



**UNHCR**  
**Cash Transfer Programmes Working Group**  
**Inter-Agency Market Monitoring System**

Facilitation Report and Recommendations  
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## Acronyms

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
CAS	Lebanon Central Administration for Statistics
CPI	Consumer price index
CTP	Cash transfer programmes
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LOE	Level of effort
MMS	Market monitoring system
MEB	Minimum expenditure basket
MOET	Lebanon Ministry of Economy and Trade
NFI	Non-food item
PDM	Post-distribution monitoring
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
STC	Save the Children
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Health
WFP	World Food Programme

## Introduction

The UNHCR engaged the Consultants for technical assistance in developing an inter-agency market monitoring system (MMS) to facilitate a national assessment of cash transfer programmes (CTP) within Lebanon. The request for assistance followed consensus among the International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) members of the CTP working group on the need for price tracking of a representative minimum expenditure basket (MEB) faced by Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Lebanese host communities. Furthermore, the CTP working group sought the input of external technical experts to ensure impartial evaluation and assistance, thereby improving the chances for commitment from all participating organisations.

The UNHCR does not conduct any market monitoring activities directly, and so instead depends upon data inputs from CTP working group members, several of whom have already developed their own price monitoring criteria and methodology. The MMS—and MEB price tracking in particular—is intended to provide a uniform data stream and database of timely market information to facilitate (and harmonize) programming, programme development, monitoring, reporting, advocacy and resource mobilization.

The Consultants were engaged for a total combined level of effort (LOE) of 6 days. The core deliverable of the consultancy was a one-day workshop to achieve consensus among CTP working group members on the MMS. According to the terms of reference for the consultancy, the expected outputs were:

- *Contents of MEB* (quantity and quality of items to be monitored, baseline cost of each item);
- *Preferred methodology* (minimum sample size and geographic distribution, frequency of data collection, format of monitoring tools);
- *Framework for the inter-agency database* (including scope and guidelines for data compilation, manipulation and analysis).

Additionally, given the market monitoring structures already in place at certain member organisations, a key assumption for the Consultants was that the inter-agency MMS would build on already existing monitoring systems, which in turn required:

- *Assessment of existing capacity* (existing data sets, different programme mandates, available financial and labor resources, and geographical presence);
- *Verification of intent to participate*, and that existing resources and tools could support proposed MEB tracking and MMS.

Finally, although MEB price monitoring was the initial focus of this consultancy, it was clear from the terms of reference and early discussions with the UNHCR that the expectations for a harmonized MMS went beyond simple consumer price tracking. Rather, the CTP working group hopes to develop an “evidence base that can guide programme direction.” As such, the MMS would ideally include farther-reaching market information on the available supply of MEB items, as well as signal market disruptions at a local, regional or national level. Such a tool could provide the international community in Lebanon, the Government of Lebanon and other international actors a broader knowledge base on the market effects of cash programming. Nationally-distributed, longitudinal price data from points of sale can richly inform debates on isolating inflationary effects from idiosyncratic relative price movements, as well as provide a solid empirical basis for assessing the required value of cash assistance and other key elements of programme design.

## Summary of Recommendations

Given the findings and challenges outlined below, the Consultants recommend that any further steps toward the creation of a national, coordinated market monitoring system for Lebanon be based on a clear-eyed assessment of the resource constraints and institutional challenges facing both the UNHCR and its partner organizations.

Despite widespread enthusiasm among CTP working group members to establish a robust monitoring system for markets and commodity prices potentially impacted by humanitarian cash assistance, it is the technical opinion of the Consultants that the full objectives of the CTP working group members go beyond what can reasonably be expected of MEB price monitoring. Pursuing all the objectives would require data collection through additional surveys, as well as a concerted effort to appropriately analyze and contextualize any such future data streams. However, some CTP working group members have expressed frustration at the number of reports their staff is currently required to submit to coordinating agencies, and any further complex or onerous reporting burdens may be difficult to enforce.

As a result of these issues, the development of a fully coordinated system will need to advance in stages—and may never meet the full expectations of the CTP working group if appropriate manpower and/or funding are not assigned to it. The proposed stages of resource mobilization (elaborated on page 10-11 below) are:

- **Stage 1:** Exploiting existing resources and data streams to provide data on a simplified minimum expenditure basket, revised according to available recent survey data on consumption patterns. Methodology will not be completely standardized, requiring UNHCR to discount and carefully revise its data in order to produce meaningful analysis.
- **Stage 2:** Development of uniform data sampling methodologies and alternative techniques; coordinated distribution of sampling. Expanded MEB including other commodities related to cash transfers (i.e. NFIs). Enhanced quality control and reachback support to investigate potential market disruptions.
- **Stage 3:** Expanded capacity to understand complex market effects beyond food and NFIs, as well as revise vulnerability criteria and evaluate competing cash assistance modalities. This will allow for highest quality assurance of data, as well as revisions to uniform methodologies to appropriately adapt to changing environment and consumption patterns.

Finally, in order to accurately gauge potential resource mobilization, and establish the preferred course of action for the CTP working group, the Consultants recommend a series of 8 next steps for the UNHCR and its partners (elaborated on page 11 below). These next steps will finalize a concrete MEB that can be adopted in the short-term, as well as a future strategy for the development of the MMS according to a consensus hierarchy of priority objectives.

## Activities Conducted

### *Analysis of Existing Data*

Following an initial request for existing MEB and other price tracking data from CTP working group members, UNHCR provided the Consultants with datasets and data collection templates from workshop members. Of the 16 INGOs invited to attend the workshop, three (IRC, DRC, STC) provided datasets from current price monitoring; Handicap International provided data collection templates; while the World Food Programme (WFP) provided a March 2013 assessment report of price monitoring tied to its food voucher programme.

Some key observations from the initial analysis:

- While there was some overlap in the existing price baskets, *only six items* could be directly compared between Danish Refugee Council (DRC) / Save the Children (STC) data and WFP data. In these cases, there appeared to be major price discrepancies between the DRC numbers and WFP numbers in the same geographic region (Akkar).
- Sample sizes and geographic distribution of sampling varies widely. As INGOs' self-evaluations note, there are serious risks of sampling errors due to flaws in current methodology (e.g. overt evaluation of food voucher partner shops, or training of mystery shoppers).
- Other key discrepancies that must be resolved include: recording price action of food vs. non-food items (NFIs); evaluating prices faced by Lebanese hosts as well as refugee populations; evaluating food voucher partner shops versus non-partner shops used by cash recipients.
- There appeared to be numerous quality control issues in the individual raw data as a result of human error in the data collection and analysis (e.g. errant zeroes, formula errors that inflate cost of living), as well as red flags that suggest sampling errors (e.g. suspiciously uniform and/or suspiciously round numbers; unlikely trends—in particular, limited or no price differentials between refugees and host population).
- All the INGOs appeared to have data from value chain analysis, shop surveys, post distribution monitoring (PDM) and other M&E activities not presented to the Consultant. However, such survey work would contain important insights for shaping a MEB that more accurately reflects consumption patterns of cash/voucher recipients, as well as better inform the geographic distribution of sampling.

