 October Policy—the first comprehensive policy on Syrian displacement in Lebanon. This ended years of reciprocal treatment of individuals between the two states as outlined in the 1991 Treaty of Brotherhood, as the government's rhetoric towards the Syrian refugee presence shifted from it being an 'existential crisis' to an 'existential threat'.³⁸ Before the 2014 October Policy was implemented, Syrians had to pay an annual fee of \$200 (or the equivalent in Lebanese pounds at that time) to renew their residency permit. However, the 2014 policy stipulated that this fee needed to be paid every six months and that applicants needed to provide additional documents, including a valid ID card or passport and a housing commitment with a certified attestation from a *mukhtar* (village leader) that the specified landlord owns the property. These stipulations meant that gaining residency permits became de facto near impossible for Syrian refugees. As a result of this and because Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, research suggests that at least 70 per cent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon do not have legal residence permits, putting them in a precarious legal situation, deprived of the rights to acquire lawful employment, and pushing them into informal or exploitative labour.³⁹

Until the 2014 October Policy was enacted, the Lebanese state left the responsibility of managing the Syrian refugee crisis in the hands of local authorities and local and international organizations.⁴⁰ This 'policy of no policy' has led to overstretched municipal resources and infrastructure as well as growing tensions between host and refugee communities. Municipalities have become largely dependent on international humanitarian assistance as support from the central government has been stymied and sporadic throughout the political and economic crises.⁴¹ Municipalities remain important interlocutors for the humanitarian community as they still tend to be among the most trusted institutions in Lebanon.⁴²

³⁶ Zisser, E., 'The Israeli-Syrian-Lebanese triangle: The renewed struggle over Lebanon', *Israel Affairs*, vol. 15, no. 4 (Sep. 2009), pp. 397–412.

³⁷ Janmyr, M., 'UNHCR and the Syrian refugee response: Negotiating status and registration in Lebanon', *International Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 22, no. 3 (2018), pp. 393–419.

³⁸ Dionigi (note 3); and Saghieh, N. and Frangieh, G., 'The most important features of Lebanese policy towards the issue of Syrian refugees: From hiding its head in the sand to "soft Power"', Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 30 Dec. 2014.

³⁹ Janmyr, M., 'Precarity in exile: The legal status of Syrian refugees in Lebanon', *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 4 (Dec. 2016), pp. 58–78; and Janmyr, M., 'No country of asylum: "Legitimizing" Lebanon's rejection of the 1951 Refugee Convention', *International Journal of Refugee Law*, vol. 29, no. 3 (Oct. 2017), pp. 438–65.

⁴⁰ Mourad, L., "'Standoffish" policy-making: Inaction and change in the Lebanese response to the Syrian displacement crisis', *Middle East Law and Governance*, vol. 9 (2017), pp. 249–66.

⁴¹ Sanyal, R., 'A no-camp policy: Interrogating informal settlements in Lebanon', *Geoforum*, vol. 84 (Aug. 2017), pp. 117–25; and El Mufti, K., 'Official response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, the disastrous policy of no-policy', Civil Society Knowledge Centre, Lebanon Support, 10 Jan. 2014.

⁴² United Nations and Lebanese Government (note 24).

The humanitarian response to the compounding crises

Given that many of the underlying tensions between host and refugee communities relate to pre-existing development and governance challenges, there is a need to address these issues in programming to tackle root causes of conflict. However, such programming is relatively neglected.⁴³ Government restrictions, lack of capacity, inaction and slow response have forced the UN and other humanitarian organizations into a decade of short-term assistance. Due to these limitations, agencies have been unable to move beyond the emergency humanitarian phase of the intervention and have therefore done little to support durable solutions.⁴⁴

Assistance under WFP's CSP for Lebanon is overwhelmingly delivered through CBTs (almost 87 per cent). Before the onset of the financial and economic crisis, WFP's monthly payments were \$27 (about LL 40 500) per person per month as part of the electronic card (e-card) system for food in place since 2013. Monthly payments rose to LL 100 000 in November 2020, but this equals less than \$10 at the market rate, substantially depreciating people's purchasing power. The cost of the food basket increased by nearly 50 per cent between mid March and the end of May 2020.⁴⁵ Therefore, WFP's recommended transfer value to cover food items has also increased and stood at LL 340 000 per person per month in August 2021. However, the Lebanese Government has imposed restrictions on increasing the transfer value beyond LL 100 000, stating concerns that an increase would mean that monthly payments are higher than the average monthly salary of civil servants and other Lebanese workers.⁴⁶

Through cooperation with local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), several humanitarian partners—predominantly WFP, UNHCR and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)—plan to scale up CBTs alongside a continued in-kind response aimed at vulnerable Lebanese. The government-owned National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP), the food component of which is implemented by WFP with funding from the European Union (EU), is the largest poverty-targeted social safety net programme for Lebanon.⁴⁷ A scale-up is under way to expand its coverage, targeting the most vulnerable Lebanese households. However, this process has slowed, exactly at the time it should be ramping up, mostly due to bureaucratic hurdles. The implementation of the World Bank's Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN), a \$246 million three-year project that will provide cash transfers and access to social services to the extreme poor and other vulnerable Lebanese populations, has been similarly obstructed in negotiations. The scale-up of the NPTP and the introduction of the ESSN will be important developments in the current Lebanese context. However, short-term programmes targeting the extreme poor cannot substitute for a full, rights-based social protection system.⁴⁸

WFP is thus facing significant and complex challenges, depending on a deep engagement with state institutions, 'walking a tight line between making compromises in a difficult political environment and holding to standards of accountability'.⁴⁹ The need for new and innovative approaches to the way aid is delivered in this complex and

⁴³ Saferworld (note 32).

⁴⁴ Atrache (note 15).

⁴⁵ WFP, *Assessing the Impact of the Economic and COVID-19 Crises in Lebanon (Round 2)* (WFP Lebanon: Beirut, Dec. 2020).

⁴⁶ WFP staff member, interview with author, Beirut, 4 June 2021.

⁴⁷ WFP, *Lebanon Annual Country Report 2020: Country Strategic Plan 2018–2021* (WFP Lebanon: Beirut, 2021).

⁴⁸ International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Towards a Social Protection Floor for Lebanon: Policy Options and Costs for Core Life-cycle Social Grants*, Policy Note (ILO and UNICEF: Beirut, 2021); World Bank, 'Lebanon Emergency Crisis and COVID-19 Response Social Safety Net Project (ESSN)', Project fact sheet, 12 Jan. 2021; Sheikh Moussa, L., 'World Bank loan to be distributed in dollars, but still on hold', *Beirut Today*, 26 May 2021; and Houssari, N., 'Lebanon MPs bicker over World Bank loan for the poor', *Arab News*, 23 Sep. 2021.

⁴⁹ Azhari, T., 'Insight: Lebanese banks swallow at least \$250 million in UN aid', *Reuters*, 17 June 2021.

fast-changing political environment has been acknowledged by the EU, the UN and the World Bank, which together have launched a people-centred response plan—the Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF). The 3RF drives the implementation of reforms as an essential requirement to restore trust, support reconstruction and improve governance.⁵⁰ While the intention for a long-term and sustainable strategy to support Lebanon's recovery seems self-evident, reform will be very challenging to achieve.⁵¹ There are three main barriers to transforming the fragile peace to a more sustainable and inclusive one: (a) sectarian tensions that are the basis for the governance system in Lebanon (i.e. sectarian identity mostly overrides national identity and regulates political representation and service provision, and determines the relationship between the state and its ruling elite and their constituents); (b) people's perceptions of corruption and mismanagement by the ruling elite; and (c) deep-rooted socioeconomic inequalities and a lack of inclusion, which is also linked to the politicization of the relationships between sectarian groups as well as any resulting clientelism.⁵²

⁵⁰ European Union, United Nations and World Bank, *Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF)* (World Bank: Washington, DC, Dec. 2020).

⁵¹ Atrache (note 15).

⁵² Search for Common Ground (SFCG), *Lebanon Strategy 2017–2021* (SFCG: Beirut, 2017); and Naamani, A., 'Lebanon protests and prospects for peacebuilding', International Alert, 16 Mar. 2020.

3. Lebanese case study approach

Objectives and background

This report assesses WFP's potential contribution to the prospects for peace in Lebanon, in a context that may be described as 'no war, no peace', as outlined in the preceding context analysis.

Peace and conflict are culturally active processes—in a specific locality and context that is multidimensional and heterogeneous—that result from complex social dynamics.⁵³ Peacebuilding used to be seen as time-bound, exogenous interventions once direct violence stopped.⁵⁴ But instead, peacebuilding should be seen as an open-ended, goal-free approach where the focus is on the process, acknowledging that it is a 'political activity that must avoid templates, formulas and one-size-fits-all solutions'.⁵⁵ Social systems are complex, dynamic, non-linear and emergent and therefore, contributions to peace are not always obvious or predictable.⁵⁶ Factors and drivers that might lead to peace in the Lebanese context are multiple and drawing conclusions on any one driver is challenging.

Given these complexities, the development of TOCs can make the relationship between an activity and a desired outcome in a particular context explicit and testable. They provide a bridge between analysis and programming to help to ensure that programmes are relevant and appropriate to the context.⁵⁷ Articulating precisely the potential of WFP's activities in Lebanon to contribute to the prospects for peace can position WFP as a key actor in the engagement of social stability and sustaining peace in Lebanon.

It is important that the TOCs are plausible and do not make unfounded leaps in logic. Moreover, the TOCs should be flexible so that there is a 'continuous process of experimentation with a range of options, coupled with a continuous process of selection and refinement'. Finally, a process of experimentation and feedback is required that is endogenous, participatory and locally anchored in order to generate knowledge about the conflict and peacebuilding environment. If the expected results are achieved, the causal pathway outlined by the TOC can then be explored, assessed and adapted for other contexts.⁵⁸

Methodology

The research entailed a remote phase of desk review of WFP programme documents as well as literature on Lebanon, and 16 interviews and discussions with WFP Lebanon staff. Data was also collected during research in Lebanon that spanned two weeks from 24 May to 4 June 2021. Here, 28 in-depth interviews with a wide range of stakeholders were held as well as four focus group discussions during visits to project sites in central and northern Bekaa and in Beirut. The case study focused mainly on

⁵³ Nordstrom, C., *A Different Kind of War Story* (University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, PA, 1997); Brown, A. M., 'Anthropology and peacebuilding', ed. R. Mac Ginty, *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding* (Routledge: Abingdon, 2013), pp. 132–46; and Bräuchler, B., *The Cultural Dimension of Peace: Decentralization and Reconciliation in Indonesia* (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2015).

⁵⁴ Mahmoud, Y. and Makoond, A., 'Sustaining peace: What does it mean in practice?', International Peace Institute, Apr. 2017.

⁵⁵ De Coning, C., 'Adaptive peacebuilding', *International Affairs*, vol. 94, no. 2 (Mar. 2018), pp. 301–17.

⁵⁶ De Coning (note 55).

⁵⁷ Babbitt, E., Chigas, D. and Wilkinson, R., *Theories and Indicators of Change Briefing Paper: Concepts and Primers for Conflict Management and Mitigation* (USAID: Washington, DC, 2013).

⁵⁸ De Coning (note 55).

activities related to crisis response, resilience-building and root causes (strategic outcomes 1, 2 and 3 of the CSP 2018–20; see box 4.1 in section 4).⁵⁹

Limitations

The complexities of the compounding crises in Lebanon, coupled with the scope of the research, resulted in limitations. First, the context is extremely dynamic and fluid, which means that the analysis remains valid at a snapshot of time, making continuous context analysis important. Second, the research team did not visit areas where tensions are highest, namely the city of Tripoli and the governorate of Akkar and 'red zone areas' in the south of Lebanon and in northern Bekaa, making them crucial peacebuilding areas. Therefore, this report might not capture important contributions to peace by WFP that might be particular to those areas.

