



# Enacting urban cash for work programmes in Lebanon in response to the Syrian refugee crisis

Guidance Note for Humanitarian Practitioners

Stronger Cities Consortium

## Preface

The *Stronger Cities Initiative* is a consortium of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and World Vision International (WVI), with technical advice provided by David Sanderson, University of New South Wales (UNSW) Sydney, Australia. The purpose of the initiative is to produce practical field-tested guidance for humanitarian organisations working in urban conflict, displacement, and natural-hazard settings. [www.iied.org/stronger-cities-initiative](http://www.iied.org/stronger-cities-initiative)

The guidance note was developed by World Vision. World Vision is a global Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

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The Human Settlements Group at the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) works to reduce poverty and improve health and housing conditions in the urban centres of Africa, Asia and Latin America. It seeks to combine this with promoting good governance and more ecologically sustainable patterns of urban development and rural-urban linkages.

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Humanitarian crises in cities require responses that reflect the urban context, address urban challenges, and provide urbanised solutions. This paper focuses on providing guidance on good practice in cash for work (CfW) programmes. Focusing on Lebanon and the Syrian refugee crisis, the paper provides nine principles for better programming outcomes. The principles include issues such as addressing fear of movement within cities, prevention of child labour, guarding against corruption, the need to insure project participants, and the importance of linking CfW to municipal and ministry strategies. The nine principles are preceded by a discussion on the context of Lebanon, with a focus on the effects of the Syrian crisis on the Lebanese labour market, the key sectors absorbing the Syrian workforce, the government of Lebanon's priorities within the response, and relevant laws and policies that impact humanitarian programming in Lebanon.

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# Abbreviations and acronyms

ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ACF	Action against Hunger
CfW	Cash for Work
CPMS	Child Protection Minimum Standards
ETF	European Training Foundation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FGD	Focus group discussion
GoL	Government of Lebanon
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ITS	Informal tented settlement
KII	Key informant interview
LBP	Lebanese Pound
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LHIF	Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MSME	Micro and small to medium enterprise
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPTP	National Poverty Targeting Programme
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PEP	Public Employment Programmes
SME	Small and medium enterprise
SMEB	Survival minimum expenditure basket
STEP	Subsidised Temporary Employment Programme
SoP	Standard Operating Procedures
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USD	United States Dollar

# Introduction

## Urban humanitarian crisis response and cash transfer programming

Humanitarian crises in cities require nuanced responses that reflect the urban context, address urban challenges and provide urbanised solutions. Current evidence suggests that cash-based programming is an effective and efficient approach in humanitarian action, so much so that the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers (Harvey and Bailey, 2015: 8) recommends that: “Humanitarian agencies should always ask: ‘Why not cash? If not now, when?’”.

Governments have long used cash as a tool for responding to natural hazards and economic shocks; it is only relatively recently that aid agencies have begun to use cash as a programming approach (Doocy *et al.*, 2006). However, what is not clear is if cash transfer programming by aid agencies is being done as efficiently and effectively as possible and at the right scale (Harvey and Bailey, 2015).

In urban areas, working with cash can provide an opportunity to increase the speed of delivering humanitarian aid and reduce costs when compared to in-kind assistance and give recipients freedom to make their own choices based on the complexities of their portfolio of needs.

Cash transfer programming can include a wide spectrum of approaches. This paper focuses on only one of them – cash for work (CfW), which can be defined as “...a short-term intervention used by humanitarian assistance organisations to provide temporary employment in public projects (such as repairing roads, clearing debris or re-building infrastructure) to the most vulnerable segments of a population” (Brainich and Knott, 2007: 2). Payment is generally based on “time worked (eg number of days, daily rate), but may also be quantified in terms of outputs (eg number of items produced, cubic metres dug)” (CaLP, 2017).

For many, CfW is helpful because it is simple: people are paid for the work that they do, in exchange for undertaking work that provides wider societal benefits. It helps people meet their basic needs (through providing an income) and, where it works, it helps people to avoid negative coping strategies. CfW is used when markets are functioning and accessible, food supplies and essential goods are available locally to purchase, and where cash can be transferred safely and effectively (Brainich and Knott, 2007). CfW is often implemented alongside other cash and assistance programmes, such as those aimed at food security and improving livelihoods (IFRC Movement, 2007).

While CfW is one of a number of modalities used within cash transfer programming, it may be that alternative options for doing cash transfer programming are more suitable, depending on the context. CfW is not a panacea solution; there are pitfalls that are important to avoid. These include corruption, offering meaningless work, failing to align with national and municipal government policies and laws guiding what constitutes work and who is eligible, and failing to reach the most vulnerable, ie those who may be unable to engage in the work on offer, such as the elderly, disabled, people who are time-poor or face mental health challenges. Moreover, CfW can be a risky approach because it must be guided by labour laws. CfW was used by agencies at the beginning of the cash journey; while it offered a high degree of control over projects it did not provide participants with a sense of autonomy or choice the way other forms of cash transfer programming do today.

CfW is not appropriate when there are no functioning markets to purchase food and non-food items; where beneficiaries use a barter system instead of a cash-based system; there is a food shortage (in this case food relief may be better until local markets recover); where political instability or violence make it difficult to track or avoid corruption; and where life-saving in-kind relief may be more required before CfW projects can take place (Save the Children, n.d.). CfW should not replace or disrupt existing work activities. In protracted crises, the suitability of CfW must be questioned because, while CfW meets basic needs, its temporary nature does not allow refugees or long-term displaced people to build up assets.

## Methodology

Four methods were employed to develop this guidance note. First, analysis began with a review of existing literature in humanitarian and development contexts, including peer-reviewed literature and grey literature such as programme reports, assessments and evaluations, etc. More than 70 documents were reviewed and coded into key themes such as gender, health and safety, insurance coverage, social cohesion, laws and policies – using NVivo software. Second, key informant interviews (KIIs) were held with 21 people in Lebanon, including eight people from NGOs, four from UN agencies, four from the private sector, and five from government (local and national). To ensure confidentiality and openness, the names of the organisations and individuals interviewed have not been disclosed.