### *Workshop*

The core output of the consultancy was a one day workshop for the CTP working group, with the key objective of building consensus for a jointly-agreed MEB, and a mechanism for the timely provision of market monitoring data under a harmonized methodology.

In anticipation of the workshop, the Consultants designed a comprehensive agenda based on supplied background information and data, as well as preparatory interviews with the UNHCR project coordinator to clarify workshop objectives and desired outcomes. The workshop design followed meeting facilitation best practices to ensure that desired outcomes could be achieved in the available meeting time, and included the preparation of workshop materials and handouts to facilitate discussion (*see Appendix I for workshop agenda*).

During the workshop itself, the Consultants provided facilitation services to ensure productive and efficient use of meeting time, clear documentation of decisions and agreements reached, and follow-through on identified ‘next steps’ and other meeting outcomes. The Consultants used a variety of techniques—including presentations, open group discussion and structured group tasks—in order to facilitate group dialogue and consensus building.

Before discussing and resolving specific methodological issues related to the MEB and MMS, the Consultants presented relevant technical background information on consumer price index (CPI) design and market survey best practices—tailored to the Lebanese context. *(The presentation is submitted as an attachment to this report.)*

Finally, using results from group discussion and structured tasks, the Consultants created record of outcomes to capture areas of agreement, including decisions and conclusions reached, and next steps. The following chart shows those points of consensus and related next steps for each methodological issue treated in the agenda:

	Points of Consensus	Follow Up Steps
<b>MEB</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Organisations to submit “menu” of raw data to help UNHCR understand what data is available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Organisations to receive instruction.</li> <li>&gt; Organisations to submit data menu.</li> </ul>
<b>Data Sampling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Important elements for harmonization.</li> <li>&gt; Profiles of orgs are needed to understand capacity, resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Proposed MEB methodology should cater to majority of org. needs.</li> <li>&gt; UNHCR to send profile, org to check and complete.</li> </ul>
<b>Data Sharing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Any proposed MEB tool must be simple.</li> <li>&gt; Nominated POC responsible for data submissions, follow up UNHCR request.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Proposed MEB methodology should recognize capacity constraints.</li> <li>&gt; POC respond to requests.</li> </ul>
<b>Quality Control</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Centralization of data at UNHCR.</li> <li>&gt; Raw data must be transparent and accessible to all orgs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Current data menus to be examined.</li> <li>&gt; Possible standardization of existing data collection.</li> </ul>

### *Organisational Profiling*

The initial data analysis suggested that CTP working group members are in possession of significant data from multiple refugee/host community profiling, PDM and other M&E activities. Following the outcomes of the June 27 workshop, during which it was confirmed that several organisations were indeed in possession of a wealth of information on expenditure patterns and consumption habits, the Consultants undertook to compile profiles of each organisation—in particular, the “data menus” available for submission to UNHCR, as well as resources (manpower, financial, etc.) that could be shared/pooled for the benefit of the working group and a future MMS.

The Consultants assembled draft profiles based on submission from structured group activities conducted during the workshop, and submitted these drafts to the nominated POC at each organisation, asking for revisions where necessary and approval to submit the information to the working group members (see *Appendix II for POCs and Appendix V for final profiles*).

The Consultants also conducted one-on-one meetings with each CTP working group member organisation in order to more closely assess the recorded outcomes from the June 27 workshop, and to answer outstanding questions about the organisation's activities and available resources for the MMS. Resulting information from these meetings was included in the final profiles attached to this report, and were used to supplement the findings, challenges and next steps outlined below.

### *Stakeholder Mapping*

The Consultants also reached out to several third-party organisations that could potentially participate in a future MMS, on either the data collection or analysis side. In particular, the Consultants facilitated a meeting between the World Bank regional office and the UNHCR project coordinator, during which initial discussions were held about how the World Bank technical staff could support the analysis of data generated by CTP working group members—and thus potentially supplement the efforts of UNHCR in-house staff in the future.

Additionally, the Consultants have sought to contact the Ministry of Economy and Trade's (MOET's) Technical Office for Pricing Policies, which currently produces the only publicly available source of relevant price data now that the Central Administration for Statistics (CAS) stopped releasing national CPI data in early 2013. Access to the raw data from the MOET's monthly supermarket price index could serve as a useful baseline for any future MEB price action analysis. This data would provide not only an alternative set of price points—to compare to what member organisations are observing on their own—but could also be studied separately to show longitudinal price action of individual MEB contents, seasonal price action of certain produce, as well as long term inflationary trends at the retail level.

### *Analysis of WFP VASyR Report*

Finally, following concerns raised during the June 27 workshop about the accuracy of the proposed food content of the MEB—how closely it tracks actual consumption patterns of refugees, and whether it appropriately reflects expenditure shares—the Consultant conducted an analysis of the WFP's VASyR preliminary survey results released on June 19, 2013. This analysis included comparing the data it contains on food share expenditure (slide 24) and food consumption patterns (slide 29), with existing price tracking by the MOET and the WFP's own price monitoring. The result was a preliminary MEB that is tied to both the consumption trend data and the existing MOET baseline data (*see Appendix III for details of the analysis; see especially "Ranked MEB with MOET and WFP Data Overlap"*).

However, given the preliminary nature of the WFP analysis, there are a number of technical questions that should be resolved before the resulting MEB can be proposed to the CTP working group. Again, as noted above, it is possible that the raw data from MOET may provide valuable insights that go beyond what is published by them on the Internet.



## Findings

The June 27 workshop and the individual follow up meetings confirmed the widespread willingness to develop a MMS, centered around MEB price monitoring. CTP working group members reached consensus on four basic MMS objectives. In essence, they hoped the MMS would allow organisations to better understand:

- (1) **How much assistance** to provide, especially regarding differences in demography and geography (regional economies; concentration of refugee population; refugees versus host communities; shifting preferences over time due to seasonality or other factors).
- (2) **To whom** cash assistance should be provided; i.e. identify the most vulnerable population groups in terms of total income, household diet diversity, etc.
- (3) **Potential effects** on specific market structures such as value chains and distribution networks, and to determine impact of cash assistance on market prices and isolate causes of change.
- (4) **How best to give** cash assistance: measuring the relative impact and potential downsides of a particular modality (voucher, in-kind, cash, etc.). In this case in particular, members were eager to have a MMS that would validate programming decisions or inform program design.

The workshop also yielded a detailed list of specific goals under each of the corresponding four primary objectives (see *Appendix IV*). While it is true that nearly all organisations cited the importance of monitoring price action in order to determine whether food voucher or non-conditional cash transfers are having a negative impact on Lebanese markets, *it is critical to note that many CTP working group members downplayed the importance of this aspect of the MMS*. Rather, organisations were more focused on using the MMS to inform programme design (especially determining the appropriate value of proposed cash assistance), as well as ensure the alignment of all cash transfer programmes in Lebanon to avoid duplication or negative market effects associated with competing modalities. Others suggested that the MMS could be used to identify underserved geographic regions or population groups.

It is the technical opinion of the Consultants that the objectives of the CTP working group members listed above go beyond what can reasonably be expected of MEB price monitoring, and that pursuing these expanded objectives would require additional focus on data gathered through PDM or other surveys of benefit recipients—as well as a concerted effort by the UNHCR to appropriately analyze and contextualize any future data streams.