⁵⁹ WFP (note 2).

4. Findings: WFP's engagement in Lebanon

This section outlines WFP's engagement in Lebanon and presents the findings of the research in the form of four TOCs that stipulate the pathways linking WFP's CBT interventions to improving the prospects for peace. It also provides a critical observation on CBTs and economic inclusion. The recommendations for each of the TOCs are not an attempt to simplify the extreme complexity and uncertainty but they nevertheless provide actionable entry points once conflict sensitivity is mainstreamed across the spectrum of CBT activities grounded in the local experience of WFP's programmes in Lebanon.

WFP has been working in Lebanon since 1967, with a suspension of presence between 1997 and 2006. Through the 2018–20 CSP (see box 4.1), WFP aims to (a) respond to the crisis by meeting immediate humanitarian needs, (b) address root causes of food insecurity, and (c) support longer-term sustainable solutions through resilience-building. The response is addressed through the nationally owned 2017–21 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP). WFP, together with the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), is the coordinating agency for the food security and agriculture sector of the LCRP, focusing on improving food availability, access and utilization. In line with the Regional Refugee Resilience Plan (3RP) under UNHCR and UNDP, WFP continues to incorporate resilience into its interventions and strengthen Lebanon's capacity for managing the Syrian refugee crisis and future shocks. As such, WFP is a key partner of the government and other UN agencies in crisis response and achievement of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Lebanon.

Theory of Change 1: Stabilizing effect

Unless the frequency and value of CBTs is maintained to cover intended beneficiaries' basic needs, the likelihood of desperation-motivated crime, including violent crime, will increase significantly, destabilizing Lebanon further at both community and national levels.

Contextual background

The societal and historical root causes for civil unrest and conflict remain founded in grievances regarding perceptions of corruption, mismanagement, a lack of transparent governance and sectarian-based inequalities. In 2021 other, tangible factors driving people's frustrations and desperation on a daily basis have become more prominent. There is a shortage of basic commodities: a shortage of food, medical supplies, fuel and other essentials.⁶⁰ As of the beginning of 2021, around 20 per cent of Lebanese, 50 per cent of Syrian refugees and 33 per cent of refugees of other nationalities are estimated to be food insecure.⁶¹

The increasing levels of food insecurity coupled with a sense of uncertainty and hopelessness are contributing to a growing sense of instability and fragility across the country. The effects are manifested in localized and diffuse conflicts that both contribute to, and are a demonstration of, increased societal tensions. They include looting, robberies, burglaries, armed clashes at petrol stations, petty thefts and even

⁶⁰ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 31 Mar. 2021.

⁶¹ Food Security Cluster, '2021 1st Quarter Sector Dashboard: Food Security and Agriculture', 2021.

Box 4.1. Strategic outcomes of WFP's country strategic plan 2018–20

Through the 2018–20 country strategic plan (CSP), WFP provides life-saving assistance for the most economically vulnerable and food-insecure refugees and host community members, while integrating asset-creation and livelihood activities to strengthen resilience and enable economic empowerment. The CSP falls under the focus areas of crisis response, resilience-building, and addressing root causes of vulnerability—all of which are embedded in four strategic outcomes.

Strategic outcome 1 provides refugees with cash-based transfers (CBTs) to meet their food and other basic needs, as well as school feeding activities in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

Strategic outcome 2 aims to enhance the resilience of refugees and host communities by investing in their skills and livelihoods, and in creating community assets, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Energy and Water, and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA).

Strategic outcome 3 supports vulnerable Lebanese through the National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP) with CBTs for food needs, in partnership with MOSA, while also strengthening the capacity of MOSA in the areas of, among others, e-card management systems, monitoring and evaluation, and risk mitigation.

Strategic outcome 4 aims to support national institutions and actors in their efforts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their assistance through capacity-building efforts.

Source: WFP, *Lebanon Annual Country Report 2020: Country Strategic Plan 2018–2021* (WFP Lebanon: Beirut, 2021).

the theft of iron fittings from churches, tombs and sewer covers.⁶² Despite decades of political instability in Lebanon, such activities have not before been seen on this scale.

The crippling economic situation and heavy burden of daily living is stretching everyone's limits. Acts of violence born from desperation have not yet spilled over from the local to the national scale, but their frequency is key.⁶³ There is an emerging propensity for violence, so that even in places with previously positive coexistence, suddenly fights break out over subsidized items, for instance.⁶⁴

Remittances from the Lebanese diaspora are keeping a part of the country afloat and compensate somewhat for the lack of public services to alleviate poverty. Remittances reached \$6.9 billion in 2020, equivalent to just over 36 per cent of Lebanon's annual GDP.⁶⁵ While remittances are now critical to the well-being of those families in Lebanon receiving them from family members abroad, access to remittances represents a source of disparity and inequality.⁶⁶

Projects covered

WFP, as part of the response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, has responded to the diverse and urgent needs of refugees and vulnerable Lebanese people, predominantly by providing unconditional CBTs since 2013. This TOC speaks to strategic outcome 1 of the CSP (see box 4.1), activity 1, which aims to provide access to life-saving, nutritious and affordable food throughout the year to food-insecure refugees and crisis-affected host populations. Households with high levels of food insecurity are targeted with unconditional transfers to cover their food expenditures.

⁶² WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 17 Mar. 2021; MOSA representative, interview with author, Zahlé, 26 May 2021; and WFP staff member, interview with author, Zahlé, 26 May 2021.

⁶³ Search for Common Ground representative, interview with author, Beirut, 2 June 2021.

⁶⁴ UNDP representative, interview with author, Beirut, 2 June 2021.

⁶⁵ Oguri, J., 'Part II of crisis in Lebanon: Buildup of interrelated challenges', Program on Financial Stability, Yale School of Management, 21 Sep. 2020; Akleh, T., 'Revealed: The importance of remittances to Lebanon's ailing economy', *Arabian Business*, 29 Dec. 2020; and WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 21 Apr. 2021.

⁶⁶ World Vision representative, interview with author, Beirut, 1 June 2021.

Analysis

In the current context of local and diffuse conflict, WFP's CBT interventions present a lifeline to the most vulnerable populations in Lebanon and provide a certain sense of stability and continuity. In this way they have a stabilizing effect, upholding a 'negative peace', where there is an absence of direct violence and where people's physical safety is largely protected. This is vital for efforts to prevent further destabilization and ultimately allows space to make steps towards enabling a more sustainable peace.

WFP's CBTs contribute to mitigating the risk of tensions linked to the 'economy-based conflict' spiralling further into violence

Many interlocutors described the situation in Lebanon in 2021 as an 'economy-based conflict', characterized by a lack of access to basic commodities and a sense of uncertainty about the future. As mentioned above, this 'economy-based conflict' is manifested in diffuse and localized crimes.⁶⁷

It is difficult to measure quantitatively what impact CBTs have on social stability, especially because improving social stability is not a direct objective of the programme design under strategic outcome 1. However, the stabilizing effects became very clear in interlocutors' narratives linked to the question, 'what if CBT stopped tomorrow?'. Without prompting, suggestions were ubiquitous that without the CBT assistance to the most vulnerable segments of society, some people might have to resort to negative and illicit coping strategies (e.g. robberies and theft) when other coping mechanisms (e.g. incurring debts, selling assets, sending children to work, early marriage, survival sex, eating less nutritious food etc.) have been exhausted in order to be able to sustain their families economically.⁶⁸ The perceptions expressed by the interlocutors reflect national statistics, particularly the previously mentioned sharp increases in the numbers of non-vehicle-related robberies, car robberies and homicides between 2019 and 2020.⁶⁹ This growth in crime has coincided with the start and deepening of the financial and economic crisis in Lebanon and is a manifestation of economic desperation. The cash transfers to the most vulnerable, thus, help to reduce economic desperation and the resulting crimes that can threaten further societal breakdown.

The challenge is to use the opportunity provided by CBT programming as a platform to contribute to building longer-term, sustainable peace.

WFP's CBTs provide intended beneficiaries' with a sense of stability and continuity, allowing them to avoid conflictual situations

In the context of an 'economy-based conflict' in Lebanon, on an everyday level, when interacting with others, people still predominantly carry out acts of everyday peace rather than conflict.⁷⁰ However, the situation has also put immense psychological pressure on people, which at times decreases the tendency of small disputes to be resolved peacefully. EMBRACE, Lebanon's only hotline for suicide prevention and mental health awareness has experienced an uptick in the number of calls and requests since the onset of the financial and economic crisis in 2019.⁷¹

⁶⁷ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 17 Mar. 2021; MOSA representative, interview with author, Zahlé, 26 May 2021; and WFP staff member, interview with author, Zahlé, 26 May 2021.

⁶⁸ Syrian intended CBT beneficiaries, interview with author, Bar Elias, 28 May 2021; Local authority representative, interview with author, Ghazze, 25 May 2021; WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 23 Mar. 2021; and School principal, interview with author, Zahlé, 31 May 2021.

⁶⁹ OSAC (note 23); and Sheibani (note 23).

⁷⁰ This is in line with findings in other deeply divided contexts of instability. See e.g. O'Driscoll, D., 'Everyday peace and conflict: (Un)privileged interactions in Kirkuk, Iraq', *Third World Quarterly* (2021), pp. 1–20.

⁷¹ France24, 'Beirut explosion: port blast and financial crisis weigh heavily on mental health of Lebanese', Video, 11 Aug. 2021; and El Dahan, M. and Creidi, I., 'Blast and financial crisis weigh heavily on mental health of Lebanese', Reuters, 2 Aug. 2021.

Prevailing uncertainty affects everyone in Lebanon and presents an additional layer of insecurity for Syrian refugees who were already forced to live a life in limbo due to uncertainty regarding their legal status in Lebanon.⁷² When asking intended CBT beneficiaries about their sense of personal safety, it was salient that the most common response was 'I feel safe'. However, after probing further it was discovered that this feeling of safety was specifically linked to the e-card, which gave intended beneficiaries a sense of ownership and of being part of a system that in turn gave them stability and certainty, albeit in the short term.⁷³ WFP has been tracking the card redemption rate, which was 98 per cent continuously between October 2019 and July 2021, meaning that intended beneficiaries were able to access their money reliably on a monthly basis.⁷⁴ The remaining 2 per cent is most likely related to intended beneficiary choice or technical issues. This stability and certainty, however short-lived, is also achieved since CBT is a comparatively easily adjustable modality in Lebanon because of WFP's diversified programme design, which includes transfers to be withdrawn at ATMs and e-cards to be used to purchase food in a large retail network. Therefore, if for instance access to ATMs is hindered due to mobility restrictions during the Covid-19 lockdown, intended beneficiaries who receive the multipurpose cash could be diverted to the food e-card modality and vice versa.⁷⁵ The caseload of WFP's intended CBT beneficiaries is large (approximately 397 000 Lebanese, 987 000 Syrian refugees and 21 000 refugees of other nationalities, amounting to a total of \$11.7 million of CBTs dispersed in June 2021) and there is a plan to scale up assistance significantly. The fact that WFP's CBTs reliably reach intended beneficiaries could therefore turn into an opportunity for stabilizing local social peace at scale. However, as this scale-up had not happened at the time of research, further study is necessary to understand the effects of the scale-up on stability.