Third, four focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with 64 people from the Bekaa Valley, of which 41 per cent were women. The FGDs included Syrian refugees and Lebanese people. Last, preliminary findings were validated in a FGD with six staff from World Vision Lebanon. The research took place between August 2016 and December 2016. This document has benefited from the input of reviewers from NGOs and academia.

As with all research, there were limitations. This study was conducted in English and therefore did not review Arabic documentation. FGDs and a number of KIIs were held in Arabic; some nuances may have as a result been lost or changed.

# Context

## Urban Lebanon

In the last fifty years, rates of urbanisation in Lebanon have dramatically increased, resulting in 87 per cent of its populations residing in urban areas and 64 per cent in what are known as large urban agglomerations, such as Beirut and its suburbs – Tripoli, Saida, Zahle, and Tyre (Government of Lebanon, 2016a).

In the Habitat III National Report for Lebanon, the government of Lebanon describes its urban fabric as ‘fragile’ and ‘complex’ resulting from “fragmented urban and territorial development initiatives” that duplicate infrastructure and fail to coordinate development (Government of Lebanon, 2016a: 10). Urban growth and development have also been impacted by a series of wars and internal conflicts that have seen large urban centres destroyed and new ones reconstructed.

In the 1960s, there was a large influx of rural-to-urban migration; those who could not afford to settle in the city centre built their homes on the periphery, forming the first informal settlements that eventually became known as ‘poverty belts’ (Boustani *et al.*, 2016). Over the years, these areas grew to host some of the poorest individuals residing in country, including Palestinian refugees, Lebanese families fleeing violence from within Lebanon, Syrians, and Iraqi refugees.

In urban areas, space is often contested; there is a wide range of key actors – often including more disparate groups whose voices need to be heard in a context where infrastructure and services were already failing before forced migration took place. These factors are important to understand before undertaking cash transfer programming.

## Cash for work

In Lebanon, CfW can be viewed as an opportunity to provide vulnerable families – refugees and host communities – with much needed cash assistance to contribute to meeting basic needs, while being a conduit for building relationships between Syrians and Lebanese, through work that improves public services and infrastructure. Moreover, as one key informant interviewee highlighted, when CfW is linked with broader development programming interventions, it can contribute to the objectives of durable solutions by preparing refugees to return home.

The situation in Lebanon is fluid and therefore fast changing. To date, national government policies had been largely unsupportive of distributing cash in exchange for work. While municipalities appear to embrace the concept, the national government provides a slightly more opaque stance on the intervention. While the following statement is from 2015, it still reflects the situation in Lebanon at the time of writing: the ILO notes that “As of August 2015, there is no official position of the government of Lebanon on Syrians’ participation in CfW programmes. An inter-ministerial group, composed among others by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Labour, is discussing this subject” (Battistin, 2015: 13). The government of Lebanon is yet to explicitly allow CfW for refugees.

Therefore, cash for work has the potential to be a contentious programmatic response in Lebanon. Strict rules govern who can and cannot work in Lebanon. At the time of writing, CfW occupied a ‘grey area’, where it was not clear what was permitted and what was not. Few examples of cash for work in Lebanon exist; even fewer of the examples explicitly focus on the urban context.

There are a small number of documents that offer practical guidance on CfW in Lebanon, most notably the Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) for Cash for Work (unpublished), facilitated by the Inter-Agency Livelihoods Working Group (2014). However, the SoPs for CfW did not receive formal approval and will likely require an update to reflect changes that have taken place in policies, standards, and context in the years since it was first written.

Other phrases used interchangeably with CfW in Lebanon include some variation on emergency employment schemes, labour intensive rehabilitation projects, public work, and temporary / rapid employment.

The ILO (Creti, 2015: 6) notes that the 2014 SoPs developed by the Inter-Agency Livelihoods Working Group are the main reference for CfW in the country, and in an effort to remain consistent, use the phrase CfW instead of 'rapid employment initiatives'. Thus, to align with the Inter-Agency Livelihoods Working Group in Lebanon, this research also uses the term 'CfW'.

## Effects on Lebanese labour markets

Before the Syrian crisis began, seasonal Syrian migrants played a large role in supplementing labour shortages in Lebanon, and their integration in the labour market was viewed favourably (Foster and Westrope, 2015). Syrians have traditionally been employed in lower paid jobs in road works, construction, seasonal farming, car repair work, cleaning and garbage collection; such work often does not provide social security or health coverage.

Opening up access to work for refugees in host countries is known as labour market integration, offering refugees the ability to meet their own needs and for host countries to garner potential economic advantages through boosts from a new demographic. Through labour market integration,<sup>1</sup> the burden on host governments to provide humanitarian aid is lessened, reducing the pressure on public finances (Alsharabati and Nammour, 2015).

Collecting systematic and regular data to inform market integration is a challenge. The ILO points out that the last Lebanese national data collection took place in 2007 through a 'Living Conditions Survey' that included all areas apart from Palestinian camps (Battistin, 2015). The ILO (2015) notes that the last census was carried out in 1932, which may impact the reliability of projections about the Lebanese population.

However, there are risks to labour market integration, not least that having a job can be an incentive for a refugee to stay in the host country beyond the cessation of the conflict in their home country. In the case of Lebanon, large numbers of refugees arrived within a relatively short period of time, creating specific challenges and risks to labour market integration.