However, there was clear consensus among workshop participants to develop a price monitoring mechanism around a jointly-agreed MEB, as well as to adopt a joint methodology and/or adjust their own existing methodologies to accommodate such an effort. As noted earlier, several organisations have already begun some form of price monitoring, and are eager to internalize lessons learned from across the CTP working group. The WFP and its partner organisations in particular have stressed their desire to move towards a more statistically significant and dynamic form of price monitoring.

Finally, among the key lessons learned shared during the workshop, perhaps most important for the future sustainability of any MMS is the near universal lack of analytical capacity among working group members. Although many organisations have HQ backstopping and detailed manuals and/or guidelines for their reporting efforts, very few at work in Lebanon today have dedicated staff with the appropriate technical backgrounds in country. Every organisation now tracking price data or conducting significant field surveys bemoaned their lack of analytical capacity—and perhaps more than further guidance on best practices and a shared methodology, are looking for assistance in putting their data sets to good use.

## Challenges

The Consultants have identified the following impediments to the successful development of the MMS:

### CONSENSUS

**Conflicting priorities between organisations.** Each working group member has esoteric institutional needs related to their specific programme designs. Despite professed willingness to participate in a joint MMS, there are no guarantees that all members will continue to participate in the system if they feel their own main goals are not being met. This concern was highlighted in follow up meetings by organisations that are looking to track NFIs, as well as activity in other programme areas (WASH, shelter, etc.). Somewhat ironically, those organisations with the most data and resources to offer will also have the fewest incentives to accommodate the joint activities of the MMS.

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### COORDINATION

**Uncertainty over existing data universe.** Although the submission of “data menus” in the attached organisational profiles is an important first step, the UNHCR will need to request and analyze the existing datasets in order to better inform the design of the MEB and its associated sampling methodology. It also remains to be seen how willing and able members will be to provide their underlying data in a timely manner.

**Rapid change creates many moving targets.** Although the potential surge in refugees over the next six months, is well anticipated, the organisational profiles also suggest a corresponding surge in staffing and programming. New staff, programmes, and reporting requirements will complicate coordination, communication and information management within each organisation, as well as across the CTP working group.

**Assessment and reporting fatigue.** INGO staff involved in previous price monitoring activities have warned that excessive M&E activities have put a strain on both field staff and refugee populations, and have asked that future templates and methodologies be as simple as possible—again, possibly frustrating those organisations who have high expectations for the MMS. Other organisations have expressed frustration at the number of reports their staff is required to submit to coordinating agencies, and any further onerous reporting burdens may be difficult to enforce.

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### CAPACITY

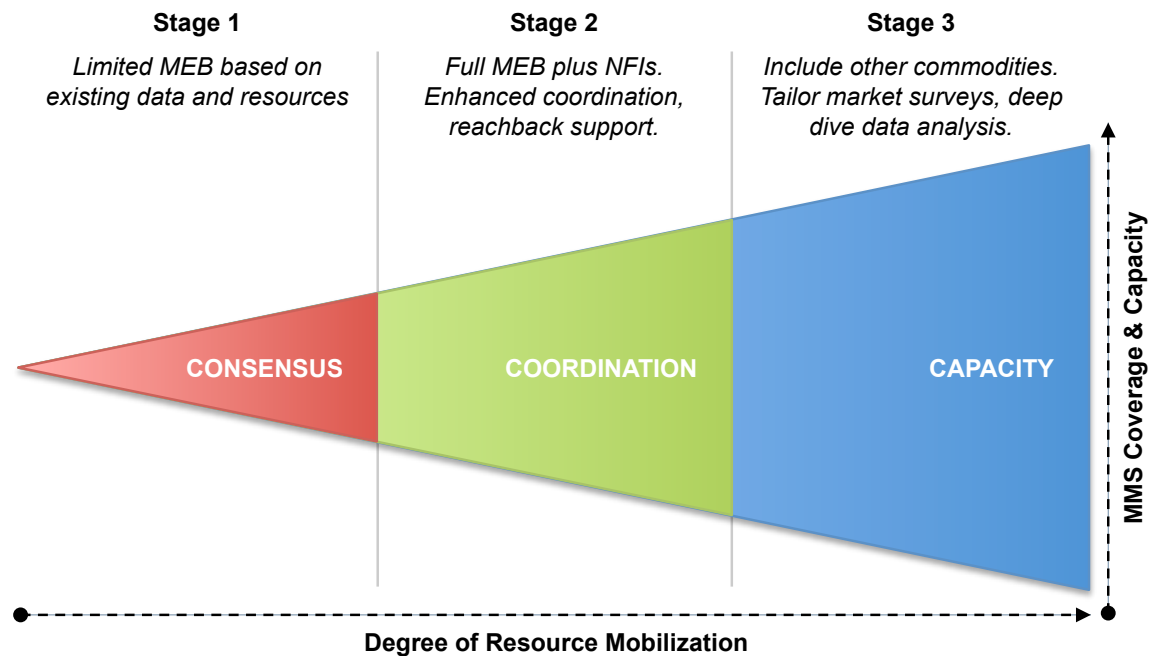
**Single points of failure in data collection and analysis.** High INGO turnover and limited UNHCR staffing creates opportunities for points of failure within the MMS. Geographic specialization, failure to submit data sets on time, limited resources for reachback to the field level, and loss of institutional knowledge could each disrupt the MMS.

**Geographic specific challenges.** The dispersion and composition of refugees across Lebanon differs by region. Likewise, as some CTP working group members confirmed, each governorate within Lebanon has its own cultural diversity, politics and local networks. An elaborated data collection methodology will need to account or compensate for these differences.

**Uneven resource distribution.** Following the final point above, there are limits to what some organisations are able to contribute to any group effort in terms of manpower and funding. Others have expressed unwillingness to subsidize the work of other organisations. This may breed resentment if a subset of organisations is seen as dominating the MMS; it may also frustrate efforts to pool financial resources to engage future contractors or facilitate training of field monitors.

## Recommendations

Given the findings and challenges identified above, the Consultants recommend the following structure for continued development of the MMS. Each of the three stages is intended to compensate for the challenge categories highlighted in white:



**Stage 1:** In order to compensate for the current lack of consensus on objectives, as well as the relatively scarce resources devoted to the MMS, it is recommended that any early step focus solely on price monitoring of a relatively simple MEB template—informed by the VASyR analysis contained within this report, ideally supplemented with deeper study of the data menus provided by member organisations. To every extent possible, the CTP working group should seek to exploit currently available resources (such as the MOET supermarket index and World Bank analytical bandwidth identified above).

Given the limited capacity of the UNHCR’s proposed data manager to act in a coordinating role, it is recommended that decisions on methodology (timing, location, modality) be devolved to member organisations (while trying to accommodate as many objectives highlighted in Appendix IV as possible). So long as the methodology employed is transparent to UNHCR data manager, he or she can adjust the final dataset according to explicit criteria (e.g. smoothing geographic distribution of sampling to correspond to relative distribution of cash assistance; or discarding data with higher risks of sampling errors) to produce more statistically valid analysis.