Since the beginning of the refugee crisis, Syrian refugees in Lebanon have generally attempted to avert conflict by avoiding interaction with Lebanese communities.⁷⁶ The stability and continuity provided by CBTs has allowed intended beneficiaries to manage without potentially difficult interactions with Lebanese (e.g. begging, exploitative labour, asking for loans etc.).⁷⁷ However, moving beyond avoidance strategies to a sustainable peace involving good relations between different communities remains an essential goal. For this, CBTs will need to be linked to other programmes that provide tangible improvements both for the hosting community and for refugees.

Conflict sensitivity concerns

CBTs are a stabilizing force due to their predictability, continuity and capacity to provide a boost to the economy. Linked to these elements, two conflict sensitivity concerns have been identified.

First, there are non-financial barriers to fair and equal access to services that cash alone cannot resolve, such as inadequate social capital and government restrictions, specifically on Syrian refugees. With the financial and economic crisis people have lost most of their purchasing power and access to cash in general has become more challenging. If these issues are not resolved, CBTs could become riskier for bene-

⁷² Janmyr, 'No country of asylum: "Legitimizing" Lebanon's rejection of the 1951 Refugee Convention' (note 39).

⁷³ Intended CBT beneficiaries, Syrian female and male participants, focus group discussion, Ghazze, 25 May 2021; Intended Syrian CBT beneficiaries, interview with author, Bar Elias, 28 May 2021; Intended Syrian CBT beneficiaries, interview with author, Bar Elias, 25 May 2021; and WFP staff survey, 9 Feb. 2021.

⁷⁴ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 24 Aug. 2021.

⁷⁵ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 25 Mar. 2021.

⁷⁶ Tschunkert, K., *Aiding Conflict? The Implications of Humanitarian Cash and Voucher Assistance for Host-Refugee Relations in Lebanon*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, 2020.

⁷⁷ Intended CBT beneficiaries, Syrian female and male participants, focus group discussion, Ghazze, 25 May 2021.

ficiaries than they were before the financial and economic crisis. Reports of sporadic incidents of harassment and abuse of intended beneficiaries at or on the way from ATMs have already increased, raising concerns that these people are now at increased risk of encountering conflict.⁷⁸ Because of the large economic scale of the CBT intervention, WFP is in a unique position to influence debates around the economics of aid that shape the peace and conflict context in Lebanon in a situation where tensions and possible conflict are linked to economic fragility. WFP is at the table with other agencies, the government and the Central Bank to make decisions on issues such as whether assistance should be disbursed in Lebanese pounds or US dollars, through cash or virtually (e-cards and e-vouchers), via banks (ATMs/e-cards) or money-transfer operators, and to discuss the inflationary impact of aid, access to liquidities, and the Lebanese pound/US dollar exchange rate. These decisions and discussions are central to determining the path forward and whether CBTs can contribute to social peace as opposed to fuelling division, dissent and possibly conflict.

Second, while CBTs in the current context of Lebanon have an overall stabilizing effect in the immediate term, this is unlikely to be felt equally across all parts of society. Market-based interventions can have unintended effects on the social, economic and political dynamics of local areas, and can shape local market economies.⁷⁹ Without a hyper-localized understanding of exactly where the benefits of CBTs go, market-based interventions risk exacerbating pre-existing inequalities.⁸⁰

Recommendations

1. Work with peace and security-focused UN agencies—such as the OHCHR, UNDP and UN Women—and local and international peacebuilding organizations to systematize evidence on the stabilizing effects of CBTs. Through this, WFP can gain an understanding of where and how the CBT modality with its stabilizing effect and programming that addresses structural causes of conflict can be integrated, so that the short-term stabilizing effect can be built upon and leveraged for longer-term structural change.
2. Position WFP's large-scale CBT modality throughout programmes as enhancing stability in the current fragile economic context: consider incorporating this more explicitly in programme design as an objective, including the further development of indicators designed to measure the stabilizing impact of cash. This will allow WFP to shift the stabilizing impact of CBTs from being an unintended positive impact to being an intentional objective that can be captured adequately.
3. Formalize knowledge gathering of field monitors on the ground (WFP or cooperating partners). Through this, and in addition to existing complaints and feedback mechanisms, WFP can keep a record of incidents to capture possible emerging conflict trends linked to CBT assistance. This will support a more proactive rather than reactive stance towards conflict

⁷⁸ WFP staff survey, 9 Feb. 2021; Syrian intended CBT beneficiaries, ATM interview with author, Bar Elias, 25 May 2021; and World Vision monitors, interview with author, Bar Elias and Chtaura, 25 May 2021.

⁷⁹ Jennings, K. M. and Bøås, M., 'Transactions and interactions: Everyday life in the peacekeeping economy', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol. 9, no. 3 (2015), pp. 281–95; and Thomas, J. and Vogel, B., 'Intervention gentrification and everyday socio-economic transactions in intervention societies', *Civil Wars*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2018), pp. 217–37.

⁸⁰ Carpi, E., 'The everyday experience of humanitarianism in Akkar villages', Civil Society Knowledge Centre, Lebanon Support, 24 Mar. 2014; and Vogel, B., Tschunkert, K. and Schläpfer, I., 'The social meaning of money: Multidimensional implications of humanitarian cash and voucher assistance', *Disasters* (2021).

sensitivity and programme adjustments. Systematizing potentially inaccurate 'hearsay' could feed into social tensions, however, meaning that triangulation with information from the complaints and feedback mechanisms is important, as is tracking frequency and accumulation of similar incidents reported in order to be able to see trends rather than individual incidents.

4. Conduct a tracer study to identify economic sectors and subsectors that have benefited from cash injections and determine the money-multiplier effect of CBTs on the local economy. Consider implementing surveys of WFP-contracted retailers, logging where they procure items over the period of a year to understand the wider distribution of profits that CBTs generate in the local economy beyond the contracted retailers. This will allow WFP to gain a better and more localized understanding beyond the macro-level multiplier effects. From a peace and conflict perspective, this will make it possible to assess how equally profits are distributed and, in the case of narrow distributions, measures can be taken to achieve more equal economic distribution and inclusion. Such an assessment would also help to circumvent risks of corruption-like practices when distributions are not equally generated and might mitigate inequalities that can fuel grievances.

Theory of Change 2: Livelihoods

If the frequency and value of the conditional CBTs continue to incentivize and enable participation in food assistance for assets and food assistance for training projects, then host and refugee community members' exposure to each other through work increases, which may in turn enhance social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

Contextual background

The compounding crises that Lebanon has faced have resulted in disruptions to business activity, job losses, deteriorating livelihoods and, overall, a worsening of the country's economy.⁸¹

In Lebanon, ongoing surveys have highlighted socioeconomic factors, particularly competition for jobs, as the most-cited perceived causes of tensions between Lebanese and Syrian communities.⁸² As a result of the financial and economic crisis, as well as Covid-19, job opportunities are scarce.⁸³ In 2020 positive intercommunal relations were at their lowest level since 2018.⁸⁴

Relations within Lebanese communities are deteriorating as well; around 29 per cent of Lebanese described relations in their communities as negative in 2020, compared with 3 per cent in 2018.⁸⁵ These tensions are driven mostly by political and sectarian divides compounded by economic factors.

⁸¹ United Nations and Lebanese Government, *Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2017–2021*, 2021 update (United Nations and Lebanese Government: Beirut, 2021).

⁸² ARK and UNDP, 'Presentation of the most recent tensions data, wave 19, April/May 2021', Minutes of national interagency meeting, 11 June 2021.

⁸³ Bou Khater (note 29); WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 25 Mar. 2021; WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 23 Mar. 2021; and WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 19 Mar. 2021.

⁸⁴ ARK and UNDP, Perception Survey Wave 8, July 2020.

⁸⁵ ARK and UNDP (note 84).

Projects covered

The CSP's strategic outcome 2 (see box 4.1) includes food assistance for assets (FFA) and food assistance for training (FFT) programmes. WFP provides short-term conditional CBTs to intended beneficiaries who participate in training or create and rehabilitate community environmental and agricultural assets. The strategic outcome intends to invest in the education, training and assets of vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian people to maximize livelihood opportunities for everyone, economically empower intended beneficiaries and strengthen social cohesion at the local level.

Furthermore, as part of longer-term recovery and stabilization, WFP invests in food systems with the aim of making them more resilient and sustainable. Systemic problems are addressed, for instance, through value chain development and capacity building for cooperatives and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) with the aim of strengthening domestic production both for domestic demand and for exports.

The research team visited an FFT activity in Deir el-Ahmar in northern Bekaa where participants receive conditional CBTs (LL 75 000 per participant per day) as an incentive to participate in agricultural processing training. The team also visited an FFA activity in Yammouneh in northern Bekaa where participants receive conditional CBTs to participate in work leading to asset creation—in this case, reforestation.

Analysis

Findings demonstrate that WFP's livelihoods programmes are enhancing social cohesion through the creation of spaces for intergroup contact between Lebanese and Syrian communities and through a systems approach that enhances food-system resilience. CBTs, on an individual level, are first a means for vulnerable households to meet their food needs, and second, an enabler for participation in activities that build cohesion. On a systems level, CBTs, when combined with livelihood and development programming, are a strong factor for resilience-building in a market-based society. However, the proportion of intended livelihood beneficiaries receiving conditional CBTs represents only 2.5 per cent of the total number of intended CBT beneficiaries, limiting the impact of conditional CBTs on the prospects for peace compared with the stabilizing effect of the much larger unconditional CBT caseload (TOC 1).

WFP's conditional cash transfers serve as an enabler for positive intergroup interaction during livelihood activities and thus can indirectly contribute to social cohesion

The research findings suggest that CBTs have an indirect positive impact on social cohesion as an enabler or incentive for beneficiary participation in livelihood activities. However, whether the programmes have a positive, neutral or even negative impact on social cohesion depends on the project design and the context in which these activities are implemented. By introducing new opportunities for people to build a livelihood, WFP can create spaces where both Lebanese and Syrians engage in economic activities that support peaceful interactions. The specific activities visited during the research contributed to social cohesion through people working together, which can break down cultural barriers. This assumption is built on the 'intergroup contact theory' which posits that increased positive intergroup contact can reduce prejudice if four conditions (equal status, intergroup cooperation, common goals and support by social and institutional authorities) are met.⁸⁶ These conditions are discussed below based on the example of the FFA project in Yammouneh, Bekaa.

⁸⁶ Allport, G. W., *The Nature of Prejudice* (Addison-Wesley Publishing: Cambridge, MA, 1954); and Pettigrew, T. F., 'Intergroup contact theory', *Annual Review of Psychology*, vol. 49, no. 1 (Feb. 1998), pp. 65–85.

Equal status. Syrian refugees in Lebanon do not have the same legal rights to employment as Lebanese citizens. While advocating with the government to grant refugees more rights, an immediate entry point for livelihood activities to meet the condition of equal status is in the *perception* of equal status among participants. The FFA project employs 50 per cent Syrians and 50 per cent Lebanese, who do the same work for the same number of hours and the same wage.

Intergroup cooperation. The activities are non-competitive and, in Yammouneh specifically, the participants suggested that, because of the small size of the town, everyone who wanted to participate in the project could do so.⁸⁷ This livelihoods project has, thus, created space for cooperation.

Common goals. The 'beautification' of the village through reforestation elicited feelings of pride and ownership among the Lebanese participants. Such 'beautification' could also serve as a common goal among participants. However, it is questionable whether the Syrian participants feel the same way in this particular case, as it is not their home village that they are supporting through asset creation.