First, predating the arrival of Syrian refugees, Lebanon was struggling to provide and cover ongoing costs of public services, such as education, healthcare, sanitation and electricity (Boustani *et al.*, 2016). Second, the arrival of Syrian refugees, who often have to take on relatively low-skilled work in the informal sector, regardless of their own skillsets, has created a 'race to the bottom' by putting pressure on sectors such as construction and agriculture, thereby increasing competition for labour within low-productivity sectors. Syrians have little option but to accept work conditions that are not regulated, which contributes to growing informality and limited social protection for Lebanese and refugee workers. The percentage of Lebanon's informal economy is estimated to be up to 50 per cent of the labour force (Ajuni and Kawar, 2015), where there are no labour safeguards for those working within it. On average, women earn 40 per cent less than males – approximately LBP 248,000 (USD 164) per month, which raises discrimination concerns (ILO, 2013). Such high degrees of informality make it more difficult to implement regulations that are designed to protect those at risk of exploitation and for government to reap economic benefits.

Third, Lebanon's economy has seen weak economic growth and shrinking work opportunities, particularly for young workers aged 15-24 (Errighi and Griesse, 2016). Unemployment rates for Lebanese have increased from an estimated 11 per cent before the crisis to around 18 to 20 per cent with the increased supply of labour provided by the influx of refugees playing a role in unemployment growth (International Monetary Fund, 2014). The demographic of Syrians in Lebanon shows selective migration: 56 per cent of Syrians are below 18 years compared to 20 per cent of the Lebanese population in the same demographic (Battistin, 2015). The 2017-2020 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) (Government of Lebanon and the United Nations) notes that Syrian unemployment rates are estimated to be at 36 per cent but that rates may in fact be higher. It further notes that two thirds of displaced Syrians considered to be in employment work less than 15 days per month, and an estimated 92 per cent earn less than the survival minimum expenditure basket (SMEB).

While the overall declining health of Lebanon's economy is an immediately obvious challenge resulting from the Syrian refugee crisis, there is a political economy argument for gradual and careful management of opening up the labour market, which can produce macro- and micro-economic benefits but may take some time to materialise.

<sup>1</sup> Such was the case in Gambia when Sierra Leoneans fleeing the war took on skilled jobs in education and healthcare, thereby investing in national systems and augmenting the economy (Jacobsen, 2006).

## Key sectors absorbing the Syrian workforce

Over the last decade, Lebanon has seen an increase in the demand for low-skill work. For example, activities considered low productivity, such as retail trade, domestic agriculture, and construction, have increased over higher productivity activities, such as manufacturing for export, agri-business, financial services, transport, and communications. Competition between Lebanese and Syrian workers is more intense in the low-skill type of work where “Syrian workers were found to accept lower salaries and worse conditions at work (ILO, 2014), thus undercutting Lebanese job-seekers” (Errighi and Griesse, 2016: 19). The sectors found to have the highest prevalence of Syrian workers and a high degree of informality<sup>2</sup> include: domestic and personal services (39 per cent), agriculture (24 per cent), commerce (15 per cent), and construction (12 per cent) (Ajuni and Kawar, 2015).

Findings show that urban labour markets seem to be less impacted than the rural ones with 72 per cent of Syrians being paid to do work on a seasonal basis (Errighi and Griesse, 2016). Research by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2013) found that an increase in Syrian workers in the agricultural sector caused daily wages to decrease by 60 per cent.

Bolstering the productive capacities of micro and small to medium enterprises (MSMEs) is one of the key activities articulated by the Lebanon government within Output One of the 2017-2020 LCRP’s livelihoods response plan. To do this, the government aims to improve upon local economic infrastructure and the ability to respond to market demands. A discussion paper published by the European Commission found that from 2011 to 2014, Syrians opened 66 per cent of the businesses running, compared to 29 per cent of Lebanese-owned businesses started during this period (Errighi and Griesse, 2016). However, the World Bank (2013) has found little evidence that Syrian-run businesses have displaced Lebanese businesses.

While MSMEs provide opportunities of self-sufficiency through participation in the labour market by those who would otherwise be excluded, informality can have negative impacts. For example, informality can result in fiscal evasion, reduce the economy’s growth, decrease enforcement of health and safety standards, and prevent small businesses from growing beyond a certain size, even if they are successful. However, current labour policies that exclude Syrians from formal work may result in the continued expansion of the informal sector.

## Government priorities

The 2017-2020 LCRP highlights that within its livelihoods response plan, 37,000 temporary opportunities for vulnerable persons will be created through public works in 2018. The types of public works include “small-to-medium-scale infrastructure upgrades in municipalities and villages (road rehabilitation, cleaning services, in the agricultural sectors (irrigation canals, agricultural roads, rainwater harvesting), and environmental work and disaster risk reduction (forestation, reforestation, cleaning of drainage, canals and rivers for flood prevention, construction of structures such as contour walls, checking of dams, and plantation of green areas in order to reduce flood risks)” (Government of Lebanon and the United Nations, 2017:108).

The 2017-2020 LCRP also outlines a number of key priorities that relate to the labour market. It states that its underlying approach will be ‘Making Markets Work for the Poor’ (M4P) in order to promote economic sustainability. It also highlights the importance of working with the private sector to improve infrastructure, a major challenge to business development identified by the government.

Addressing issues of informality and the right to decent work are raised as priorities of the Ministry of Labour and its partners in order to prevent various types of exploitation that manifest through informality. The 2017-2020 LCRP states a commitment to eliminating the worst forms of child labour, by implementing a ‘Decent Work Country Programme’ that was developed in 2016, and increasing labour inspection capacity.

By way of measuring impact, the 2017-2020 LCRP mentions the use of three indicators to measure livelihoods sector interventions, including: new commercial linkages for existing MSMEs; increased profitability and improved production in targeted SMEs; and jobs created and maintained. Under this outcome, the work of the sector will be structured under six outputs, all adapted from the 2016 response strategy (Government of Lebanon and the United Nations, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Estimates of the informality ratios of individual sectors stem from the 2009 Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey by Lebanon’s Central Administration of Statistics (Errighi and Griesse, 2016).