**Stage 2:** Given the commitment of appropriate funding and resources by working group members, it will be possible to coordinate the development of more uniform sampling methodologies, moving beyond a simple MEB to include other commodities (NFIs) based on close study of the “data menus” and any new PDMs or household surveys that provide more specific information on consumption patterns.

Uniform sampling could be achieved by the development and deployment of a smartphone-based survey sheet, such as those used by DRC or ACTED. More consideration could be given to sampling

methodology (i.e. direct surveys of shopkeepers versus mystery shopper exercises). More crucially, standardized training of field monitors and data collectors would ensure adherence to market survey best practices and contribute to the development of a truly national, coordinated market monitoring system.

Ideally, there would also be enhanced capacity within the UNHCR and member organisations for quality control and reachback support in data analysis, should the central data manager want to investigate any potential signals of price fluctuations or other market disruptions at a local, regional or national level. Coordination of this effort would require a liaison role, as well as close cooperation, between the UNHCR and member organisations. It may also involve the use of more complex, online data sharing—such as visualization tools and results mapping—again depending on funding.

**Stage 3:** While the exact degree of resource mobilization will determine the full coverage and capacity of any future MMS, it is possible to develop a system that can fully satisfy all the objectives highlighted in Appendix IV. Once better coordination mechanisms have been established in Stage 2, periodically revised methodologies can be dispersed to field monitoring teams, who in turn can be retrained to ensure data integrity. The ability of the MMS to respond and adapt to any changing environment or market developments will depend on the technical expertise and manpower assigned to the system (whether centrally or by member organisations). Reaching such a high level of resource mobilization, however, will be key consensus among working group members.

Additionally, increased funding and/or staffing will also make possible tailored studies of market effects, as well as open up other possible areas for research (such as rental market, electricity, transportation, telecommunications, etc.). Again, many of these aspirations may be satisfied by the work of individual member organisations (who will receive funding from donors to conduct particular surveys relevant to specific programme areas), but the ability of the MMS to gain access and properly utilize such data will, again, require careful and persistent coordination.

### *Next Steps*

Within the next 4-6 weeks, the UNHCR should:

- (1) Conduct assessment of in-house capacity to continue coordination role, as well as MMS information management and technical design;
- (2) Request submissions from data menus provided in the organizational profiles, and closely study any relevant information on consumption patterns;
- (3) Work with WFP VASyR data to clarify/develop MEB basket;
- (4) Liaise with MOET to gain access to supermarket index raw data; continue outreach to CRI, CAS, World Bank for relevant data and expertise;
- (5) Discuss and assess willingness of CTP working group members to collectively fund further MMS design, or otherwise commit resources;
- (6) Following recognized resource constraints, have CTP working group agree on hierarchy of priorities from Appendix IV and approve strategy outlined in this report;
- (7) Finalize MEB survey template according to agreed hierarchy of priorities, likely allowing lead organisations (WFP and its partners) to drive final decisions on MEB content and methodology;
- (8) Develop interim strategy on outstanding issues (e.g. possible move to stage 2 or 3 priorities) to reflect available resources and agreed priorities.

## Appendices

### I. June 27 Workshop Agenda

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Thursday June 27, 2013	
Time	Item
9:00 – 9:15 am	1. Welcome
9:15 – 9:30 am	2. Introductions
9:30 – 10:15 am	3. Inter-Agency Market Monitoring System: Overview and Objectives
10:15 am – 11:00 am	4. Key Themes
	- Consumer Price Index Design
	- Market Survey Best Practices
11:00 am – 11:20 am	Coffee break
11:20 – 12:30 pm	5. Existing Market Monitoring Situation
12:30 – 1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 – 4:30 pm (Break from 2:45-3:00)	6. Inter-Agency Market Monitoring System: Methodology
	- Minimum Expenditure Basket
	- Data Sampling Methodology
	- Quality Control & Analysis
4:30 – 4:45 pm	7. Review: Points of Consensus & Next steps
4:45 – 5:00 pm	8. Session Wrap up

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## II. MMS Organisations and Points of Contact

Organisation	Designated POC	Email	Mobile
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)	Rachel Routley	rachel.routley@drclebanon.dk	76028042
Action Contre La Faim (ACF)	Martina Iannizzotto	ctyre@lb.acfspain.org	76152765
International Rescue Committee (IRC)	Francesca Battistin	francesca.battistin@rescue.org	71374888
Save the Children	Isabelle Pelly	I.Pelly@savethechildren.org.uk	71906484
Makhzoumi Foundation	Dana Lahham	d.lahham@makhzoumi.org	03/711684
WorldVision	Mirdza Abele	Mirdza_Abele@worldvision.org.uk	71093764
Solidarite International	Thibault Notteghem	pm.outreach.tripoli@solidarites-liban.org	76043697
Handicap International	Cécile Barriere	eval.cash@hi-emergency.org	76887522
Oxfam	Loreto Palmaera	LPalmaera@oxfam.org.uk	70098773
UNHCR	Simone Holladay	holladay@unhcr.org	71910329
World Food Programme	Susana Moreno	susana.moreno@wfp.org	76320588
Norwegian Refugee Council	Carol Ward	carolemergency@gmail.com	+353 873291810
Mercy Corps	Victoria Stanski	vstanski@field.mercycorps.org	03/830074

### III. VASyR Analysis

*Food Share Expenditure vs Food Consumption Patterns*

Food Share	Share Expenditure	6-7 days/week	1-5 days/week	0 days/week
Bread, Pasta	22%	100%	0%	0%
Fresh Fruit	15%	4%	36%	60%
Dairy	11%			
Fresh Meat	9%	1%	58%	41%
Oil	9%			
Cereals	8%	14%	84%	2%
Tubers	6%	38%	59%	3%
Sugar	6%	91%	6%	3%
Canned Food	6%			
Pulses	4%	3%	80%	17%
Other Food	2%			
Cooked Food	2%			
<b>Food Consumption Items</b>				
Spice, Condiments		98%	2%	0%
Fats		89%	11%	1%
Other veg.		73%	25%	2%
Milk		71%	19%	11%
Eggs		37%	51%	12%
Green leafy veg.		2%	20%	78%
Vit. A veg		2%	19%	80%
Vit. A fruit		1%	12%	87%
Fish		1%	8%	92%
Organ meat		0%	3%	97%

*\* highlighted items show highest expenditure share and frequency of consumption*

#### Outstanding questions for WFP and/or CTP working group:

- (1) Whether to include fruit (which is a big part of the expenditure basket, but is eaten relatively infrequently)?
- (2) What constitutes "other veg." in consumption basket?
- (3) What are the components of "dairy" (3rd largest expenditure) vs. just milk?
- (4) What kind of meat are refugees buying (i.e. don't need to bother with imported)?
- (5) Need to standardize sizes and units (WFP tracks 400g Nido and 5L veg oil; MOET tracks 2.5kg of Nido and 3.5L of cooking oil).
- (6) Fresh meat will require visiting a butcher and/or supermarket, and is relatively infrequently eaten—likely not at all by the most vulnerable population—so should it be included at all?