Support by social and institutional authorities. For intergroup contact to have the desired effects, it needs to be supported by authoritative governing structures, laws, local leaders or social customs and values.⁸⁸ WFP's cooperating partner for the FFA project in Yammouneh coordinates with the local authorities and other establishments, such as the local youth club, ensuring support for the project in the community. The town has not experienced significant pressure on infrastructure and services, which makes obtaining institutional support more likely than in areas under pressure where meeting this condition of the intergroup contact theory would be more difficult.

Thus, if these conditions are met, and if social cohesion outcomes and components of peacebuilding are deliberately included into the design of livelihood interventions, the livelihood activities enabled by CBTs can contribute to social cohesion because, through such mutually beneficial labour and community asset creation, functioning social networks can be (re)established.

However, in other areas, where competition exists and where historically there has been less friendly interaction between Lebanese and Syrians, implementing such livelihoods projects has been more challenging. There have been instances where work has had to be split into shifts so that Lebanese and Syrian workers could work separately due to tensions that arose during the project.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the socio-economic restrictions placed on Syrian refugees by the Lebanese Government (work in three sectors only and a maximum of 60 hours per month) limit the possibilities for agencies to implement livelihoods programmes with the potential to positively impact social cohesion on a large scale. Moreover, intended CBT beneficiaries in livelihoods programming constitute only 2.5 per cent of the total number of intended CBT beneficiaries, which limits the impact of these conditional CBTs on the prospects for peace. Finally, the LCRP's livelihoods sector faces a nearly 70 per cent funding gap, which makes it impossible for large numbers of people to participate. This, in turn, means that the social cohesion effect of the livelihood activities enabled by CBTs will be limited for the foreseeable future.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Intended livelihood beneficiaries, Lebanese female participants, focus group discussion, Yammouneh, 24 May 2021.

⁸⁸ Lepp, E., *Side-by-Side in the Land of Giants: A Study of Space, Contact and Civility in Belfast*, PhD Thesis (University of Manchester: Manchester, 2018).

⁸⁹ World Vision representative, interview with author, Zahlé, 27 May 2021.

⁹⁰ United Nations and Lebanese Government (note 24).

WFP's conditional CBTs are a key condition for livelihoods projects to support and enhance food systems and their resilience by decreasing the likelihood of competition over resources or jobs that drives tensions and conflict

Beyond providing benefits at the individual level, livelihoods projects also have the potential to provide more sustainable and longer-term benefits at the community and systems levels. The meaning of CBTs in this case shifts from being purely an individual incentive to being a key condition that is unlikely to be met by other modalities (i.e. in-kind), as money is the only accepted currency among actors in a market-based economy. CBTs on this level are therefore crucial, as providing assistance through other modalities would not achieve the same level of buy-in and commitment from market actors.

Once the individual-level training (phase one) of the FFT agricultural processing project in Deir el-Ahmar, Bekaa, is finalized, the project will move to a second phase, which incorporates value chain development and capacity building for cooperatives and MSMEs with the aim of strengthening domestic production both for domestic demand and for exports.⁹¹ Grants for MSMEs, for instance, are dispersed through CBTs to cover needs for rehabilitation, equipment, salaries, and business-related rent and debt.

Through these grants, WFP is investing in wider systems with the potential to sustainably support more people in the long term and strengthen the resilience of the food system as a whole. The pathways from livelihoods to contribution to the prospects for peace often go through resilience.⁹² For example, investing in local food systems can provide people with an opportunity to join produce markets.⁹³ This can help people to better respond to future economic shocks without having to resort to negative coping mechanisms. This, in turn, can decrease the likelihood of competition over resources or jobs to trigger tensions and violent conflict.⁹⁴ Furthermore, investing in resilient food systems allows these systems to adapt to foreseeable or unforeseeable changes and preserves their ability to (re)distribute resources in a society in a peaceful and legitimate manner, strengthening the prospects for a sustainable peace.⁹⁵

Conflict sensitivity concerns

Conflict sensitivity concerns for CBTs as an incentive for livelihood activities appear in two areas, namely local socioeconomic and wage comparisons and local and historical dynamics.

WFP Lebanon faces a dilemma between providing a decent wage and favourable working conditions on the one hand and preventing any potential conflict around its CBT assistance on the other. The minimum wage of LL 675 000 per month in Lebanon was equivalent to approximately \$72 in June 2021, depending on the daily fluctuations of the exchange rate. This is down from an equivalent value of \$450 before the

⁹¹ Intended livelihood beneficiaries, Syrian male participants, focus group discussion, Deir el-Ahmar, 24 May 2021; and Environment and Sustainable Development Unit representative, interview with author, Deir el-Ahmar, 24 May 2021.

⁹² Holleman, C. et al., *Sowing the Seeds of Peace for Food Security: Disentangling the Nexus between Conflict, Food Security and Peace*, FAO Agricultural Development Economics Technical Study, no. 2 (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO: Rome, 2017); and Breisinger, C. et al., *How to Build Resilience to Conflict: The Role of Food Security* (International Food Policy Research Institute: Washington, DC, Oct. 2014).

⁹³ Delgado, C., Murugani, V. and Tschunkert, K., *Food Systems in Conflict and Peacebuilding Settings: Pathways and Interconnections* (SIPRI: Stockholm, 2021).

⁹⁴ Midgley, T. and Brethfeld, J., *Integrated Conflict Prevention and Resilience Handbook* (Christian Aid: London, 2018); and Aall, P. and Crocker, C. A., 'Building resilience and social cohesion in conflict', *Global Politics*, vol. 10, no. 52 (June 2019), pp. 68–75.

⁹⁵ Johannson, P., 'Resilience thinking for peacebuilders', *International Journal for Peacebuilders*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2018), pp. 1–14; and Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), *Positive Peace Report 2020: Analysing the Factors that Sustain Peace* (IEP: Sydney, 2020).

onset of the financial and economic crisis and the resulting devaluation of the local currency.⁹⁶ Workers are thus at risk of 'in-work poverty', as this devaluation, coupled with high rates of inflation, affects value for money and purchasing power. However, this applies not only to intended WFP beneficiaries of livelihoods projects, but also to the wider population receiving their wages in Lebanese pounds. Any increases of the transfer value under livelihoods programmes, thus, include a risk of creating and exacerbating tensions around aid bias between Lebanese and Syrian communities and within Lebanese communities if those enrolled in livelihoods projects ultimately receive more than those Lebanese workers who are not enrolled in the programmes.

Furthermore, support that is well conceived but provided before people are ready to begin collaborating will most likely fail to contribute to peace, or worse, could exacerbate tensions. As the analysis has shown, in some areas where there are more dividers than connectors between communities, compounded by a historical divide between Lebanese and Syrians, the social cohesion intention of positive relations born from enhanced interaction can have the inverse effect and drive tensions. Positive social cohesion outcomes depend on the quality of interactions and, thus, livelihood support as a stand-alone activity should not be seen as a substitute for the important tasks of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, although it may resolve some of the tension and urgency surrounding the conflict.⁹⁷

Recommendations

5. Design livelihood activities with local conflict analysis and by making use of the local conflict data available from UNDP. Prioritize conflict sensitivity and collaborate with peacebuilding actors that can support WFP in finding the capacities for peace, the connectors in each community, that WFP can leverage to find an entry point for social cohesion activities.
6. Mobilize resources from major donors for multi-year programming. Livelihood and resilience programmes that have a longer-term outlook can contribute towards strengthening productive assets and institutions of refugee-hosting communities. These assets support both refugee and host communities in times of refugee displacement, build goodwill with host communities, and protect the future asylum space.
7. Use WFP's leverage with state entities to advocate with the appropriate ministries to facilitate better working conditions for both Lebanese and Syrians, and to give Syrians the right to work in sectors beyond agriculture, construction and solid waste management. This includes advocating for implementation of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which grants individuals, irrespective of status, labour rights, the right to health, the right to education and the right to an adequate standard of living.⁹⁸ This will make it possible for livelihoods projects to address the most promising sectors for the Lebanese economy, where CBTs will provide immediate relief to Lebanese and Syrians and where a systems approach can yield longer-term benefits for the wider communities.

⁹⁶ Azzi, A., 'Minimum wage down by 84 % amid the currency crisis', Research Blog, Blominvest Bank, 9 Mar. 2021.

⁹⁷ USAID, *Livelihoods & Conflict: A Toolkit for Intervention* (USAID: Washington, DC, 2005).

⁹⁸ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, opened for signature 16 Dec. 1966, entered into force 3 Jan. 1976.

Theory of Change 3: Digital CBTs

If CBTs are delivered electronically, transactions and cards are traceable, and intended beneficiaries are regularly validated, then this reduces the risk of corruption and diversion so that credibility and trust in the programme can be fostered.

Contextual background

TOC 3 goes to the core of the grievances that have led to anti-government protests and eroded the population's sense of government legitimacy, namely perceptions of government corruption and elite capture of public funds. The discussion therefore touches on sensitive issues about which many different actors have strong opinions. Not addressing these questions would neglect central aspects of experience and perception among the Lebanese population. This report discusses these matters without taking a position on any specific cases.

The financial and economic crisis has resulted in a significant increase in poverty among the population of Lebanon. This has necessitated a scale-up of assistance to vulnerable Lebanese, implemented through the government's social safety net—the NPTP. As a result of these developments, humanitarian assistance, and specifically cash assistance, has come to the attention of a far larger proportion of the population than ever before. Despite the fact that UN assistance activities in Lebanon have operated on a large scale for almost a decade, until relatively recently most Lebanese were oblivious to the details of these activities. Due to the complex context in which programmes using CBTs as a modality are implemented, the importance of checks, balances and accountability measures related to these interventions has grown at the same rate as the need for these programmes to stave off the worst social consequences of the crises (see TOC 1).

Projects covered

Under the CSP's strategic outcome 1 (see box 4.1), WFP provides food-insecure refugees—including school-age children—and crisis-affected host populations with access to life-saving, nutritious and affordable food throughout the year. This is done through the digital Lebanon One Unified Inter-organizational System for E-cards (LOUISE), a common card born out of a collaboration between WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF. For example, in June 2021 WFP provided 987 000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon with CBTs valued at LL 100 000 (equivalent to approximately \$8 in June 2021) per person. One of the key objectives of LOUISE is to increase accountability and quality through the provision of streamlined assistance to intended beneficiaries and through the generation of updated and reliable data on coverage and assistance provided to agencies designing and managing CBTs.⁹⁹

Under the CSP's strategic outcome 3 (see box 4.1), which aims to enable vulnerable populations in Lebanon to meet their basic food needs all year long, WFP has since 2014 provided food assistance as part of the NPTP through an e-card to vulnerable Lebanese living below the poverty threshold. Moreover, WFP extends technical support to the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), the custodian of the NPTP, on the processes of e-card management, data management, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting. The aim is to scale up assistance to 75 000 households by the end of 2021 (from

⁹⁹ Pelly, I. and Juillard, H., *Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organizational System for E-cards (LOUISE): Learning Review* (Key Aid Consulting: Paris, 2020).

26 000 in May 2021), while continuing to advocate with the government to increase the transfer value according to the level of inflation.

Analysis

The digitalization of WFP's CBT mechanisms has contributed to the prevention and mitigation of large-scale aid diversion. Furthermore, as WFP is widely trusted by the population and has a seat at the table with the government during discussions around building social safety nets in Lebanon, its involvement in the government-led social safety net (i.e. the NPTP) has the potential to promote principles of equity, fairness and impartiality within the social safety net landscape and lend the NPTP a 'stamp of integrity'. In turn, this provides an opportunity to build trust among the population in a context where a lack of trust in the ruling elite due to perceptions of corruption and mismanagement has previously fuelled people's grievances towards the government, leading to social unrest.