## Laws and policies

Lebanese laws and policies regulating Syrian participation in the Lebanese labour market are complex and, in certain circumstances, unclear due to the addition of new laws over a short period of time, ambiguity over the status of Syrian refugees, and poor enforcement of existing laws, all of which make the environment for running CfW projects all the more complicated.

In December 2014, the economic activity of 'displaced' Syrians (also described here as refugees) became restricted through the implementation of Decree 197 of the Ministry of Labour, which limited work for Syrian nationals to sectors that traditionally depended on migrant workers, including agriculture, construction, and the environment (Battistin, 2015). The rules governing residency permits (which are a prerequisite for obtaining work permits) were toughened in January 2015, making it more difficult for Syrians in Lebanon to obtain and maintain legal stay. Additionally, the application process requires applicants be supported by their employers, which generally does not occur.

In early 2015, Lebanese authorities issued new regulations and rules declaring that Syrians seeking residency in Lebanon must sign a pledge not to work, which was subsequently replaced by a pledge to abide by Lebanese law (Battistin, 2015). The pledges were intended to reduce local job competition resulting from the high influx of refugees. The impact of the pledge to abide by Lebanese law on Syrian refugees wanting to work often results in greater difficulty securing legal stay and restriction of freedom of movement for those who do not have residency. The policy also places greater strain on public finances to support refugees through humanitarian aid and potentially reduces economic growth by restricting Syrian participation in the labour market.



Photo credit: Marc AJ

# Nine principles for implementing CfW in urban areas in Lebanon

## Principle 1: Understand fears related to mobility

Fear of movement into the city and throughout the city can impact the participation of Syrian refugees in CfW projects.

Freedom of movement by Syrian refugees is restricted by a lack of a residency permit, which can result in a risk of arrest at checkpoints or during raids, detention, ill-treatment, and departure orders, particularly impacting refugee men (Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF), 2016). A Norwegian Refugee Council assessment (2014) found that more than 73 per cent of the 1,256 refugees interviewed reported freedom of movement as the main challenge for refugees with limited legal status. Since 2014, some municipalities have imposed curfews (Lenner and Schmelter, 2016).

Fear of movement throughout cities and into cities also contributes to increases in poverty by reducing access to income-earning opportunities. One aid agency described mobility restrictions as placing refugees without residency in 'the eye of exploitation' because of the ability of authorities to deal with such persons at their discretion and for potential employers to offer work without adequate conditions, decent pay, or sometimes no pay at all. A lack of residency precludes refugees from reporting instances of abuse and exploitation to authorities.

Many refugees are located in informal tented settlements (ITSs), which are located on the outskirts of cities. Such locations impact mobility on two levels: first, checkpoints on the way to urban areas were listed as a key place that people without residency wanted to avoid. Second, a lack of public transport to and from ITSs, especially smaller ones, creates a problem for people wanting to move in and out of urban areas for work.

Changes in policy have the potential to reduce the fear of mobility; the government of Lebanon (GoL) stated it would review existing regulatory frameworks related to residence and access to work. At one stage, an identification document or 'attestation' was being explored, not as a replacement for residence permits, but as an acceptable document for use at checkpoints. Ultimately, such policy change did not take place, maintaining mobility restrictions on refugees with limited legal status. While the LHIF (2016) views these types of policy discussions as positive, it notes that obtaining and maintaining a valid residence permit is the key protection measure for unlocking access to livelihoods and education.

### KEY ACTIONS

1. When designing CfW programming in urban areas of Lebanon, it is crucial to assess mobility risks for refugees, to understand reasons refugees are fearful of going to a city or moving around it. Where possible, collect data on violations at checkpoints and share it with protection sector actors (ie UNHCR) in order to strengthen advocacy efforts with the GoL around easing refugee movement restrictions (NRC, 2014).
2. Assess the type of transportation available to refugees and related costs in order to ensure refugees are adequately compensated in their daily wage.
3. Design CfW activities that are geographically located within neighbourhoods hosting a high number of refugees or located close to ITSs in order to reduce travel risks.

## Principle 2: Combat gender discrimination

### Find effective ways to engage women.

One of the key challenges with CfW is that women are not often engaged in labour-intensive activities. In the case of Syrian refugees, at least 20 per cent of households are female-headed (Battistin, 2015). Focus group discussions highlighted that Syrian women preferred working from home; those without husbands often had no choice but to leave their home to find work.

Labour-intensive work is not always suitable for women, especially those who are pregnant or balancing domestic and childcare duties that support the survival of a family. Overall, women's salaries, especially in agriculture, where it is most common to see women and children working, are as low as 8,000 LBP (USD 5.30) per day, well below the minimum wage (Battistin, 2015).

One way to potentially engage more women in CfW is through productivity-based wage setting, rather than the more common method of wage setting based on time, location, activity, and output. Productivity wage setting is a system whereby the number of pieces produced is counted without factoring in time, for example how many blankets were knitted. It can also be based on quantity of work, for example how much of a community garden was planted in a day. Seeking new ways for women to engage in CfW would assist to ensure fairer targeting. This can be done through home-based schemes whereby cash is given for products such as tailoring. For example, in Lebanon, the IRC ran a home-based cash for products project whereby 93 women were able to work from home to produce basic goods, such as clothing for children and productive assets, such as fishing nets to support the livelihoods of vulnerable households (Battistin, 2016). In productivity-based CfW activities, it is crucial to design projects that build social capital by providing opportunities for women to develop friendships, share information, teach each other new skills, and nurture trust.

Other examples of CfW activities that accommodate women in urban environments by the IRC include disseminating information (ie services available from the IRC and health and hygiene information) and providing childcare for caregivers who are engaged in training or income-generating activities.