Ranked MEB with MOET and WFP Data Overlap

Consumption Frequency Rank	Consumption by Most Vulnerable	Category	Item Tracked By MoET*	Tracked by WFP?
1	*	Bread, Pasta		Yes
3	*	Sugar	Sugar	Yes
4	*	Fats	Butter Lurpack	
4	*	Fats	Corn oil mazola	Yes?
5	*	Other veg.	Zucchini	
5	*	Other veg.	Eggplant	
5	*	Other veg.	Cabbage	
5	*	Other veg.	Green Beans (Lubieh)	
5	*	Other veg.	<i>Cucumber</i>	Yes
5	*	Other veg.	<i>Tomato</i>	Yes
6		Milk	Powered Milk - Nido	Yes
6		Milk	<i>Local Labneh</i>	
6		Milk	<i>Local Akkawi</i>	
7	*	Tubers	Potato	
7	*	Tubers	Carrots	
8		Eggs	Eggs	Yes
9	*	Cereals	Egyptian Rice	Yes
10		Pulses	White Beans	Yes
10		Pulses	Red Lentils	
11		Fresh Meat	<i>Beef meat</i>	
11		Fresh Meat	<i>Beef meat - mawzat</i>	
11		Fresh Meat	Boneless chicken breast	
11		Fresh Meat	Boneless lamb meat	
11		Fresh Meat	Chicken thighs with skin	
11		Fresh Meat	Lamb meat	

\* items in red could be excluded depending on clarification of WFP data.

**Other items tracked by MOET**, which are likely eaten by target population and should be added to MEB above, include: (1) tomato paste, (2) tahineh - al yaman brand, (3) local fruits [banana, red and yellow apples, lemons].

**Other items not tracked by MOET**, but likely should be included: (1) other pulses [ful, hummus], (2) bread, pasta, (3) canned foods, (4) other cereals.

**Other items tracked by WFP**, which should likely be preserved in MEB: (1) canned foods [beef, tuna], (2) processed cheese, (3) bulgur wheat, (4) spaghetti.



#### IV. Consensus on MMS Objectives

(1) Value of assistance	(2) Targeting criteria	(3) Market effects	(4) Preferred modality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Purchasing power by value (esp. relative to cost of cheapest nutritional daily diet).</li> <li>&gt; Purchasing power by geographic region.</li> <li>&gt; Purchasing power by point of sales type.</li> <li>&gt; Purchasing power by recipient/consumer (Syrian vs. Lebanese; length of time in country).</li> <li>&gt; Purchasing power by season (esp. Winter).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Vulnerability according to current income (incl. debt, existing assistance and casual labor rates, esp. for children).</li> <li>&gt; Consumption preferences relative to current income (ability to cook at home vs. dependence on prepared/canned foods).</li> <li>&gt; Coping strategies that distort food consumption (i.e. skipping meals) or incentivize negative effects of cash transfer (i.e. skipping hygiene products to afford food).</li> <li>&gt; Recurring revisions of “vulnerability” as refugee behaviors/situations change (i.e. savings depleted, illness, etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Price increases across the consumption basket, or in particular goods.</li> <li>&gt; Effect of price fluctuation on refugee consumption patterns.</li> <li>&gt; Geographic distribution of existing cash assistance across CTP working group, and/or impact of refugee inflows on local or regional price levels.</li> <li>&gt; Positive or negative externalities of cash assistance (job creation, distorting competition).</li> <li>&gt; Ability to follow up with observed trends, provide information to support determination of impact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Modality (voucher vs. cash) and value of assistance at points of sales (POS) to determine corresponding price differentials for comparison of price levels between food voucher partner shops and non-partner shops, and to identify general or specific differences in price levels.</li> <li>&gt; Effects of modality on consumption preferences or patterns.</li> </ul>

## V. Organisational Profiles

### Danish Refugee Council (DRC)

<b>Point of Contact</b>	Name	Rachel Routley
	Email	rachel.routley@drclebanon.dk
	Tel.	76028042
	Est. Departure?	unknown
<b>Program Description</b>	Program Areas	Food vouchers, food parcels and NFI distribution, targeted cash assistance (special needs fund and cash for rent), WASH, Protection, Livelihoods
	Geographic Presence	Tripoli+5, North Bekaa, Central West Bekaa, Akkar, South Lebanon
	# Families Targeted	Approx 300,000 on a monthly basis
	Approximate Value (USD) of Assistance	\$45 million Jan-June 2013
<b>Data Collection &amp; Monitoring</b>	Staff Available for Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 Lebanese data collectors</li> <li>• 25 Syrian data collectors</li> </ul>
	Data currently being collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prices of MEB commodities</li> <li>• Average expenditure per month <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value chain analysis</li> <li>• Shopkeeper interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PDM</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	Methods for collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Android app for data collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home visits</li> <li>• Direct polling</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<b>Available DATA MENU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline list of Syrian consumption patterns (from Syria?)</li> <li>• Initial price assessment of 100 shops across Akkar, Tripoli, East Bekaa, Central West.</li> <li>• Jan 2013 interviews of 150 families in Tripoli on expenditure habits: avg. \$800 per family</li> <li>• April 2013 value chain analysis of retail and wholesalers (33 in Akkar, 27 in Tripoli and ?? number in Bekaa) of partner &amp; non-</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shopkeeper interviews: what kind of goods are you selling, how vendor has changed his business since the crisis; does it effect price competition.</li> <li>• May 2013 PDM monitoring of several hundred families to see how they're using vouchers.</li> <li>• Poll of 1200 families in Tripoli about a cash for rent program.</li> </ul>
Planned expansion?	(i.e. future plans to increase M&E or data collection staff, as well as geographic presence)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M&amp;E consultant in the process of being hired. Estimated arrival mid August.</li> <li>• Information Management Expert also being hired. Estimated arrival 01 August. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Database management team being strengthened. (One additional Officer).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Action Contre la Faim (ACF)

Point of Contact	Name	Martina Iannizzotto
	Email	ctyre@lb.acfspain.org
	Tel.	76152765
Program Description	Est. Departure?	Indefinite – plans for next 2 years
	Program Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency assistance on WASH</li> <li>• Food vouchers</li> </ul>
	Geographic Presence	Tyre/Sour, Nabatieh, Marjayoun, BintJbeil, Hasbaya/Shebaa
	# Families Targeted	About 7,000
	Approximate Value (USD) of Assistance	Over 5 million since late 2013
Data Collection & Monitoring	Staff Available for Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 (part-time) field monitor officers</li> <li>• staff for data entry</li> </ul>
	Data currently being collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WFP price lists</li> </ul>

