

The Ripple Effect of Cash-Based Programming on WASH Services in Informal Settlements in Lebanon

SUMMARY

In 2020, the WASH team in UNICEF Lebanon issued a nationwide feasibility and monitoring study for the use of cash as a modality to meet certain WASH needs within informally tented settlements (ISs). Under this initiative, UNICEF implemented a pilot project to evaluate and investigate the appropriateness of scaling up cash-based programming and eventually shifting from the in-kind/voucher-based modality of support in 200,000 ISs. The grant initiative aims to meet WASH sector-specific outcomes through enabling beneficiaries with the purchasing power to freely meet their demands, thus detaching their dependency on service provision by UNICEF and implementing partners.

The pilot found that shifting to cash-based programming using a WASH-specific grant could address the two underlying gaps faced by ISs in Lebanon today: support continuous access to reliable water and desludging services.

Background:

The displacement of children due to war and conflict has created a clear ripple effect on their access to basic needs and services. Families of these displaced children often seek refuge in informally tented settlements (ISs), many of which lack access to basic water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services. Since the start of the Syrian crisis, the UNICEF Lebanon country office has been at the epicenter of the WASH response.



A portrait of Khaled, a Syrian refugee at the Delhamiyeh informal settlement. © UNICEF/UNI373014, Celia Peterson.

Throughout the years, UNICEF Lebanon has studied the various gaps within ISs through the development of a sector-wide dashboard called the WASH Assessment Platform (WAP)¹. The WASH section in UNICEF Lebanon has explored the various gateways to guarantee *reliable*, *sustainable*, and *resilient* WASH programming within ISs nationwide. As part of these continuous improvement initiatives, UNICEF developed the Cash for WASH (C4WASH) pilot project.

In the C4WASH project, UNICEF provides unrestricted cash to beneficiaries within ISs through a unified E-card system called LOUISE. The cash is distributed for WASH-specific interventions and mainly provides beneficiaries access to reliable drinking/domestic water and desludging services.

Lebanon aims to target beneficiaries residing in ISs nationwide – over 50 per cent of which are children. The initial response for 2021 focuses on access to water and desludging services as the key indicator of WASH accessibility.

Opportunity

Amongst the pilot projects UNICEF Lebanon has adopted, the C4WASH project has proven to be particularly interesting as it:

- Creates an entry point for UNICEF to influence sector-wide WASH-specific response.
- Provides families residing in ISs with liquidity – to be used to access WASH needs.
- Enables beneficiaries to gain a locus of control over to satisfy their *immediate* daily WASH needs.
- Detaches the dependency of beneficiaries to NGOs for service provisioning (in-kind/ voucher-based) – specifically water trucking and desludging services.

¹ The WASH Assessment Platform Report 2020.
<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/83190>

- Allows UNICEF and partners to focus on ensuring the best quality of services to meet WASH gaps by collaborating with market actors.
- Provides a space to scale up climate-resilient WASH development.
- Ensures the safeguard of access to services and storage capacities in times of economic, social, and situational hardships (i.e., the current hyper-inflation in Lebanon, impacts of COVID-19, etc.).



Syrian refugee children playing in front of a water truck at the Delhamiyeh informal settlement. © UNICEF/UNI373026, Celia Peterson.

Methodology

At the start of the Syrian crisis, several organizations joined forces to meet the immediate need of refugees and harmonize the process of grant distribution across initiatives, creating the *Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organizational System for E-card (LOUISE)*.

LOUISE is a multi-purpose grant based on the cost of the minimum survival expenditure basket covering food needs, drinking water, hygiene, communications, and transportation costs. It provides a platform for cash-based multi-purpose grants, accessed by ATM cards, allowing refugees to gain purchasing power to cover their basic needs and service requirements. The model was established as a collaborative operational

model by UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, and the former Lebanon Cash Consortium.

The WASH team in UNICEF has adopted the platform as their main modality of WASH-related cash distributions. The use of this innovative E-card modality ensures the streamlining of CBP within Lebanon.

Figure 1: Components of the LOUISE minimum expenditure basket



Current Context

The scaling up of the C4WASH pilot project does not aim to increase the demand for water access and desludging services but to switch the modality from in-kind/ voucher-based to Cash-Based Programming (CBP) and study the willingness of beneficiaries to access WASH services with the allotted aid.

A feasibility study conducted in 2020 on the approach showcased that the shift from in-kind/voucher based to CBP did not disrupt the provision of services. Households were able to access water trucking and desludging services on a similar or more frequent basis.

Scale-up within ISs

Service gaps in Lebanon are often filled through the support of NGOs/UN agencies on the ground leading to empowerment of the beneficiaries and

a high level of dependency on unsuitable methods of service delivery (e.g. planned scheduling of water trucking vs. demand-based on-call scheduling).

Switching from in-kind/voucher based to CBP increases the pool of disposal income available to a household as well as the ability for beneficiaries to access resources on demand basis.

Figure 2: Theory of change



A scale-up feasibility survey covering 15 ISs (144 household surveys) showcased multiple impacts, including:

- No disruption of services or change in frequency of access was seen when switching to CBP.
- WASH-related services were purchased as a third priority after food and medicine.
- Willingness to buy water exceeded that of purchasing desludging services.
- 99per cent of beneficiary preferred accessing cash-based multi-purpose grants as opposed to in-kind or vouchers.
- No significant change in the primary source of drinking water – most settlements use water trucking for drinking water.
- Share of households not desludging is smaller amongst those receiving cash-based multi-purpose grants.
- The frequency of desludging services has increased at over 25per cent of the sites receiving cash-based multi-purpose grants.