### KEY ACTIONS

1. If it has been assessed that women can be better engaged in CfW if the activities are home-based, consider using a productivity-based payment method whereby women are paid based on the outputs / number of items produced on average per unit of time.
2. If using a productivity-based approach, work with participants to determine the metrics that will be used to measure the completion of tasks or products.
3. Consult participants to determine how monitoring will take place in a way that avoids exploitation if tasks/ products are found to take longer than originally anticipated.
4. Develop a strategy with participants for determining what will happen with the products once they are completed. Will they be sold?
5. Hire and train female work site supervisors and staff to enhance the protection and safety of female participants.

## Principle 3: Prevent child labour and assert child protection principles

Focus group discussions with Syrians and Lebanese as well as key informant interviews with aid agencies and Lebanese business owners reveal it is not uncommon for children as young as eight years old to be working.

Based on the interviews and focus group discussions, child labour appears to be an upward trend with children selling goods on the street, working at car repair shops or other small businesses where they are employed to do low-skilled labour. They earn approximately 1,000 LBP (USD 0.66) a day. During the harvest season, parents reported that children working in the agriculture sector made approximately USD 5 per day. One agricultural business owner confirmed the hiring of children saying, “We are obligated to hire children. We go through the *Chawish* (Syrian community leader) who tells us the children are 20. I suspect they are 14. We need workers on that day so we take them. The older ones stay at home and take care of the home while the younger ones pick vegetables”.

A number of aid agencies correlate the increase with fewer restrictions on the movement of children. Children 14 years-old and under do not require a resident permit (LHIF, 2016), thereby allowing them to move around more freely without fear of being detained. Undoubtedly there are a number of other complex factors that contribute to the number of children working in this protracted crisis.

The Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action define child labour as: “work that is unacceptable because the children involved are too young and should be in school, or because even though they have reached the minimum working age (usually 15), the work they do is harmful to the emotional, developmental and physical well-being of a person below the age of 18” (Child Protection Working Group, 2012:111).

In addition to preventing child labour, humanitarian agencies must assert child protection principles in CfW programmes. The six core principles listed in the Child Protection Minimum Standards (CPMS) include: avoidance of exposing children to harm; ensuring access to assistance is impartial; protection from physical and psychological harm arising from violence and coercion; assistance to claim rights, access available remedies, and recover from the effects of abuse; strengthening of child protection systems; and strengthening children’s resilience (Child Protection Working Group, 2012). Many humanitarian agencies have their own standards around child protection and therefore use the CPMS in conjunction with their own. For example, World Vision’s child protection standards include seeking to do no harm, acting in the best interest of the child and utilising opportunities to help children be safer in their families and communities (World Vision International, 2012).

The Lebanese legal framework states that children<sup>3</sup> working are allowed a maximum of six hours per day with a one-hour break; 13 hours of rest is required between two consecutive shifts; work is not permitted between 7pm and 7am, and a medical certificate is compulsory (Battistin, 2015).

Attempts to set standards for children engaged in CfW activities have been made through the Inter-Agency Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) for CfW in Lebanon. The minimum age for participation in projects was set at 18 years. Exceptions are made for children aged 16 and 17, providing the work is not a form of child labour, does not interfere with a child’s education or training, is not full-time, and is legal for children of that age (Inter-Agency Working Group-Livelihood Sector, 2014).

Cash for work has the potential to mitigate against child labour when projects engage caregivers in temporary employment. In Mar Elias refugee camp for Palestinians in Beirut, the IRC collaborated with a local community-based organisation to reduce protection risks for street and working children by engaging their parents and caregivers in CfW activities (Saliba, 2016). Doing so, the IRC notes, was a way to address economic deprivation and a lack of livelihood opportunities.

<sup>3</sup> The ILO notes that “According to the Lebanese labour code, the legal minimum working age is 13, provided that they are fully protected, instructed and trained. Different provisions apply for different ages between 13 and 17. For instance, children aged 13 years old are allowed to be engaged in ‘light work’, although the Lebanese law does not define the meaning of ‘light’” (Battistin, 2015: 13).

## KEY ACTIONS

1. Provide guidance and training to all staff and volunteers working in CfW programmes on child protection, including child labour, child trafficking, and awareness of systems for child protection referrals.
2. Coordinate with child protection colleagues to ensure children who require specialised support are identified and referred to appropriate supports systems or service providers.
3. Ensure households where children are at risk of/or already engaged in child labour are included in beneficiary selection criteria for CfW programmes.
4. Assess the types of CfW activities that can be undertaken by parents and caregivers of vulnerable children, including street and working children, and design the temporary employment projects with those who will be participating in them.
5. Undertake activities that complement CfW objectives by mitigating child labour and enhancing protection such as parent/caregiver support programmes, child protection awareness-raising sessions, cash for education, and dedicated case management.



Photo credit: Marc AJ

## Principle 4: Use Cash for Work as an investment

CfW can be an investment for many things, including improved community infrastructure, better public services, and increased social cohesion.

CfW can have a number of objectives. At its core, CfW is about short-term cash injections for beneficiaries participating in community-based projects that improve, rehabilitate, or maintain public infrastructure or services (Brainich and Knott, 2007). Therefore, any activities that fall under this category are relevant.

In urban areas, specialised skillsets are often required to do more skilled work. The challenge is to find activities that unskilled workers can comfortably do and find ways to improve their existing skills. Activities such as painting community buildings, picking up garbage, building walls, and cleaning or digging canals are more common in Lebanon.