Mitigating the risk of diversion of CBT assistance to Syrian refugees through traceable transactions and validation checks

Any form of humanitarian aid is subject to the risks of diversion, corruption, theft and fraud.¹⁰⁰ CBT as a more recent form of delivery does not inherently resolve these issues.¹⁰¹ However, as some argue, the transparency and possibility of tracking digital transfers, which is the delivery mechanism used in Lebanon, may help to reduce these risks.¹⁰²

In 2013 WFP Lebanon transitioned from paper vouchers to e-cards.¹⁰³ The paper voucher processes were not only lengthy and inconvenient for voucher recipients, but also at high risk of diversion and fraud. While WFP staff members tried to ensure that the paper vouchers went to the right person, after distribution, intended beneficiaries were often asked to sell their vouchers at below face value by other people, either for personal gain or, sometimes, to support war-related activities in Syria.¹⁰⁴ Contextual changes, such as a decrease in cross-border movements, the waning of desire and capacity to support war efforts in Syria and the growing needs of the intended beneficiaries in Lebanon given the financial and economic crisis, have certainly played a role in reducing the number of such diversion activities in recent years. However, it is very likely that the transition after 2013 to a digitalized system with electronic cards, PINs and mitigation measures—including consistent shop monitoring and quarterly biometric card validation—have contributed significantly to a decrease in such illicit activities. It is unclear whether the change in context or the digitalization of CBTs has played the larger role in mitigating diversion but, during the field visit, only individual rather than systemic issues were reported, such as a landlord taking a Syrian woman's card as collateral until she would pay her outstanding rent.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Overseas Development Institute (ODI), *Doing Cash Differently: How Cash Transfers Can Transform Humanitarian Aid*, Report of the High-level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers (ODI: London, Sep. 2015).

¹⁰¹ Stoddard, A. et al., *Humanitarian Access SCORE Report: North-East Nigeria: Survey on the Coverage, Operational Reach, and Effectiveness of Humanitarian Aid* (Humanitarian Outcomes: London, 2020); and Vogel, Tschunkert and Schläpfer (note 80).

¹⁰² Overseas Development Institute (note 100).

¹⁰³ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 15 Mar. 2021; and WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 23 Mar. 2021.

¹⁰⁴ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 12 Mar. 2021; WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 23 Mar. 2021; and Syrian CBT recipient, interview with author, Bar Elias, 28 May 2021.

¹⁰⁵ WFP staff member, interview with author, Zahlé, 26 May 2021; Syrian CBT recipient, interview with author, Ghazze, 25 May 2021; Flaemig, T. et al., 'Using big data to analyse WFP's digital cash programme in Lebanon', Humanitarian Practice Network, 20 Feb. 2017; and Seilern, M., *User Journeys of Syrian Refugees Receiving Multi-purpose Cash from WFP in Lebanon* (Ground Truth Solutions: Vienna, 2021).

Finally, the most recent advancement in digitalization is through the Payment Instrument Tracking app. Currently utilized for the NPTP, this app allows WFP to know at all times where in the process, and with which entity (e.g. cooperating partner, WFP field office etc.) the e-card and the PIN are before they are distributed. This is a digital instrument that adds another layer of assurance in preventing diversion of aid up to the point where the intended beneficiary withdraws the assistance. If the app proves to be effective, its use will be extended to include the Syrian CBT intervention as well.¹⁰⁶

The possibility of the NPTP-specific e-card programme lending trust and credibility to the government-owned social safety net

As assistance needs have risen across Lebanon, international aid has become more widely discussed on social media, in people's homes and on the streets. With this spotlight comes an increased perception of aid bias, which has driven tensions between Lebanese and Syrian communities and within these groups between those targeted and those excluded.¹⁰⁷ The narrative among the population surrounding humanitarian assistance, and especially CBTs, given the financial and economic crisis, is loaded with a sense of potential corruption and mismanagement. For example, Lebanese citizens made many public pleas on both traditional and social media platforms to the international community to avoid channelling assistance through the government after the Beirut port explosion on 4 August 2020 based on their perceptions of government corruption and ineptitude.¹⁰⁸ During this research, one taxi driver seeking to access UN assistance, replied dismissively that 'they're all thieves anyway' when it was explained to him that as a Lebanese citizen he would have to self-register for the NPTP. These are just two examples that demonstrate how little trust Lebanese citizens currently have in the government and, by extension, the NPTP. However, while bypassing the government and supporting civil society organizations directly was fruitful in providing emergency relief to those immediately affected by the explosion, sidelining the state entirely is unlikely to resolve any of Lebanon's structural problems.¹⁰⁹

As with support to any large national safety net system, funding to support vulnerable Lebanese through the NPTP aims to strengthen national systems and contribute to social protection. From a peacebuilding perspective, such efforts can build and improve the social contract between the state and its citizens, moving from a system of patronage to a politics of rights and justice.¹¹⁰ While this is a meaningful aspiration for Lebanon's future, in the current situation with an absence of government, it does not seem to be achievable, even though government ownership of the NPTP is important.¹¹¹

However, WFP sits at the heart of important debates on building a social safety net in Lebanon. Due to the scale of WFP's interventions in Lebanon, WFP has a seat at the table with the government, which could be an opportunity to promote principles such as ensuring that social safety net systems are needs-based, independent of group and political affiliations, and inclusive of and responsive to intended beneficiary feedback. WFP could contribute to building social peace by engaging in the design

¹⁰⁶ WFP staff member, interview with author, Zahlé, 28 May 2021.

¹⁰⁷ United Nations and Lebanese Government (note 24).

¹⁰⁸ Human Rights Watch, 'Lebanon: Ensure aid goes directly to those in need', 16 Sep. 2020.

¹⁰⁹ Sewell, A. and Chehayeb, K., 'Four months on, Beirut blast survivors struggle to rebuild', *New Humanitarian*, 9 Dec. 2020.

¹¹⁰ Hickey, S., 'The politics of social protection: What do we get from a "social contract" approach?', *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, vol. 32, no. 4 (2011), pp. 426–38; and WFP staff member, interview with author, Beirut, 4 June 2021.

¹¹¹ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 12 Mar. 2021.

of the government-owned social safety net based on principles of equity, fairness and impartiality. This could help to counter issues of perceived corruption and clientelism, which are obstacles to achieving shared values, principles and practices that can contribute to progress towards sustainable and inclusive social peace.

Furthermore, the accountability measures that WFP provides to the NPTP that could give the social safety net a 'stamp of integrity' and build some trust among the population include a verification exercise done by WFP and contracted firms since 2019. Despite some initial reluctance from the government to implement the exercise, the verification has made a positive difference for the integrity of the NPTP by transparently verifying whether beneficiary selection is carried out according to eligibility criteria generated by proxy-means-testing. WFP's involvement in training social workers on data collection has also improved the quality of data collected. In addition, with the scale-up of the food component of the NPTP, the monitoring is gradually increasing in frequency, from once a year to quarterly.¹¹²

Three challenges to fully achieve these positive impacts have been identified, namely poor data quality, an inadequate community complaints and feedback mechanism, and coverage. First, for the NPTP data on the Lebanese population, the situation is generally dire, given that the last official census was conducted in the 1930s and because the use of a national ID is not enforced. Therefore, the data is nowcasted and triangulated from three different sources: MOSA, the World Bank and the International Labour Organization (ILO). The lack of adequate data makes it very difficult to state with confidence that the NPTP targeting is equitable across the country.¹¹³

Second, the complaints and feedback mechanism is handled by MOSA through a hotline and at social development centres (SDCs) at the village level. A challenge with this is the lack of information received by WFP directly.¹¹⁴ To date, there are no mechanisms in place for people to anonymously provide feedback and complaints, for instance on systemic issues such as perceptions of corruption. Furthermore, there is no process for resolving the complaints received by MOSA, and local MOSA staff are often unaware or unfamiliar with the operating processes of the NPTP.¹¹⁵ This reflects a general lack of clear information on the NPTP and who is involved. A lack of awareness of WFP's role in and support of the NPTP, particularly in terms of accountability, might limit the extent to which the above-mentioned 'stamp of integrity' can help to build trust among the population in this government-owned social safety net.¹¹⁶

Finally, at the time of research (May–June 2021) the main challenge of the NPTP remained its inability to cover all eligible people, which is why it had not been advertised broadly to the population. The government simply does not have the means to provide for all of the vulnerable people in Lebanon; and try as they may, the international community cannot completely substitute for the role of the government in providing this critically needed social safety net.¹¹⁷

¹¹² WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 17 Mar. 2021; and WFP staff member, interview with author, Beirut, 3 June 2021.

¹¹³ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 17 Mar. 2021; WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 22 Mar. 2021; WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 18 Mar. 2021; and WFP staff member, interview with author, Beirut, 3 June 2021.

¹¹⁴ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 17 Mar. 2021; WFP staff member, interview with author Beirut, 3 June 2021; and author observations from NPTP distribution site, Zahlé, 31 May 2021.

¹¹⁵ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 17 Mar. 2021.

¹¹⁶ World Vision representative, interview with author, Zahlé, 27 May 2021; *Mukhtar*, interview with author, Saadnayel, 31 May 2021; and WFP staff member, interview with author, Beirut, 2 June 2021.

¹¹⁷ ECHO representative, interview with author, Beirut, 3 June 2021.

Conflict sensitivity concerns

Working with the government on a social safety net in a complex context where service provision is vulnerable to politicization is a significant challenge for WFP.

Expectations among research participants are that programmes such as the NPTP will be politicized in the wake of scheduled elections in 2022, with a possibility of transfers fuelling loyalties to parties.¹¹⁸ Because the targeting is done by MOSA, rather than WFP, there are widely held perceptions that the CBTs could be used for political gains.¹¹⁹ Linked to this, there is a risk that WFP could face resentment for its involvement in this government-led programme.

A second conflict sensitivity concern is around targeting, which the WFP Phase I Report had also flagged as one of the most common conflict sensitivity flashpoints.¹²⁰ This relates to perceived disparities in assistance between Lebanese and Syrian communities. WFP is one of the largest organizations supporting both refugees and host communities, which can 'take the edge off existing tensions'.¹²¹ However, disparities in the amounts transferred under the assistance programme aimed at refugees on the one hand and the NPTP on the other, whether real or imagined, are causing tensions. The transfer value of the food e-card in June 2021 was LL 100 000 per household member. For the NPTP, there is a cap of six members per household receiving the assistance, even if the household is bigger—a cap that does not exist for the Syrian assistance.¹²² It is possible for anyone to see the disparity in the amounts received by Lebanese and by Syrians. Information about transfer values is publicly available and the cards' colours differ (intended NPTP beneficiaries receive a white card while the card for intended Syrian beneficiaries is red) meaning that people can observe how much the intended beneficiaries are able to buy with their cards. This could lead to further tensions.¹²³ While the Syrian CBT intervention and the Lebanese NPTP are similar in many objectives, they are different initiatives targeted at distinctive constituencies. Therefore, building awareness among both intended beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries around the characteristically different nature of the programmes could prevent and mitigate further tensions around disparities.