Methods for collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Twice monthly shopkeeper interviews</li> </ul>
<b>Available DATA MENU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Price survey of 20 shops across geographic areas (how many months of data?).</li> </ul>
Planned expansion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food voucher / e-voucher for monitoring purposes.</li> <li>Introduce cash for work in Sour/Tyre (which will also generate data).</li> <li>Expanding data collection and M&amp;E staff. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nutrition survey</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Point of Contact	Name	Francesca Battistin
	Email	francesca.battistin@rescue.org
	Tel.	71374888
	Est. Departure?	Certainly with IRC until 31 <sup>st</sup> October
Program Description	Program Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unconditional cash assistance</li> <li>Livelihoods promotion (vocational training under current grant)</li> </ul>
	Geographic Presence	Akkar (11 villages: Bireh, Bebnine / Abde, Berquayel, Bourj Al Arab, Halba, Jdaydet Al Kayteh, Machha, Tal Hayat, Tleil, Wadi Al Jamous, Quarquaf)
	# Families Targeted	1150 (700 Syrian refugees and 450 Lebanese households)
	Approximate Value (USD) of Assistance	1,100,000 USD
	Staff Available for Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 field assistants (who select "mystery shoppers")</li> <li>2 project officers who organize and monitor data collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 data entry officer</li> </ul> </li> <li>Coordinator who provides supporting analysis</li> </ul>
1,100 Data Collection & Monitoring	Data currently being collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MEB food and non-food prices across three villages in Akkar (Berqayel, Halba, Abde) chosen on the basis of consumer surveys. Three fixed combinations of shops in each village (not all the basket can be purchased in the same shops; some items are purchased from shops selling vegetables and fruit)</li> <li>Post Distribution Monitoring on a monthly basis, on a randomly</li> </ul>

	selected sample corresponding to around 12% of the caseload
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vulnerability assessment of Lebanese households</li> </ul>
Methods for collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mystery shoppers (Lebanese and Syrians) on a monthly basis; IRC gives them a list and money; they get to keep the items</li> </ul>
<b>Available DATA MENU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 months of price data from MEB surveys (from February, which is the baseline, to June)</li> <li>Monthly PDM collecting data on income and expenditure structures and amounts (among other things)</li> <li>Vulnerability assessment for 715 Lebanese households, collecting data on income and expenditure structures and amounts (among other things)</li> </ul>
Planned expansion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sr. M&amp;E Officer being hired</li> <li>Geographic presence may be expanded to the Bekaa</li> <li>Increased focus on livelihoods (employment services, cash for work and vocational training)</li> </ul>

Save the Children (STC)

Point of Contact	Name	Isabelle Pelly
	Email	I.Pelly@savethechildren.org.uk
	Tel.	71 906 484
	Est. Departure?	Unknown (2014 +)
Program Description	Program Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unconditional cash assistance</li> <li>Conditional cash assistance (for youth livelihoods) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cash for Work</li> </ul> </li> <li>Food vouchers (prospective, currently under discussion with WFP)</li> </ul>
	Geographic Presence	Existing programming: Bekaa, Akkar Future programming: Tripoli
	# Families Targeted	5928 (funding pending)
	Approximate Value (USD) of Assistance	\$12,000,000 (based on average of \$600 per h/h although this varies)
Data Collection &	Staff Available for Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average of 5 Field assistants and 1 M&amp;E Officer per programme area.</li> </ul>

Monitoring	Data currently being collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food and non-food prices in six villages in Bekaa (Bardius, Qabbelias, Baalbek); Akkar (Talmaaya, Halba, Heba/Hesa?). 3 suppliers for each location. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline household questionnaire</li> </ul> </li> <li>Post Distribution Monitoring household questionnaire.</li> <li>Post Distribution monitoring focus group discussion tool</li> </ul>
	Methods for collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monthly field visits to three stores; standard data collection form.</li> <li>Households' interviews with sample beneficiaries on monthly basis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus groups with sample of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<b>Available DATA MENU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Market prices for list of food and non-food items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demographic data</li> </ul> </li> <li>Data on perception of cash assistance</li> <li>Data on monthly cash expenditures (per type of item) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coping strategy scores</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	Planned expansion?	Pending funding (could be 15,000 households for food vouchers, and up to 10,000 households for cash assistance)

Makhzoumi Foundation

Point of Contact	Name	Dana Lahham
	Email	d.lahham@makhzoumi.org
	Tel.	03/711684
	Est. Departure?	(i.e. "within 6 months," "indefinite," "unknown")
Program Description	Program Areas	WASH , Cash for Rent, One and Two Times Grants
	Geographic Presence	Beirut
	# Families Targeted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2,000 Syrian refugee families in total</li> </ul>
	Approximate Value (USD) of Assistance	[NOT FOR PUBLIC DISCLOSURE]

Data Collection & Monitoring	Staff Available for Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 social workers doubling as data collectors</li> </ul>
	Data currently being collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food and non-Food prices for our assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measuring vulnerability of beneficiaries.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	Methods for collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus groups on behalf of UNHCR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some home visits</li> </ul> </li> <li>Direct interviews/follow-up with vendors</li> </ul>
	<b>Available DATA MENU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data in collection process</li> </ul>
	Planned expansion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans to improve training of data collectors; formalize and expand the current system to measuring impact.</li> </ul>

World Vision International

Point of Contact	Name	Mirdza Abele Soha Karam Rebecca Samaha
	Email	Mirdza_Abele@worldvision.org.uk Soha_karam@wvi.org Rebecca_samaha@wvi.org
	Tel.	71093764 (Mirdza) 70520952 (Soha) 03972365 (Rebecca)
	Est. Departure?	Mirdza (September 2013) Soha (April 2014) Rebecca (July 2014)
	Program Areas	(i.e. "WASH," "food, NFIs, Education, Children in Emergencies, Protection, Advocacy and GIK
Program Description	Geographic Presence	Central and West + North (Bekaa?); Tyre and Saida (current) + Bent Jbeil soon. Akkar (Middle Dreib) and Palestinian Camps in the South and Beirut.
	# Families Targeted	105,515 beneficiaries (reaches so far) + 182,900 (targeted)
	Approximate Value (USD) of Assistance	\$13,351,810 plus a pipeline of \$3,888,809 (including food value)
Data Collection &	Staff Available for Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 Field Monitors + 9 volunteers</li> </ul>

Monitoring	Data currently being collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not much action yet on price data.</li> </ul>
	Methods for collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On site monitoring (OSM). Field observation. Post distribution monitoring (PDM).</li> <li>Shop monitoring and prices, capacity, quantity, availability of stocks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring e-cards usage (to follow). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfaction surveys</li> <li>Focus Group Discussions</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<b>Available DATA MENU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demographic data. Satisfaction. Usage. Complaints. Opinion regarding the assistance received.</li> <li>Detailed description of the items (food and non-food) used by refugee beneficiaries!!</li> </ul>
	Planned expansion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They have reserve funds and rapid deployment potential.</li> <li>They are contemplating bringing in another agency for market research and analysis.</li> </ul>

Solidarités International

Point of Contact	Name	Thibault Notteghem Reza Kasraï
	Email	pm.outreach.tripoli@solidarites-liban.org cdm@solidarites-liban.org
	Tel.	76 04 36 97
	Est. Departure?	unknown
Program Description	Program Areas	WASH, Shelter, NFI, Cash for Rent
	Geographic Presence	Zgharta and Minieh-Denniyeh districts.
	# Families Targeted	28,400
	Approximate Value (USD) of Assistance	3,000,000
Data Collection &	Staff Available for Data Collection	2 agents dedicated to monitoring.