Observations

Throughout the use of CBP, the following main points have been observed:

- Increase in efficiency of service provision based on actual demand and not planned scheduling.
- Growth in purchasing power allows beneficiaries to freely access services, thus reducing the waiting period experienced during planned scheduling.
- Increase of disposable income enables beneficiaries to access WASH services regardless of geographic location.
- Beneficiaries gain access to market actors, which in turn enable the stimulation of the immediate economy and improves service quality.
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- increased resistance and resilience of CBP to the economic shocks and major crises (i.e., COVID-19).

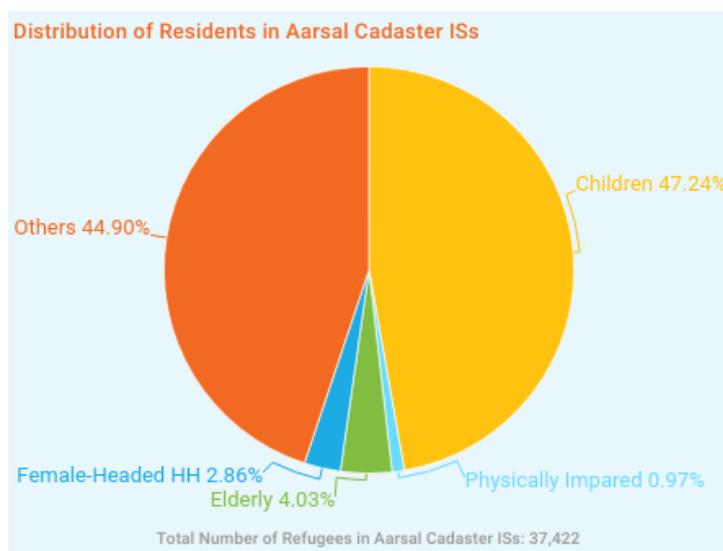
- CBP allows improved monitoring due to the modality of assistance.

Scale-up

With time, UNICEF Lebanon aims to target more than 200,000 residents in ISs across four governorates and six cadastres. Preliminarily, UNICEF Lebanon aims to target 206 sites in the Aarsal cadaster, or 3.6per cent of the total number of sites nationwide. Aarsal cadaster lies within the district of Baalbeck within the Baalbeck – Hermel Governorate. The proportion of vulnerable people in the governorate is 69 per cent of the overall population, 51 per cent of which are children.

Based on the recent WAP, the Aarsal cadaster houses 37,422 refugees or 11.4per cent of the national caseload of individuals living in ISs – of whom 47per cent are children.

Figure 3: Distribution of residents in Aarsal Cadaster ISs



The Aarsal cadaster houses 5 individuals on an average per household. Amongst the cadaster are 362 physically impaired, 1,508 elderly, and 1,072 female-headed households (housing 4,797

individuals on an average). 45per cent of the ISs in the cadaster rely on water trucking as their primary source of water.

In 2019, UNICEF partners had desludged 536,525m³ for a total cost of 1,465,894 USD, amounting to approximately 25per cent of the overall spending on desludging services to Aarsal cadaster.

KEY POINTS – AARSAL CADASTER

- *3.6per cent of sites nationwide*
- *11.4per cent of refugees nationwide*
- *On average, 5 individuals per household*
- *47.24per cent of total population are children*
- *45per cent of sites receive water trucking*
- *Approximately 25per cent of national spending on desludging*
- *Access to 42.8L/c/d, of which 60per cent is water trucking paid for by NGOs*

Challenges

Similar to any project, some concerns related to the pilot project were raised – mainly regarding protection and communication issues (e.g. about the sustainability of assistance). These concerns will be further addressed in coordination with LOUISE as part of the scale-up.

The constant refugees' movement from ISs to ISs makes it more complex to manage and to ensure that the cash-based multi-purpose grants is going to the

family living in the ISs, and not to a family that moved to another location. It will be critical to implement the planned expansion with and enhanced monitoring framework to ensure proper targeting and high-quality private sector service provision.

Conclusion

Like many developing countries, Lebanon is currently facing a multifaceted economic, political, and health crisis, which exacerbates the needs of the 1.5 million Syrian refugees residing within the country, especially those residing in ISs.

The UNICEF Lebanon country office conducted a monitoring and feasibility study on a new innovative approach to provide people living in ISs with WASH services. C4WASH pilot project gave cash multipurpose grants directly to beneficiaries instead of providing scheduled services through NGO and private sector partners. Results showed very high acceptance rate of the use of cash grants to cover water and sanitation-related needs and improved service efficiency.

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Key Aid Consulting, Nov.2020, Wash Services Monetization Scale-up Feasibility Analysis, Post-Distribution Monitoring Analysis.

Photo Credits

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About the Author

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About the Series

UNICEF's water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) country teams work inclusively with governments, civil society partners and donors, to improve WASH services for children and adolescents, and the families and caregivers who support them. UNICEF works in over 100 countries worldwide to improve water and sanitation services, as well as basic hygiene practices. This publication is part of the UNICEF WASH Learning Series, designed to contribute to knowledge of good practice across UNICEF's WASH programming. In this series:

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Fact Sheets summarize the most important knowledge on a topic in few pages in the form of graphics, tables and bullet points, serving as a briefing for staff on a topical issue.

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