Recommendations

8. In relation to the Lebanese Government's NPTP, build awareness of WFP's accountability measures (e.g. transparent verification of intended beneficiary selection, training of social workers on data collection, increased frequency of monitoring etc.) among the population beyond direct intended beneficiaries through community engagement. This can provide a 'stamp of integrity' and increase the potential to lend the NPTP a sense of legitimacy among the population in the context of widely held perceptions of government corruption and mismanagement.
9. Include an indicator in perception surveys beyond 'aid bias' to capture more concretely the impact of WFP's corruption and diversion mitigation

¹¹⁸ World Vision representative, interview with author, Zahlé, 27 May 2021; WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 21 Apr. 2021; WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 18 Mar. 2021.

¹¹⁹ Search for Common Ground representative, interview with author, Beirut, 2 June 2021; and WFP staff survey, 9 Feb. 2021.

¹²⁰ Delgado, C. et al., *The World Food Programme's Contribution to Improving the Prospects for Peace* (SIPRI: Stockholm, 2019).

¹²¹ WFP staff survey, 9 Feb. 2021.

¹²² WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 12 Mar. 2021.

¹²³ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 17 Mar. 2021.

measures as the value of measures mitigating diversion and corruption is not measurable as of now. This aims to strengthen accountability, transparency and end-to-end assurance in terms of the traceability of transfers.

Theory of Change 4: Communication

*If messaging around CBT interventions strikes the right balance between transparency and consistency, and communication is two-way, **then** harmful misperceptions can be challenged and a better understanding of WFP and its interventions, aims and values can be conveyed to intended beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike, which in turn dilutes tensions around perceived aid bias and enhances acceptance of CBT in the wider communities.*

Context

Trust in the central government has long been low, and has decreased significantly since 2019, as outlined in the context analysis above. UN agencies and other international agencies and NGOs, by contrast, generally hold high levels of trust among both communities, although the perception of aid bias among the Lebanese population represents a key challenge to these sentiments. According to one study, 10.3 per cent of Lebanese respondents in 2020 perceived the UN and other international NGOs to have worsened life somewhat or a lot, compared with 4.8 per cent in 2018. However, the majority of respondents perceived these agencies to have improved their lives (60.7 per cent in 2018 and 58.5 per cent in 2020).¹²⁴

Finally, freedom of expression combined with the well-educated and critical population of Lebanon has resulted in the country having one of the most diverse and sophisticated media landscapes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), with over 40 national media outlets. However, even though the media is free from state control, many outlets are affiliated with political or sectarian groups that use these channels to convey messages to their constituents and to position themselves vis-à-vis other political actors, events and trends in Lebanon. There are only a few outlets where people can access neutral, fact-based news representing a range of perspectives on current affairs. Such a polarized media landscape tends to exacerbate social tensions and underscore divisions along sectarian lines.¹²⁵

Projects covered

TOC 4 is not derived from a particular geographic area or specific intervention. Instead, it is crosscutting, covering all projects visited and discussed in the previous TOCs.

Analysis

In the current context of Lebanon, with a high and increasing rate of economic vulnerability among its population, the peacebuilding value of communication is also growing in importance. By providing consistent, transparent and evidence-based communication, WFP has the potential to positively influence the current media

¹²⁴ Hynes, T., *The Issue of 'Trust' or 'Mistrust' in Research with Refugees*, Working Paper no. 98, New Issues in Refugee Research (UNHCR: Geneva, 2003).

¹²⁵ UNDP, *UNDP's Engagement with the Media for Governance, Sustainable Development and Peace* (UNDP: Oslo, 2019); and Trombetta, L., Pinto, C. and Renino, R., 'Lebanon', *Media Landscapes*, 2020.

landscape around humanitarian cash assistance that is traversed by rumours and misperceptions that tend to fuel social tensions.

In a context of low trust in central government, WFP's strategic communication has the potential to provide evidence-based information from a reliable and credible source

Lebanon's economy is a free, open market economy, dependent on imports and financial services to the region. Because of the importance of the financial sector as the 'backbone' of the Lebanese economy, coupled with the devaluation of the local currency and high rates of inflation, it is the loss of purchasing power and lack of access to financial capital that are most prominent in this current crisis. For decades, the Lebanese pound was pegged to the US dollar. The market readily accepted both currencies simultaneously and it was common for people to save in US dollars in their bank accounts. The financial and economic crisis has shown that what people thought their money and savings were worth, does not reflect reality as the exchange rate skyrocketed from LL 1507.5 to the US dollar to above LL 15 000 at the time of research in June 2021, and has reached more than LL 20 000 in July 2021.

Today, access to 'fresh' US dollars from abroad through, for instance, remittances that can be withdrawn in hard currency, carries particular significance in Lebanon. This means that humanitarian cash-based interventions from international organizations that embody access to US dollars carry particular meaning and is an explanation for why there has been a new focus on CBTs in the media and on the streets in people's everyday lives. Syrian refugee e-card holders expressed a feeling of safety linked to 'ownership' of the card and, in turn, a feeling of stability and continuity of being part of an international financial system when the national system had collapsed (see TOC 1).¹²⁶

The perceptions that people conveyed demonstrate this very well. The notion that WFP supports mostly Syrians with assistance, translating to a perception of aid bias, is widespread. Furthermore, even though WFP changed the transfers to Syrians to be withdrawn in Lebanese pounds rather than in US dollars in response to the economic crisis, rumours that Syrians still receive their assistance in US dollars have persisted.¹²⁷ It is, thus, not the provision of CBT per se that fuels tensions, but these types of perceptions of unfairness, injustice and inequality of those who have not (yet) been targeted. Perceptions do not always reflect an objective reality, as is the case here with the narrative of Syrians receiving US dollars. However, people tend to act based on their perceptions of the world and their socioeconomic standing vis-à-vis that of others around them rather than on measurable facts and objectivities.¹²⁸

In the fragmented, politicized and polarizing media landscape in Lebanon, the information people receive depends on the type of media they consume.¹²⁹ Information flow and feedback loops are constructed through rumour, word of mouth, and social media flare-ups, all against a backdrop of lack of trust and increasingly fragile security structures. Social media, in particular, plays a heightened role. As one interlocutor

¹²⁶ Intended CBT beneficiaries, Syrian female and male participants, focus group discussion, Ghazze, 25 May 2021; Intended Syrian CBT beneficiaries, interview with author, Bar Elias, 28 May 2021; and Intended Syrian CBT beneficiaries, interview with author, Bar Elias, 25 May 2021.

¹²⁷ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 25 Mar. 2021; WFP staff survey, 9 Feb. 2021; Search for Common Ground representative, interview with author, Beirut, 2 June 2021; CAMEALEON representative, interview with author, Beirut, 2 June 2021; and Lebanese intended school feeding beneficiary, interview with author, Zahlé, 31 May 2021.

¹²⁸ Stewart, F. (ed.), *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies* (Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2008); and Langer, A. and Stewart, F., *Horizontal Inequalities and Violent Conflict: Conceptual and Empirical Linkages*, CRPD Working Paper no. 14 (Centre for Research on Peace and Development: Leuven, 2013).

¹²⁹ Silverman, D. M., 'Perceptions and misperceptions in war: Civilian beliefs about violence and their consequences in Pakistan, Iraq, and beyond', PhD dissertation, Ohio State University, 2017.

suggested, only half-jokingly: 'there is a civil war on Twitter'.¹³⁰ Social media seems to be a main source of tensions, and it has become a 'magnified mirror' of social fractures with a real impact on people's perceptions.¹³¹ Social media plays a role in reinforcing an 'us versus them' narrative.

International organizations have a growing importance as sources of information in crises, especially in conflict-affected societies with such a polarizing and politicized media landscape.¹³² Given the trust that WFP and other international organizations in Lebanon generally enjoy, WFP is in a good position to positively influence a definition of reality around humanitarian cash-based assistance in Lebanon that is based on facts and evidence rather than rumours, in order to prevent tensions and conflict driven by misperceptions around CBTs. A lot of valuable communication work is done by WFP on social media and in some traditional media, balancing output between short-term humanitarian assistance and longer-term projects that also benefit Lebanese host communities. The scale-up of WFP's support to the food component of the NPTP, for instance, was pitched directly to journalists over the phone and in live interviews on national and regional news channels.¹³³ The expectation is that providing facts about increasing assistance to vulnerable Lebanese people could dilute some of the tensions driven by perceptions of aid bias.

Conflict sensitivity concerns

WFP's communication work takes place in an environment where extremely low levels of societal trust in the government pervade. The government is the custodian of the NPTP and there are numerous factors over which WFP has little or no control. This makes WFP communications about the NPTP susceptible to fuelling inadvertently perceptions of the politicization and manipulation of aid. This, in turn, could increase tensions between the government and its citizens and could even cast a shadow of mistrust over WFP. Similarly, the widespread misperceptions around Syrians receiving US dollars as part of their CBT assistance could be corrected by consistently sharing the fact that assistance for both Lebanese and Syrians is currently provided in Lebanese pounds; however, the context is so dynamic that if, at some point in the future, dispersal changes from Lebanese pounds to US dollars, such a statement would no longer be correct. This could cause confusion and actually exacerbate frustrations and corrode the level of trust that people in Lebanon have in international organizations. Messaging must therefore be handled with great care to ensure not only transparency, but also as much consistency as possible. In the current context of Lebanon and its media landscape, interpretations are diverse. As one WFP staff member noted: 'What is interpreted a certain way by group A is interpreted a different way by group B, stretching to an innumerable number in Lebanon.'¹³⁴ Distortion of facts and misinformation through social media and broadcast messaging can polarize information put out by organizations like WFP by those who purposely intend to do so. Therefore, making a *singular, factual* statement is difficult.

Finally, WFP Lebanon has an accountability to affected populations unit that leads on communication with communities, manages WFP's responsibilities to the call centre as part of LOUISE, and handles complaints response and protection

¹³⁰ Search for Common Ground representative, interview with author, Beirut, 2 June 2021.

¹³¹ MOSA representative, interview with author, Zahlé, 26 May 2021; and Lefton, J. et al., *Analysing Refugee-Host Community Narratives on Social Media in Lebanon* (UNDP: Beirut, 2019).

¹³² Fröhlich, R. and Jungblut, M., 'Between factoids and facts: The application of "evidence" in NGO strategic communication on war and armed conflict', *Media, War & Conflict*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2018), pp. 85–106.

¹³³ WFP staff member, interview with author, Beirut, 2 June 2021.

¹³⁴ WFP staff member, interview with author, Beirut, 4 June 2021.

mainstreaming.¹³⁵ However, while WFP regularly communicates with its intended beneficiaries, preferably through SMS, effective two-way communication seems to be lacking. Targeting of CBTs, for instance, does not seem to be understood well by intended beneficiaries or the wider population, including those who may feel they should be included but have been left out of the caseload.¹³⁶ Such lack of clarity runs the risk of fuelling rumours such as those mentioned above, as well as perceptions of injustice and inequalities that all too frequently lead to tensions and even violence in Lebanon.

Recommendations

10. Undertake further deliberate messaging to the wider public that conveys factual, trustworthy information about WFP's assistance, striking the right balance between transparency and consistency.
11. Contribute to enhancing feedback loops through improved two-way communication throughout programming, for instance through group discussions with trusted local actors such as local authorities and local leaders to enhance WFP's understanding of communities' understanding of CBTs in locally and culturally relevant, context-specific terms and concepts. This will enhance WFP's knowledge on how to best position, explain and adapt CBT interventions and targeting mechanisms in order to build increased community acceptance.
12. Build on the existing complaints and feedback mechanisms. This could include regular training of cooperating partners and a template for general information sharing about common complaints raised through these mechanisms.
13. Provide conflict sensitivity training to communications officers and include them in strategic planning discussions in order collectively to identify potentially sensitive issues or language and means of mitigating and moderating any fall-out. Make it a regular and consistent practice as operations or contexts shift so teams are ready to respond to public inquiry.