Selecting a municipality and specific area in which to run a project is a challenge in urban areas due to absolute numbers of poverty and the sheer scale of need. Competition between municipalities was identified in research for this paper; some mayors felt certain municipalities with better connections and fewer refugees were targeted. However, most agencies said they targeted specific neighbourhoods based on infrastructure deficit; on the needs of the potential beneficiaries in a particular area; or through existing relationships with local government or institutions (such as schools). Municipalities interviewed said they wanted to be engaged in the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects, but that they were concerned they did not have the technical skills required. The times when pre-packed projects had been offered by NGOs, government interviewees reported them rejected.

The desire to improve social cohesion was often listed as a prioritised output for aid agencies and municipal authorities. Findings from this research suggest that tensions may be lowered when Lebanese see Syrians investing in their communities by cleaning and caring for the environment. The value in CfW comes not necessarily from Syrians and Lebanese working side-by-side, but rather through high visibility activities that invest in community well-being. One mayor said, “an uprising will happen here at some point. We need to see benefits from Syrians living in our community. Our goal is to lower tensions here and CfW can do that”. It is also worth noting that community tensions are not always between nationalities – they may sometimes be between sects.

While links between CfW and municipalities have traditionally been strong, up until recently the national government has been marginally engaged, if at all, in CfW projects. However, with donor pressure, UN agencies are reporting a greater willingness on behalf of ministries to engage. One NGO reported that dealing with the lack of clarity on the national government’s stance towards CfW was best done by working with a UN agency to undertake negotiations with the relevant ministries in order to receive clearance for the project to go ahead.

### KEY ACTIONS

1. When selecting a location for CfW, ensure a clear justification is communicated to the neighbourhood residents and municipality. Moreover, ensure the method of selecting is fair by using tools such as NRC’s urban mapping vulnerability assessment tool (UMVAT) for targeting guidance (Mohiddin and Smith, 2017).
2. Engage neighbourhood residents and municipal authorities to decide upon the specific outputs of the project (ie social cohesion, neighbourhood beautification, improvement of public infrastructure).
3. Consider who will oversee the technical design and execution of public infrastructure projects – the government, NGOs or other.
4. Clearly outline the role of each stakeholder including neighbourhood committees, the government, the implementing NGO, etc.

## Principle 5: Ensure health, safety and insurance for everyone participating in CfW

Protection from ill-health and injury prevention during participation in any CfW project is essential.

With Lebanon's health services already overstretched and a lack of financial resources available within refugee families, it is imperative that projects maintain more than the minimum standard for health and safety to avoid the additional economic burden that could come from injury or ill-health.

In urban areas, health and safety concerns within CfW projects include exposure to air and noise pollution from vehicles and industry, risk of traffic-related injuries, and heat stress due to the impacts of climate change in what are often hotter, less permeable environments, and ensuring access to safe drinking water.

Risk mitigation within CfW projects can take place in several ways. First, insurance must be offered to those who participate in projects. Aid agencies interviewed for this research indicated that coverage in their projects varied from some coverage to no coverage. Agencies that did provide coverage selected a local insurance provider. Most opted to work with the company that provides insurance to the organisation's staff. The SoPs for CfW in Lebanon (Inter-Agency Working Group-Livelihood Sector, 2014) note that insurance policies can be collective, non-individual schemes that cover only work-related accidents with fees determined based on number of participants and amount of payment.

The SoPs give an example of one organisation that paid USD 1,400 for 60 workers (approximately USD 23 per person) and that of a larger organisation which paid USD4,000 for 400 participants. Rates vary for skilled and unskilled workers. With insurance, aid agencies were not always clear whose responsibility it was for coverage; needless to say, agencies engaged in CfW projects must either cover insurance costs themselves or facilitate adequate coverage from private sector companies.

Second, personal protection and specialised safety equipment must be provided to ensure good health and prevent injury. In urban areas of Lebanon, there is ease of access to personal protective gear such as gloves, boots, reflective vests, overalls and masks.

Third, training in first aid and health and safety could also be provided. This ensures that participants learn new skills that can be applied in the project, as well as in other places in their lives. The Inter-Agency CfW SoPs note that in order to avoid duplication, training on health and safety could be standardised around things like "contact with chemicals, use of dangerous tools, noise at work, contagion of communicable diseases and infection through contact with infected persons or materials" (2014: 13).

### KEY ACTIONS

1. Begin every CfW project knowing who will provide insurance and the cost of doing so.
2. Ensure the correct type of personal protective gear and specialised protection is budgeted for.
3. Work with key stakeholders to determine how assets such as protective gear will be accounted for.
4. Integrate standardised health and safety and first aid training into CfW activities.

## Principle 6: Conduct analysis of the informal labour market

### Is CfW the best option when other cash transfer programming modalities exist?

In urban areas where markets are working, an understanding of the labour market is especially important in order to understand if CfW is indeed the most appropriate and relevant form of cash transfer programming assistance. This research found no analysis that focused solely on informal labour by Syrians in Lebanon. There are assessments of labour conditions,<sup>4</sup> but none focus specifically on understanding the labour supply gaps in niche and often informal areas where Syrians are permitted to work, such as agriculture, construction, and services. Knowing more about the informal labour market could help design better CfW projects that link to a wider variety of jobs valued in the labour market and help ensure projects are designed in ways that benefit current and future market opportunities in Lebanon and Syria.

A report by ACTED (2014) found that 65 per cent of Syrians surveyed relied on word-of-mouth to find jobs; 27 per cent waited in the street or asked people in their community for job opportunities. The same study found that the majority of businesses hire Syrians based on referrals from friends or family or by word-of-mouth. These findings demonstrate that Syrians without social ties or connections may find employment opportunities difficult to come by. It is these families that can benefit from CfW projects.

When designing CfW projects, ensure compensation schemes do no harm. Having a common country-wide rate can be problematic as the costs of labour are different in Bekaa or Akkar in comparison to Mount Lebanon or Beirut, for example. While the Lebanon CfW SOPs were never formalised, and according to key informant interviews now require updating, there was an attempt to articulate CfW rates. The documents recommend a daily compensation rate of USD 15-20 for low-skilled work and USD 25 for skilled work. The SOPs emphasise that the rate must not compete with current labour wages, which are to be reassessed regularly.