<b>Monitoring</b>	Data currently being collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vulnerability assessment (WASH, Shelter and NFI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post-distribution Monitoring (soon)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	Methods for collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Household surveys.</li> <li>Focus Group Discussion</li> </ul>
	<b>Available DATA MENU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Profile of households (income/month, rent/month, food consumption, shelter conditions, access to WASH facilities, etc...)</li> </ul>
	Planned expansion?	The monitoring system is not completely set-up yet. Plan to increase M&E data collection

Handicap International

<b>Point of Contact</b>	Name	Cécile Barriere MagalieVairetto
	Email	eval.cash@hi-emergency.org hom.lb@hi-emergency.org
	Tel.	76 887 522 78 898 925
	Est. Departure?	Within 6months
<b>Program Description</b>	Program Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unconditional cash assistance</li> <li>Disability and Vulnerability Focal Point program (identification, direct support and referral of vulnerable refugees)</li> <li>NFI/FI distribution</li> </ul>
	Geographic Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern Lebanon (including Tripoli)</li> <li>Bekaa Valley (Central, West and North Bekaa)</li> </ul>
	# Families Targeted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>65,000 individuals</li> </ul>
	Approximate Value (USD) of Assistance	7,500,000
<b>Data Collection &amp; Monitoring</b>	Staff Available for Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 staff on monitoring in Bekka.</li> <li>2 dedicated data-operators.</li> </ul>
	Data currently being collected	Weekly food (33 items) and non-food (8 items) prices in 10 small shops and market sellers across geographic areas.

Methods for collection	Monitoring team visiting every shop or sellers to get prices. Weekly basis. Same shop, products and sellers. Focus group with sellers every month.
<b>Available DATA MENU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 months of price data from 10 points of sale</li> <li>DVFP data-base</li> </ul>
Planned expansion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning to scale-up activities regarding basic needs, especially unconditional cash assistance</li> <li>Increase monitoring, including adding 6 people in Tripoli</li> <li>Want to look at electricity, transportation, rent costs.</li> </ul>

Oxfam

Point of Contact	Name	Loreto Palmaera
	Email	LPalmaera@oxfam.org.uk
	Tel.	70098773
	Est. Departure?	Within 6 months
Program Description	Program Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cash Voucher for Food</li> <li>Cash Voucher for Hygiene <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cash for Rent</li> </ul> </li> <li>Cash Voucher for Kitchen sets</li> </ul>
	Geographic Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Palestinian camps in the North (Beddawi and Nahr el Bared), 1 Palestinina gathering in Bekaa (Bar Elias), and 2 Palestinian Camps in south (El Bus and Burj Shemali).</li> <li>Host community in Qalamoun, Batroun, El Koura, Chekka and other surrounding municipalities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zgharta municipality</li> <li>West Bekaa Municipalities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	# Families Targeted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1600 families in Palestinian camps and gatherings (funded by ERF-OCHA)</li> <li>4,070 families in host communities in the Tripoli + 5 (funded by Australian Aid and Oxfam Quebec) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>870 families in West Bekaa (funded by DEC)</li> </ul> </li> <li>2500 families in Bekaa Valley (tbc) (funded by French government)</li> </ul>

Data Collection & Monitoring	Approximate Value (USD) of Assistance	USD 1,672,400 (direct project cost only)
	Staff Available for Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 intl. Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning (MEAL) staff. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 staff from 6 partners (1 staff per partner)</li> </ul> </li> <li>1 Intl Emergency Food Security and Livelihoods (EFSL) Adviser. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 National EFSL program officers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Casual staff as needed</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	Data currently being collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food and hygiene price list at partner shops;</li> <li>Consumer preferences via baseline survey and Post Distribution Monitoring;</li> <li>Shop surveys (product diversity &amp; availability; accessibility &amp; capacity of traders)</li> </ul>
	Methods for collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through 6 implementing partners (Jadawel al Kheir; NAVTSS; PAWL; Islamic Scouts; Zgharta Municipality; NAJDEH)</li> </ul>
	<b>Available DATA MENU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline assessments (price lists) of partner shops</li> <li>Baseline and PDM (beneficiaries' expenditure patterns) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondary information through reports and visits</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	Planned expansion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The over-all aim of Oxfam International is to reach 30,000 families to be assisted with cash vouchers for food and hygiene.</li> </ul>

# Inter-Agency Market Monitoring System Development Workshop

June 27, 2013

# Presentation Overview

- Lebanon in Context
- Consumer Price Index Design
- CPI Challenges: Sampling Errors
- Potential Non-Sampling Errors
- Current CPIs in Lebanon
- What is a Market Survey?
- Market Survey Best Practices
- Market Survey Best Practices—MENA
- Other Lebanon Specific Challenges
- Final Thought

# Lebanon in Context

- Lebanon is largely dependent on imports to provide for its food needs. As such, the country is *extremely vulnerable to external price shocks*. Rises in commodity prices and import bills are often a consequence of external factors thanks to Lebanon's dollar-peg, and the significant volume of trade with the European Union.
- Even before the disruptions caused by the crisis in Syria, Lebanon had some of the highest meat, sugar, tea, milk, tomato, potato, and vegetable oil prices in the Arab world. Key factors behind this include uncompetitive consumer markets, and increases in the prices of non-tradable goods like transportation and electricity.
- There is significant regional variation in commodity prices between North Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and South Lebanon: average retail prices are highest in South Lebanon and lowest in the Bekaa Valley.
- The crisis in Syria is exerting strong forces on Lebanon's economy—not only with the inflow of significant numbers of refugees into the country, but also by disrupting historical trade patterns and current consumption patterns.

# Consumer Price Index Design

- Inflation is a rise in the general level of prices of goods and services in an economy over a period of time. Economists distinguish between inflation and volatility of sector-specific prices.
- A **Consumer price index (CPI)** is a measure of the average change in prices paid by consumers for a **market basket of goods and services**. The contents of the basket are chosen to reflect consumption needs (a given level of utility)\* of the population, and the contents are also weighted to reflect relative expenditure levels and allow comparisons between types of consumers (geographic spread, income level, etc.).
- A CPI basket is defined ideally following rigorous and widespread surveying of households. In the United States, a survey of 5,000 households is conducted quarterly, in which each household is asked to make a complete record of all expenses for a two-week period.
- Ordinarily, the contents and relative weighting of the CPI basket are routinely adjusted to more accurately reflect contemporary consumption patterns and preferences.
- An index number (usually with a base period = 100) is used to aggregate detailed information on prices and quantities to make relevant policy decisions more intuitive.

# CPI Challenges: Sampling Errors

- Most indices are subject to heated criticism about the calculations/mathematics behind them (aggregation formula choice, weighting schemes, static versus dynamic modeling, etc.); however, the major determinants of precision and accuracy are sampling methodology and the related **potential for sampling errors**:
- **Changing consumption patterns:** Without adjusting the contents of the CPI basket, there is no way to account for consumer reactions to inflation and/or exogenous shocks. CPIs assume that consumer preferences and levels of expenditure (e.g. versus savings) extend across time.
- **Changing data collection techniques:** While continuously refined data collection techniques and adjustments in estimation methods are important, it is also important that data sampling be sufficiently consistent to allow standardization and comparisons.
- **Frequency of sampling:** Frequent sampling tends to miss or under weigh low-frequency purchases, particularly for durable goods. Likewise, selecting certain time periods for sampling (e.g. only weekdays) can produce its own distortions.
- **Distribution of sampling:** Targeting particular Point of Sales (POS) or geographic spreads can be problematic. Cities enjoy higher market competition, while regional variations in consumer preferences may require geographic disaggregation to avoid misleading averages.