Critical observation on CBTs and economic inclusion

A commonly cited benefit of CBTs is the positive impact on the local market and economy caused by multiplier effects, which spread across various businesses, widely distributing the financial gains.¹³⁷ For example, the winterization cash programme in Lebanon, which ran from November 2013 to April 2014, was shown to have a significant multiplier effect. The programme provided CBTs to intended beneficiaries to meet additional needs in the winter such as buying *mazout* (fuel) for heating. Each dollar that intended beneficiaries spent as part of this programme was found to generate \$2.13 for

¹³⁵ 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* (Cash Learning Partnership: 2019).

¹³⁶ WFP staff survey, 9 Feb. 2021; Local authority representative, interview with author, Ghazze, 25 May 2021; WFP staff member, interview with author, Beirut, 2 June 2021; and MOSA representative, interview with author, Zahlé, 26 May 2021.

¹³⁷ Bailey, S. and Harvey, P., 'State of evidence on humanitarian cash transfers', Background Note for the High-level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Mar. 2015; and Bailey, S. and Pongracz, S., 'Humanitarian cash transfers: Cost, value for money and economic impact', Background Note for the High-level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, ODI, May 2015.

the Lebanese economy.¹³⁸ Moreover, WFP's e-card intervention was argued to have a multiplier value of 1.51 in the food products sector in 2013.¹³⁹ However, these rather macroeconomic and top-down studies say little about the specific political economy, competition and exploitation between individuals and groups at the community level.

Redistribution of revenue through WFP's CBTs across a variety of retail channels that source locally produced foods could result in wider economic inclusion. Achieving this requires a competitive market environment wherein intended CBT beneficiaries can continue to choose the most relevant shops for their needs and have access to life-saving, nutritious and affordable food throughout the year as outlined by the CSP's strategic outcome 1 (see box 4.1). This is in line with one aim of the LCRP to root activities in the 'making markets work for the poor' approach to promote the sustainability of economic gains by changing the way market systems work.

For this study, a TOC around economic inclusion was initially planned and prepared in advance, predicated on an assumption of the above-mentioned market and retail conditions at play in Lebanon. However, the findings of the research for this report, and previous research on Lebanon, present a more complex and less linear picture than anticipated, due to the deep embeddedness in Lebanese society of elite capture and clientelism. International actors working in these contexts can create an 'intervention economy' with 'economic activity that either would not occur or would occur at a much lower scale and pay-rate, without the international presence'.¹⁴⁰ Such intervention economies unequally benefit some, usually well-connected people where the local and the international collide.¹⁴¹

For example, in 2012 and 2013 WFP's paper voucher system, particularly in border towns in northern Bekaa, was susceptible to manipulation by voucher dealers at distribution sites, asking intended beneficiaries to sell their vouchers at below face value. A portion of the profits made after 'cashing in' the vouchers was skimmed by black marketeers linked to organized criminals and partly to members of non-state armed groups involved in the war in Syria. While TOC 3 demonstrated that this particular conflict sensitivity concern has been mitigated through digital solutions and contextual changes, elite capture by prominent merchants remains an issue.¹⁴²

Similarly, in 2018 research in a border town in central Bekaa found that the presence of Syrian refugees and their increased purchasing power through CBTs created perceptions of 'winners' and 'losers'.¹⁴³ Those from the local community indirectly benefiting from CBT interventions, through Syrian intended CBT beneficiaries' market spending and humanitarian aid flows more generally, were mostly from a privileged socioeconomic background: landlords, local authority leaders, large business owners, religious leaders and other influential people. Those market actors who self-identified as economic 'losers' were holding grievances linked to this perceived inequality. This has created a rift between the 'winners' and the 'losers', which shows that the CBT interventions, and their real or perceived narrow distribution of profit, can reinforce existing perceptions of inequalities and hierarchies.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ Lehman, C. and Masterson, D., *Emergency Economies: The Impact of Cash Assistance in Lebanon* (International Rescue Committee: 2014).

¹³⁹ Bauer, J.-M., Sandström, S. and Audi, H., *Economic Impact Study: Direct and Indirect Effects of the WFP Value-based Food Voucher Programme in Lebanon* (WFP: Rome, July 2014).

¹⁴⁰ Jennings and Bøås (note 79).

¹⁴¹ Jennings, K. M., 'Life in a "peace-kept" city: Encounters with the peacekeeping economy', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol. 9, no. 3 (2015), pp. 296–315.

¹⁴² WFP staff member who worked on the food voucher programme in 2013, interview with author, remote, 14 June 2021; WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 12 Mar. 2021; and WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 23 Mar. 2021.

¹⁴³ Tschunkert (note 76).

¹⁴⁴ Tschunkert (note 76); and Kraft, M. et al., *Walking the Line: Strategic Approaches to Peacebuilding in Lebanon* (Working Group on Development and Peace, FriEnt: Bonn, 2008).

Finally, this research has found that some WFP-contracted shops have been able to increase their capacity and hire more employees, which benefits the wider community.¹⁴⁵ However, there remains a skewed distribution of profits. The restrictions put in place by the government, which prevent WFP from increasing the monthly transfer value of CBTs, have resulted in the heavily reduced purchasing power of intended beneficiaries. Moreover, there is a liquidity crisis and retailers who receive the money spent by intended beneficiaries into their bank accounts cannot access much of it due to withdrawal limits. In May 2021 WFP-contracted retailers reported a monthly withdrawal limit of LL 30 million (around \$1500 at the market rate).¹⁴⁶ The situation is dynamic and there are different Lebanese pound withdrawal limits depending on the bank, but this type of limit is stipulated across banks. As of June 2021, US dollar depositors are permitted to withdraw \$400 per month plus \$200 with the debit or credit card at point of sale and the equivalent of \$200 in Lebanese pounds at a rate (around LL 12 000 to the US dollar) set by the Central Bank's exchange rate platform, Sayrafa. However, this rate does not reflect the market rate fluctuating at around LL 15 000–22 000 to the US dollar in May–July 2021 and the Central Bank has set a limit on US dollar withdrawals at \$4800 annually.¹⁴⁷

This situation translates to unequal market access. Those retailers who have access to 'fresh' US dollars and have good connections continue to have access to supply while others are at the mercy of powerful wholesalers. As a result, many retailers have ceased trading.¹⁴⁸ However, WFP-contracted retailers have not reported any business closures, which shows that despite liquidity issues and reduced purchasing power, CBT spending has supported those retailers included in WFP's retail network. While many wholesalers are struggling as well, a small number of powerful wholesalers seem to be the 'winners' in this crisis. These wholesalers are reportedly hoarding subsidized items, waiting for subsidies to be removed so that they can sell the goods at a highly profitable market price.¹⁴⁹ Thus, any injection of cash into the market needs to be analysed through these processes of inequality.

From a peacebuilding perspective, these findings challenge the assumption that free markets create productive competition and cooperation that reduce the likelihood of conflicts. This is because socioeconomic inequalities (sometimes exacerbated by free market economic approaches) can lead to and prolong violent conflict, underscoring the importance of equal economic distribution.¹⁵⁰ Avoiding reinforcement of privileged access to the market and building a sustainable peace requires the formation and support of 'peace economies' that actively work towards reducing structural economic inequalities and grievances of the (pre-)conflict period, as well as addressing the

¹⁴⁵ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 17 Mar. 2021; WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 25 Mar. 2021; and WFP-contracted shopkeeper, interview with author, Zahlé, 31 May 2021.

¹⁴⁶ WFP-contracted shopkeeper, interview with author, Majdal Anjar, 28 May 2021; and WFP-contracted shopkeeper, interview with author, Zahlé, 31 May 2021.

¹⁴⁷ Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, 'The Government Monitor no. 21: The Central Bank's circulars regulating depositor's accounts', *Setting the Agenda*, 1 Sep. 2021; El Dahan, M. and Bassam, L., 'Lebanon bank customers to regain access to up to \$800 a month', *Reuters*, 4 June 2021; and Habib, O., 'BDL's circular 158 fails to appease depositors', *Daily Star Lebanon*, 7 July 2021.

¹⁴⁸ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 17 Mar. 2021; WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 24 Mar. 2021; WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 31 Mar. 2021; WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 6 Apr. 2021; WFP-contracted shopkeeper, interview with author, Majdal Anjar, 28 May 2021; and WFP-contracted shopkeeper, interview with author, Zahlé, 31 May 2021.

¹⁴⁹ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 16 Mar. 2021; WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 22 Mar. 2021; WFP-contracted shopkeeper, interview with author, Majdal Anjar, 28 May 2021; WFP-contracted shopkeeper, interview with author, Zahlé, 31 May 2021; Chehayeb, K., 'Lebanon: Fuel stockpilers raided as energy shortages deepen', *Middle East Eye*, 30 Aug. 2021; and Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International (LBCI) and Reuters, 'Lebanon health ministry seizes tons of medicines hidden in depots', 24 Aug. 2021.

¹⁵⁰ Stewart, F., *Horizontal Inequalities: A Neglected Dimension of Development*, QEH Working Paper no. 81 (Centre for Research on Inequality: Oxford, 2008).

livelihood concerns of citizens.¹⁵¹ They are economies where different groups have access to decent market opportunities and a share in economic growth as an essential ingredient for consolidating and sustaining peace in the long term.¹⁵²

If WFP aims to support equal economic distribution and inclusion through its CBTs, solely collecting quantitative data on how much money has been created for the local economy—for instance through measuring multiplier effects—is not sufficient. Qualifying where the cash injections have gone and how they have been distributed in the local economy on a subnational level is vital in order to understand the full impact of CBTs in the specific political economy in Lebanon and elsewhere. Such an understanding will then make it possible for WFP to make necessary adjustments to the programmes so as to advance equal economic inclusion and therewith support the establishment of a peace economy.

¹⁵¹ Distler, W., Stavrevska, E. B. and Vogel, B., 'Economies of peace: Economy formation processes and outcomes in conflict-affected societies', *Civil Wars*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2018), pp. 139–50.

¹⁵² Hamad, B. A. et al., *Transforming Cash Transfers: Beneficiary and Community Perspectives on the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme, Part 1: The Case of Gaza Strip* (Overseas Development Institute: London, 2013).

5. Cross-cutting components to improving the prospects for peace

Research under the SIPRI–WFP Knowledge Partnership explores five cross-cutting themes: climate change, stabilization, gender, CBTs and measurement. While this report has mainly presented findings on CBTs, significant findings have emerged from other cross-cutting components. Stabilization is reflected in TOC 1 and findings from the other themes are detailed below.