Compensation rates must be set taking into consideration the following: the cost of meeting essential needs; the SMEB established by the Cash Working Group for Syrian refugees and related unconditional cash assistance grants; the poverty line set by the GoL and the World Bank in the National Poverty Targeting Programme (NPTP); and the proportion of SMEB that households cover with their own resources or support from aid. Additionally, compensation rates also need to take into account rates within the formal labour market and Lebanese regulations. The CfW SOPs recommend adjusting rates based on the casual labour wages in the agricultural or construction sector, as well as the minimum wage in Lebanon for similar types of work to those envisioned in the project in order to avoid attracting people from other streams of work.

### KEY ACTIONS

1. Assess if CfW is the best form of cash transfer programming in the neighbourhoods where assistance is needed.
2. Set the daily rate based upon casual labour rates in a particular location in addition to the cost of meeting daily needs, the SMEB, and other cash assistance available.
3. Consider developing links to livelihoods and other sustainable programming through CfW or other complementary activities.
4. Develop an advocacy strategy to influence and enable Syrians greater access to the employment market.

<sup>4</sup> Assessments of labour conditions include Battistin, 2015: 13; and a number of more recent labour market assessments, such as ACTED, 2013; Jaoude, 2015; and Errighi and Griesse, 2016.

## Principle 7: Link cash for work to private sector job creation

### Work with the best-placed employers to achieve local investments.

Projects that partner with the private sector in urban areas, such as the construction of large-scale, sustainable infrastructure, meet urban development objectives within municipalities and link to national ministerial plans (as described above in the Context section on Government priorities). In the LCRP (2017), it is noted that the government is seeking employment opportunities through local investments in labour-intensive sectors, and that partnerships with the private sector are encouraged to enable job creation. Through the CfW methodology there is potential for aid agencies to support the government's agenda in five areas, as follows:

The first is through training the private sector on CfW methodologies in order to help the sector identify where aspects of the methodology could be of advantage to its profit margins or bring in similar results. Training in labour standards, procurement processes, and due diligence activities could also be valuable as an addition to traditional CfW programming.

The second is the opportunity to engage neighbourhoods and civil society groups in ways that reflect genuine participation and inclusiveness. Work with the municipality to conduct urban needs assessments and profiling in order to target the most vulnerable groups in the most vulnerable areas. Assist municipalities and the private sector to use urban participatory tools to engage residents in the project design process. Engage neighbourhoods in bottom-up communication processes whereby groups select the communications channels appropriate to them, ie social media pages, school or community signboards, radio, etc. In addition to engaging neighbourhood leaders, ensure refugee leadership is represented.

The third is by facilitating decent work conditions. For example, ensure that all projects provide insurance and meet health and safety standards. Work with the private sector to establish processes and/or conditions that meet Lebanese labour standards and laws, including around issues such as pay and number of hours worked. Cases of engaging the private sector in urban areas were difficult to come by and thus key informants generalised their learning from other contexts with the potential to apply it to Lebanon.

The fourth is the technical support NGOs can bring to complement large infrastructure projects. Mayors interviewed for this research highlighted that they did not have the technical capacity or human resources available to develop environmental, social or economic impact studies. Such studies were requested in order to support future urban development and planning works in addition to the current project at hand.

The fifth opportunity to engage with the private sector is to ensure the design of project plans links to good urban design and planning principles as well as the municipality's urban development plan (if one exists). The Ministry of Planning was recently formed; an aid agency with an understanding of national policies that could make those connections would be of great benefit to a municipality.

### KEY ACTIONS

1. Work with the private sector from the outset. The first step may be to develop a business plan for engaging in CfW activities.
2. When designing CfW projects with the private sector, consider including training in labour standards, procurement processes, and due diligence activities.
3. Work with the municipality, private sector, the Inter-Agency Livelihoods Working Group and, if relevant, the Cash Working Group, to establish acceptable levels of pay.
4. Hire technical staff who can conduct impact studies in order to inform CfW project design and other future projects developed by the municipality.
5. Ensure good practices in urban design and planning are reflected in the CfW project, such as inclusiveness, safety, and disaster resilience.

## Principle 8: Guard against corruption

Monitor and evaluate in close collaboration with municipalities, the private sector, and neighbourhood residents.

Corruption was a large concern expressed by mayors and aid agencies engaging with CfW in urban environments. Agencies tolerating or engaging in any level of corruption within their programmes become part of the cycle of corruption themselves. Key informants were most concerned about corruption within project identification, beneficiary selection, and implementation.

Beneficiary selection methods, in particular the outdated lists of Lebanese families provided by the National Poverty Targeting Programme, must be updated using sound methodologies. Key informants from within government and aid agencies cited listing friends and family of local authorities as a common form of corruption. Additionally, participants sometimes claimed to work days they did not show up for. In regards to implementation, concerns were expressed over loss of assets (such as purchasing 100 shovels, but only recording receiving 80). In terms of payment practices, one NGO reported the need to monitor payments, noting that Syrian refugees were sometimes receiving less than the agreed amount.

A number of activities can be put in place to counter corruption. These include having a clear contract that outlines roles and responsibilities of the municipality, the aid agency, the private sector contractor, and CfW participants. Actor and power mapping the city was suggested by one agency as a way of knowing who has influence in order to determine the best ways to negotiate and communicate with different stakeholders.

Frequent monitoring was also highly recommended – monitor payments, job attendance, the quality of the work, regularly view bank statements, conduct spot checks, and hold weekly meetings with stakeholders to check in and share information. Mayors in particular requested assistance with auditing projects carried out by the municipality and private sector, and stated that NGO evaluation criteria or a third party audit would help curb corruption.