# Potential Non-Sampling Errors

- Consumers are likelier to shift their expenditure patterns faster than researchers can shift their models and techniques. As a result, CPIs can overstate or understate inflation as consumers react to critical changes in the marketplace:
- **New product bias:** Imports and/or innovation of production can change the supply of available goods. One countermeasure is periodic reassessment of consumer habits.
- **New outlet bias:** If the pattern of sampling was based on a particular geographic distribution, or a specific series of POS, new entrants to the market can alter consumption patterns as well as market prices due to competition. Periodic sample rotation is advised.
- **Substitution bias:** This is usually triggered by short-term shifts in price levels that create new preferences for relatively less expensive items. Brand competition, currency fluctuations or seasonality of supply can all cause consumers to shift from one brand to another, to prefer imports, or simply to select another product altogether (e.g. beans versus meat).
- **Demographic bias:** Age, income, ethnicity, etc., can significantly alter consumption patterns. Most indices build a consumer basket that best reflects the largest possible share of households.

# Current CPIs in Lebanon

- The official body entrusted with the publication of the Consumer Price Index is the **Central Administration of Statistics (CAS)**. 25 CAS data collectors average four weekly or monthly samples of price points on 360 items from 2,000 points of sales across most of Lebanon. Other infrequent expenses are collected quarterly, semi-annually or annually.
- Other bodies publishing price statistics in Lebanon include the **Consultation and Research Institute (CRI)** and the **Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture**. The CRI has five field workers record prices for around 600 items from pre-selected retail establishments and institutions; and the CRI produces a monthly average of changes in prices per outlet, lessening the effect of exogenous factors (serves more like a GDP deflator). An additional 120 items are recorded seasonally.
- The **Ministry of Economy and Trade's Technical Office for Pricing Policies (TCPP)** produces a monthly price index for a basket of goods that are sold in supermarkets. A team of five employees receives a monthly price list of 650 goods from 10 supermarkets across Lebanon (6 supermarkets from Beirut and Mount Lebanon, 1 from the north, 1 from the south, 1 from Nabatieh and 1 from the Bekaa Zahle).

# What is a Market Survey?

- Traditionally, a market survey is a systematic <sup>(1)</sup> **collection**, <sup>(2)</sup> **recording**, <sup>(3)</sup> **analysis** and <sup>(4)</sup> **interpretation** of data relating to the existing or potential market for a product or services.
- A market survey is a useful tool for contact with the market (**primary research**). Through a market survey we can obtain information such as market size, market structure, consumer preferences including buying habits and motives, demand patterns, price-setting, and/or past and present trends for particular products or locales.
- There are many different styles of market research, which each calls for a different approach to surveying. In addition to isolating **quantitative** vs. **qualitative** research, survey work can involve a variety of observational techniques (**direct polling, panel targeting, mystery shopper exercises, qualitative focus grouping, auditing and data processing**).
- **However**, the market survey itself is at best a tool. The systematic and intelligent use of this tool (**secondary research**) can reduce risks of decision making under conditions of uncertainty.

# Market Survey Best Practices

- **Understand the objective:** Knowing what **specific** information is missing or desired will shape all decisions behind survey work as you determine the **what, who, from whom** and **how**.
- **Assessing time and costs:** Be realistic about what can be accomplished given practical constraints—things like budget or available manpower. This shapes or limits the scope of data collection (size of survey team, distribution of sampling), but it also tells you early on what kind of tool you are building (i.e. data on only 10 POS may not be statistically meaningful).
- **Identify additional internal constraints:** The **who** (is available for conducting survey work; level of education, ability to conduct dynamic surveys) will determine the possible complexity of the survey questionnaires itself, as well as the reliability of field data; it will dictate how much work needs to be dedicated to QC and data cleaning.
- **Understand external constraints:** Recognizing other issues like freedom of movement, security risks, willingness for public participation, etc. will largely dictate methodology and can be important for minimizing risks to survey work as well as avoiding observational biases.
- **Carefully select and refine appropriate methodology:** Develop an early action plan for choosing sampling modality (e.g. mystery shopper vs. self-reporting), incentive schemes, geographic distribution, wording of surveys, etc. **Refine, refine, refine.**

# Best Practices — MENA

- **For the survey team and the public, keep it simple:** Level of education among rural populations is often low. Outside of urban areas, consumer research is uncommon and often poorly understood. To minimize misunderstanding and reduce the possibility of false/fraudulent data, questionnaires and data fields should be basic.
- **Recognize cultural constraints:** Social codes that dictate or limit public interaction tend to produce selection bias by limiting gender, age, ethnicity in sampling. Lack of social trust (particularly in areas with ongoing political tension) heighten suspicions of outsiders and questions from outsiders. This is a key risk for mystery shopper exercises in particular.
- **Where possible, build in safety mechanisms:** It is preferable to deploy overlapping survey teams to double check field work. Routine work and established relationships with survey targets (shopkeepers, individual consumers) raise the temptation of “gaming the system,” as well as recycling previous work. Rotating sampling can minimize those risks.
- **Use benchmarking wherever possible:** Due to the lack of reliable market research or public policy data (i.e. population statistics), it is important to build into surveys control groups that can be used as a benchmark for price spikes or significant shifts in consumer behavior. It can be beneficial to mix sampling modalities simply to validate the primary data stream.

# Lebanon Specific Challenges

- **Lack of social trust:** Even prior to the Syria crisis, CPI data collection conducted by the CRI required the deployment of the same employee to build familiarity, expertise, and trust.
- **Potential for disruptions in pricing, data collection:** Any price collection mechanism could face significant disruptions during extended periods of unrest as certain areas become unreachable, shops close, etc. During major disruptions, prices may become erratic, posing analytical challenges for the long-term validity of any price index.
- **Seasonality of value chain:** Although the design of the consumer basket can remove individual goods that are particularly susceptible to seasonal price fluctuations, wholesale markets and food distribution across Lebanon as a whole are subject to seasonal changes in behavior.
- **Discrepancies in quality of tradable goods:** Likewise, within individual cities or towns (or even neighborhoods), there is often significant variation in the quality and/or appearance of food products, as traders and retailers target different demographic groups with different preferences. This frustrates “apples to apples” comparisons.
- Because of the **role of imports**, there is a strong lead/lag trend following international prices fluctuations. Local prices increase rapidly (2010) in anticipation of further increases, but decline more slowly only after threat of future increases has dwindled (2011).

# Final Thought

*It will always be difficult to isolate inflation from idiosyncratic relative price movements.*

## II. MMS Organisations and Points of Contact

Organisation	Designated POC	Email	Mobile
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)	Rachel Routley	rachel.routley@drclebanon.dk	76028042
Action Contre La Faim (ACF)	Martina Iannizzotto	ctyre@lb.acfspain.org	76152765
International Rescue Committee (IRC)	Francesca Battistin	francesca.battistin@rescue.org	71374888
Save the Children	Isabelle Pelly	I.Pelly@savethechildren.org.uk	71906484
Makhzoumi Foundation	Dana Lahham	d.lahham@makhzoumi.org	03/711684
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World Food Programme	Susana Moreno	susana.moreno@wfp.org	76320588
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