Action on climate change and food security to improve the prospects for peace

Climate change exacerbates the risk of violent conflict, especially in contexts susceptible to tensions and conflict. This can occur, for example, through the detrimental effects of climate change on people's livelihoods as well as through climate-related migration that results in competition over resources, especially if the elite exploits the situations. It is important to bear in mind that while climate change can contribute to conflict, it is not the only cause.¹⁵³

Lebanon is at high risk from the impacts of climate change. The main risks include rising sea levels and increasing temperatures, partly climate change-induced rising world food prices, fluctuating patterns of rainfall, diminishing water sources, and droughts that increase the likelihood of forest fires.¹⁵⁴

Lebanon has set out its climate goals in a nationally determined contribution, a non-binding national plan highlighting climate actions in line with the Paris Agreement, first submitted in 2015 and then regularly updated.¹⁵⁵ Humanitarian and development actors also aim to mitigate the risks of climate change. The Food Security Sector Working Group, which operates as part of the interagency mechanism initiated by the Lebanese Government and UNHCR to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis, promotes that partners adapt climate-smart agricultural practices to prepare small-scale farmers to partially mitigate climate risks.¹⁵⁶

While action on climate change is not mainstreamed in WFP's current CSP, there are plans to feature this issue more prominently in the next CSP generation from 2022. Some of WFP's current FFA and FFT resilience programming contributes to positive environmental conditions in communities as outlined under strategic outcome 2 in the CSP (see box 4.1 in section 4). WFP systematically assesses geographic areas and matches them with the most appropriate environmental intervention while recognizing the importance of alignment with potential for income generation.¹⁵⁷ One example is the FFA livelihoods reforestation project in Yammouneh, Bekaa, visited during research in Lebanon. Here, both Lebanese and Syrian participants receive CBTs for building a community-relevant asset, in this case trees, and thereby increasing forest cover. Other important components of this project include fire prevention through trail management activities, building local capacity through training on best practices for reforestation, forest management and eco-tourism.

¹⁵³ Mobjörk, M., Krampe, F. and Tarif, K., 'Pathways of climate insecurity: Guidance for policymakers', SIPRI Policy Brief, Nov. 2020.

¹⁵⁴ UNDP, *Climate-proofing Lebanon's Development Plans* (UNDP: Beirut, 2021); USAID, 'Climate risk profile: Lebanon', Fact sheet, 2016; and United Nations and Lebanese Government (note 81).

¹⁵⁵ UNDP (note 154); and USAID (note 154).

¹⁵⁶ United Nations and Lebanese Government (note 81).

¹⁵⁷ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 19 Mar. 2021.

Mainstreaming action on climate change throughout the CSP will put WFP in a good position to advance projects that help to mitigate and prevent negative social and economic consequences through climate change.

The role of action on gender inclusivity in preventing conflict and improving the prospects for peace

Women and girls tend to be disproportionately impacted in times of violent conflict. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) has become an increasingly common feature of violent conflicts, most commonly inflicted upon women and girls.

In 2000 the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325, which recognized the importance of mainstreaming gender in peace operations and strengthened the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) architecture around the 'three ps': protection of women and girls from gender-based violence in armed conflict, participation of women in all aspects of peacebuilding at every level; and mainstreaming of gender into mechanisms for the prevention of armed conflict.¹⁵⁸

In Lebanon, systemic gender inequality prevails, manifested in less access for women than men to resources, services and opportunities.¹⁵⁹ Syrian women also participated less in the paid labour force than men. Female-headed households are therefore highly dependent on humanitarian assistance. Other protection issues include child labour, particularly among Syrian boys, and child marriage among girls.¹⁶⁰

SGBV is one of the main protection concerns, and 90 per cent of the reported incidents involved women and girls. There was an increase in reported incidents of SGBV in 2020, partly due to the Covid-19 lockdown, which increased the risk of domestic violence due to confinement with the perpetrator and lack of access to services to seek help and safe spaces such as school.¹⁶¹

Notably, one of the UN's SDGs is to achieve gender equality and eliminate SGBV. The LCRP aims to mainstream gender equality and action throughout humanitarian and development activities in Lebanon, which requires an assessment of implications of any planned activity on women, girls, men and boys, and consideration of their concerns and experiences in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.¹⁶²

WFP disaggregates data by gender and age in all monitoring and evaluation exercises. Furthermore, female-headed households tend to be included in CBTs due to their increased vulnerability. Women are also systematically included in FFT and FFA activities as equally as possible to men. One aim is to provide them with income-generating opportunities and skills for the longer term. To enable this, WFP where possible provides for childcare spaces.¹⁶³ Women who took part in the FFA livelihoods reforestation project in Yammouneh all agreed on a cultural change that their community and those surrounding them now looked positively on women's labour. Furthermore, according to some interlocutors, cultural exchange between Lebanese and Syrians had had a positive influence on individual cases of child marriage and child labour, convincing those who were contemplating these options due to the difficult economic situation of the importance of keeping their children in education.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁸ Duncanson, C., *Gender and Peacebuilding* (Polity Press: Cambridge and Malden, MA, 2016); and UN Security Council Resolution 1325, 31 Oct. 2000.

¹⁵⁹ United Nations and Lebanese Government (note 81).

¹⁶⁰ UN Women et al. *Gender Analysis: 2020 Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon* (UN Women, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP: 2020).

¹⁶¹ United Nations and Lebanese Government (note 24).

¹⁶² United Nations and Lebanese Government (note 81).

¹⁶³ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 12 Mar. 2021.

¹⁶⁴ Intended livelihood beneficiaries, Lebanese female participants, focus group discussion, Yammouneh, 24 May 2021.

Similarly, an FFT cooking project in Beirut showed that the female participants all had aspirations to open their own delivery services from home upon project completion with not just cookery skills but also market skills perceived to be helping them in the medium to long term.¹⁶⁵

These WFP activities, on an individual level, seem to give participating women a sense of empowerment and the means to control their own finances and skills for the future. However, there is a risk that this liberal approach to female empowerment by including women in the economy might not liberate them but burden them further. There is a need to mainstream a goal of structural change.¹⁶⁶

Assessing and measuring WFP's contribution to the prospects for peace

Monitoring and measuring the impacts of programmes on the conflict and peace-building environment is challenging as these contexts are complex, non-linear and uncertain. There is evidence that conflict has detrimental impacts on food security, and that food insecurity negatively affects stability and peace. However, the drivers and pathways of these interconnections are context-specific and disentangling them is difficult.¹⁶⁷

At a minimum, WFP must try to 'do no harm', for which monitoring is needed to ensure programmes are conflict sensitive. To go beyond this and 'do some good', more monitoring is required to identify progress and opportunities of engagement. A starting point is a thorough context analysis that contextualizes key concepts underpinning the TOCs and other peacebuilding activities. WFP is already doing this, and a vast amount of contextual subnational-level data is available through for instance UNDP, which WFP could tap into further.

WFP already collects qualitative data in relation to its programmes from intended beneficiaries and tries to 'marry' both quantitative and qualitative data. Qualitative narratives are 'translated' to language appropriate for high-level audiences such as donors, partners and government.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, 'marrying' the qualitative with the quantitative can be a fruitful starting point to measure impacts of WFP programming on prospects for peace based on a community perspective. However, data is not collected from non-beneficiaries, which hinders WFP from gaining an understanding of the wider perspective on programming. It is important to capture this perspective in order to understand programmes' impacts holistically. Focus group discussions clearly showed that livelihood activities have the potential to facilitate positive cultural exchange between communities. In relation to this, indicators could be developed around the extent to which WFP interventions facilitate positive intergroup contact that can help to break down prejudices and bring people culturally closer together. This should be based on a collection of indicators of what positive interaction means to people derived from participatory engagement, as concepts of peace and conflict are subjective. In this sense, such bottom-up indicators may be able to 'add more textured and fine-grained detail that is not available at the national level'.¹⁶⁹

It was clear from the research that many such narratives are already being picked up by local project staff and cooperating partners; however, existing monitoring structures do not sufficiently capture and use these narratives. This is partly because

¹⁶⁵ Intended livelihoods beneficiaries, Lebanese female participants, interview with author, Beirut, 3 June 2021.

¹⁶⁶ Duncanson, C., 'Beyond liberal vs liberating: Women's economic empowerment in the United Nations' Women, Peace and Security Agenda', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, vol. 21, no. 1 (2019), pp. 111–30.

¹⁶⁷ Holleman et al. (note 92); and Delgado, Murugani and Tschunkert (note 93).

¹⁶⁸ WFP staff member, interview with author, remote, 15 Mar. 2021.

¹⁶⁹ Firchow, P. and Mac Ginty, R., 'Measuring peace: Comparability, commensurability, and complementarity using bottom-up indicators', *International Studies Review*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2017), pp. 6–27.

WFP's corporate results framework does not allow for this—a finding that the phase I country case studies also identified, and which will be further unpacked in the forthcoming measurement deep dive.

6. Conclusions

The findings suggest that WFP's CBT interventions can—and do—positively contribute to improving the prospects for peace in Lebanon. Building on WFP Lebanon's important contributions to peace, there is room for improvement to further strengthen and systematize current engagements. This report makes 13 recommendations summarized below. The conflict and peacebuilding environment in Lebanon is extremely complex and rife with uncertainties. Endogenous, participatory and locally anchored processes are necessary in order to generate knowledge about the conflict and peacebuilding environment so that programmes can be continuously adjusted to the dynamic context. WFP can build on the current and potential contributions to peace through longer-term support to conflict-affected communities by explicitly articulating the contributions to peace and measuring them over time. These recommendations are not an attempt to simplify the extreme complexity and uncertainty but can nevertheless provide actionable entry points once conflict sensitivity is mainstreamed across the spectrum of CBT activities grounded in the local experience of WFP's programmes in Lebanon.

Summary of recommendations

1. Work with peace and security-focused UN agencies—such as OHCHR, UNDP and UN Women—and local and international peacebuilding organizations to systematize evidence on the stabilizing effects of CBTs.
2. Position WFP's large-scale CBT programmes as enhancing stability in the current fragile economic context: consider incorporating this more explicitly in programme design as an objective, including the further development of indicators designed to measure the stabilizing impact of cash.
3. Formalize knowledge gathering of field monitors on the ground and track trends in responses to and articulation of issues surrounding CBT assistance.
4. Conduct a tracer study to identify economic sectors and subsectors that have benefited from cash injections and determine the money multiplier effect of the CBTs on the local economy. Consider implementing surveys of WFP-contracted retailers, logging where they procure their items over the period of a year to understand the wider distribution of profits that CBTs generate in the local economy beyond the contracted retailers.
5. Design livelihood activities with local conflict analysis and by making use of the local conflict data available from UNDP. Prioritize conflict sensitivity and collaborate with peacebuilding actors that can support WFP in finding the capacities for peace, the connectors in each community, that WFP can leverage to find an entry point for social cohesion activities.
6. Mobilize resources from major donors for multi-year livelihood and resilience programmes to strengthen productive assets and institutions of refugee-hosting communities.

7. Use WFP's leverage with state entities to advocate for better working conditions for both Lebanese and Syrians, and to give Syrians the right to work in sectors beyond agriculture, construction and solid waste management. This includes advocating for implementation of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which grants individuals, irrespective of status, labour rights, the right to health, the right to education and the right to an adequate standard of living.
8. In relation to the Lebanese Government's NPTP, build awareness of WFP's accountability measures beyond direct intended beneficiaries through community engagement.
9. Include an indicator in perception surveys beyond 'aid bias' to capture more concretely the impact of WFP's measures to mitigate corruption and diversion.
10. Undertake further messaging to the wider public that conveys factual, trustworthy information about WFP's assistance, striking the right balance between transparency and consistency.
11. Contribute to enhancing feedback through improved two-way communication, for instance through group discussions with trusted local actors such as local authorities and other local leaders.
12. Build on the existing complaints and feedback mechanisms. This could include regular training of cooperating partners and a template for general information sharing about common complaints raised through these mechanisms.
13. Provide conflict sensitivity training to communications officers and include them in strategic planning discussions. Make it a regular and consistent practice as operations or contexts shift so teams are ready to respond to public inquiry.

About the author

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Her PhD research at the University of Manchester explored the implications of humanitarian cash-based assistance for host-refugee relations in Lebanon. Her other research interests include socioeconomic dimensions of peace and interventions and local agency, and micro-dynamics of conflicts.



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