To improve implementation, it was recommended that technical experts are hired to conduct technical research and provide evidence of what needs to be done in order to monitor the direction of the project when key technical decisions need to be made. Many key informants felt that the modalities of payment – the One Card,<sup>5</sup> ATM cards, or cash in hand should be decided upon, based on the profile of the participant and their ability to process various forms of payment. For example, the One Card works for registered refugees but unregistered refugees would find an ATM card a more appropriate form of payment.

In order to meet accountability standards, aid agencies recommended developing communication strategies at project milestones / when key achievements take place, using the many channels of communication available in urban environments – adverts on the sides of buses or at bus stops, leaflets, radio, social media, and billboards were some of the channels listed.

### KEY ACTIONS

1. In conjunction with neighbourhood residents, municipalities, and the private sector, decide upon and clearly communicate inclusion / exclusion criteria for CfW projects. Use a range of communication channels to reach different audiences.
2. Assess possible payment modalities and then prioritise the one that best suits the demographics of the CfW participants.
3. With project stakeholders (neighbourhood residents, municipalities and the private sector) discuss and agree upon actions that will be taken if corruption is identified. Decide upon consequences for common forms of corruption ahead of time.
4. Communicate project milestones / key achievements to the host community where the project is taking place.

<sup>5</sup> The One Card is 'a single electronic card with a POS and an ATM wallet' ... that "allows beneficiaries to receive food assistance using POS terminals at selected retailers, as well as cash assistance through ATM cards. The OneCard works through a platform made available by the Banque Lebanese Française (BLF) and (is) managed by WFP, benefitting 8,500 refugee families" (Creti, 2015).

## Principle 9: Link cash for work to municipal and ministry strategies

Use development thinking to design, or at the very least, link humanitarian projects to livelihoods interventions in order to build sustainable and resilient people and neighbourhoods.

Investment in CfW provides a greater chance of ensuring decent working conditions and limiting abuse and exploitation. It is imperative that alongside job creation opportunities, donors invest in monitoring and enforcing labour standards. After the London Donor Conference in February 2016, the LHIF made a recommendation to “Expand decent employment opportunities for refugees and Lebanese alike, through investments in labour intensive public infrastructure programmes that are linked to ministry and municipal strategies and through investment in monitoring working conditions and limiting abuse and exploitation” (2016: 1). The LHIF consortium recommends investment specifically in agricultural infrastructure and community assets alongside capacity building with multiple actors to achieve greater sustainability.

At the same conference, the GoL issued a statement of intent outlining, among other things, its ambition to create 180,000 to 210,000 jobs for Syrians through investments in municipalities, a subsidised temporary employment programme (STEP), trade, and infrastructure development (Ibid, 2016). The GoL is also working with the World Bank to design a STEP to assist with job creation in labour-intensive sectors and support infrastructure needs (Government of Lebanon, 2016b; Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF), 2016).

While reporting on its CfW activities, the NGO Action Against Hunger (ACF) described its activities in southern Lebanon as being “in line with the 2015-16 Lebanon Crisis Response Plan” with its objective to “reduce negative coping mechanisms... (by Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese households)... and reinforce the local capacity to deliver community services through municipalities involved in the project, ultimately diminishing the pressure on local infrastructures” (ACF Lebanon, 2016). Municipalities were selected based on the number of Syrian refugees present, the number of vulnerable host families, the capacity of the local infrastructure to service the influx of people, and the authorities’ ability and willingness to monitor CfW activities. The municipalities designed the activities to be implemented, including cleaning public areas, gardens, parks, beaches and seasonal tourist areas such as Tyre city, as well as the maintenance and protection of archaeological sites through cleaning activities. ACF Lebanon took on the role of compliance by ensuring alignment of CfW with legal requirements and good practice guidelines.

With all the momentum and support for livelihoods interventions after the London Conference, it remains of great concern that the livelihood and social stability sectors are seven per cent and six per cent funded, respectively (Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon, 2016). The livelihoods sector is the second most underfunded after the social stability sector, which is a worry in dense urban areas where reducing social tensions has been reported a priority by most government and aid agency key informants.

Finally, better financial and programmatic coordination is needed between humanitarian, development, and municipal actors to ensure support to the most vulnerable. CfW is a useful humanitarian response modality for providing access to rapid cash, but it is not a long-term solution to protracted crisis response. Development programming must be carried out where possible to develop sustainable livelihoods and communities through skill-building and infrastructure investment. Moreover, development programming must also build individual and community resilience by increasing social cohesion, conducting peace-building, and reducing disaster risk in as many sectoral activities as appropriate.

### KEY ACTIONS

1. Be familiar with the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan and look for ways CfW activities can support the plan, especially in regards to livelihoods and social cohesion activities.
2. Work with municipalities to support local agendas of improving infrastructure, public services, and social cohesion.
3. Look for ways to link development programming to CfW activities in order to promote sustainability and build urban resilience.

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Knowledge  
Products

# Toolkit

June 2017

## Urban

*Keywords:*

stronger cities, urban crises, disaster,  
Lebanon, cash for work

Humanitarian crises in cities require responses that reflect the urban context, address urban challenges, and provide urbanised solutions. This paper focuses on providing guidance on good practice in cash for work (CfW) programmes. Focusing on Lebanon and the Syrian refugee crisis, the paper provides nine principles for better programming outcomes. The principles include issues such as addressing fear of movement within cities, prevention of child labour, guarding against corruption, the need to insure project participants, and the importance of linking CfW to municipal and ministry strategies. The nine principles are preceded by a discussion on the context of Lebanon, with a focus on the effects of the Syrian crisis on the Lebanese labour market, the key sectors absorbing the Syrian workforce, the government of Lebanon's priorities within the response, and relevant laws and policies that impact humanitarian programming in Lebanon.

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