

Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade
and Development Cooperation

**Special Evaluation Office of the Belgian Development
Cooperation**

Evaluation of the Belgian Strategy for Humanitarian Aid

Country Report

Lebanon



@UNHCR, Sarah is one of 3 other siblings raised by their single mom in the Bekaa. Her two brothers had to work to support the family that UNHCR also supports.

June 2022

The evaluation is conducted by ADE (www.ade.eu). The Special Evaluation Office ensured that the evaluation complied with the Terms of Reference and benefited from the support of a Reference Group.

The opinions expressed in this document represent the authors' points of view and do not necessarily reflect the position of the FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background to the country

Lebanon's population currently stands at 6.8 million. The country hosts the highest number of refugees per capita worldwide, with an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees of which 839,086 refugees (188,990 households) have been registered with UNHCR as of March 2022.¹ The greatest concentration of refugees is in the Bekaa region with 328,354 registered refugees.²

Lebanon also hosts Palestine refugees, estimated to be between 193,000³ and 475,000,⁴ including 27,248 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS)⁵ registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

A total of 90% of Syrian refugees are living in extreme poverty, whilst 57% of Syrian refugees live in an overcrowded shelter, shelter below humanitarian standards, and/or shelters in danger of collapse.⁶ Humanitarian assistance remains the main source of income for Syrian refugees to meet their basic needs.⁷

Lebanon's growth has been hampered by continuously compounding crises. The protracted Syrian refugee crisis, the economic crisis, COVID-19, and the Port of Beirut explosion have all contributed to deepening poverty and economic vulnerability experienced by the population in Lebanon. Food prices have seen a continuous rise throughout 2021, and a monthly national food basket is 557% the price of a food basket in October 2019.⁸ Over half the Lebanese population is living below the poverty line.⁹

The worsening financial crisis was initially caused by very high levels of public debt (one of the largest debt-to-GDP ratios in the world), a large deficit in current accounts due to trade deficits in goods and soaring inflation rates associated with a shortage of US dollars and the collapse of the Lebanese pound. Lebanon's GDP is expected to contract a further 6.5% in 2022, following declines of 10.5% in 2021, and 21.4% in 2020.¹⁰ It is frequently deemed that the Lebanon economic and financial crisis is one of the top three most severe crisis episodes globally since the mid-19th Century.¹¹

1.2. Case study context

Lebanon was selected as a case study for the evaluation of Belgium's humanitarian strategy in order to explore the approaches used to support humanitarian assistance in a non-partner country setting, the funding modalities and the results. Indeed, Lebanon is

¹ UNHCR. Lebanon. 2022.

² Ibid.

³ Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee. 2017. Population and housing census in Palestinian camps and gathering in Lebanon.

⁴ UNRWA. 2018. Registration figures as of 1 January 2018.

⁵ UNRWA. *Lebanon: Humanitarian Snapshot*. November & December 2019.

⁶ UNHCR, WFP, Unicef. Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon. 2021.

⁷ UNHCR, WFP, Unicef. Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon. 2021.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Government of Lebanon and the United Nations. Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2022-2023. January, 2022.

¹⁰ The World Bank. Lebanon's Economic Update. April 2022.

¹¹ The World Bank. Lebanon Economic Monitor, Spring 2021: Lebanon Sinking. May, 2021.

not a partner country under Belgium’s development cooperation and Enabel is not present in the country. The funding modalities used are predominantly project funding for multilateral organisations with limited programme funding for Belgian NGOs.

Belgium has provided humanitarian assistance support to organisations (see below for details) to address the needs of Syrian refugees, Palestinian refugees from Syria and Lebanese nationals affected by the deepening economic and financial crises.

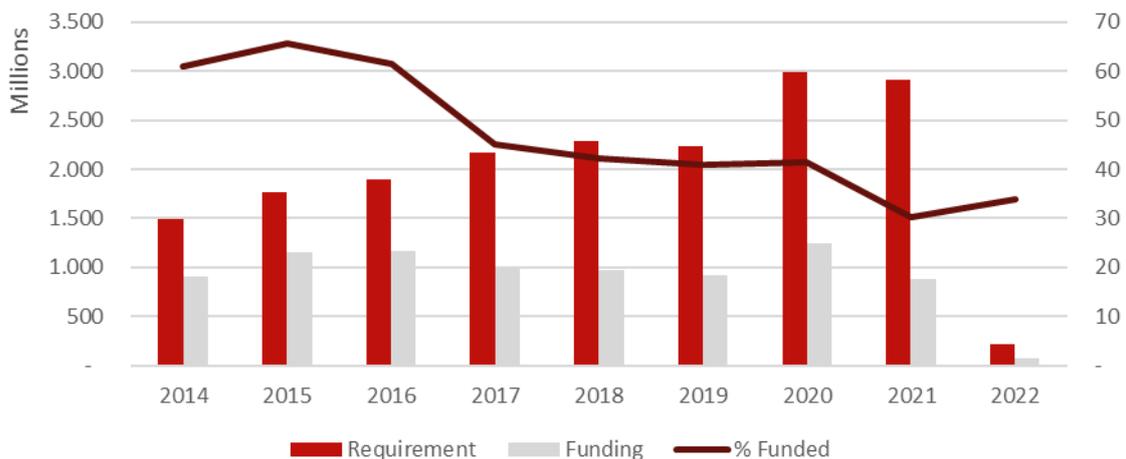
The selection of the partners and projects enabled the evaluation team to cover all ten evaluation questions with an emphasis on the following aspects:

- Whether Belgium’s assistance can adapt to an appropriate transition phase of assistance when a refugee situation becomes protracted (i.e., Syrian refugee and Palestinian refugee crisis in Lebanon);
- Whether Belgium’s humanitarian funding modalities allowed for a timely emergency response following the Beirut port explosion in 2020;
- Whether Belgium’s humanitarian funding can respond to the convergence of a protracted crisis and emergency situations requiring quick responses;
- The convergence of humanitarian and development funding through the nexus support for a project implemented by a national NGO (funded by D5.2);
- Whether Belgium’s institutions have the necessary resources and capacity in a non-partner country to be able to monitor and provide added value.

Funding to Lebanon

The humanitarian response in Lebanon has been underfunded over the last years. Current funding is insufficient to meet increasing humanitarian needs in the county among both national and refugee population groups. The underfunded Syrian crisis response puts a strain on host countries. The evolution of the required and actual funding over the period of interest is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Annual Requirements and Funding data for Lebanon (2005-2021)



Source: UNOCHA FTS, updated 23 June 2022.

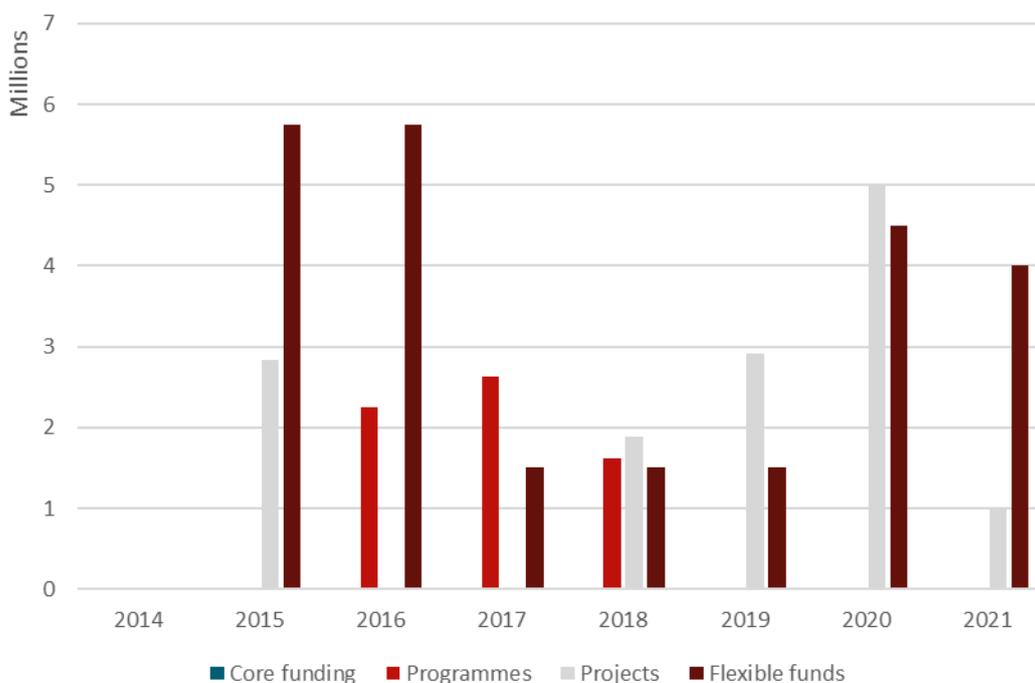
Lebanon is ranked 6th in terms of Belgium’s ODA and also in terms of humanitarian funding received from Belgium between 2014 and 2020. This is notable because it is not among the 14 partner countries of Belgium’s Development Aid. Over the years, DGD’s funding in HA has been the most prominent (over 80% of total ODA). Humanitarian aid increased strongly in 2015 and remained at that level in 2016 in response to the Syrian refugee crisis, after which a decline between 2017 and 2019 can be observed. The level of HA

funding rose to a new high at around 9.5 million € in 2020 because of the explosion in the port of Beirut. Lebanon is also one of the five main countries for project funding together with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Central African Republic (CAR), Palestine and Syria.

Figure 2 presents the evolution of DGD’s instruments (core funding, programmes, projects, and flexible funds) in Lebanon between 2014 and 2021. Over this time period, flexible funds are the most important type of funding instruments to support HA in the country. After a strong decline between 2017 and 2019, it increased significantly since then. Besides, projects have also increased strongly since 2018, although they experienced a decline in 2021. With regards to programmes, these instruments have not been used over the last years.

During the period under evaluation, Belgium provided a total of 44.64 million EUR to Lebanon, out of which 89.41 percent was allocated to UN agencies (OCHA, WFP, UNHCR and UNRWA), 6.72 percent to the ICRC and 3.87 percent to Belgian NGOs. 30.56 percent of the funding was allocated to project funding and 14.56 percent to programme funding.

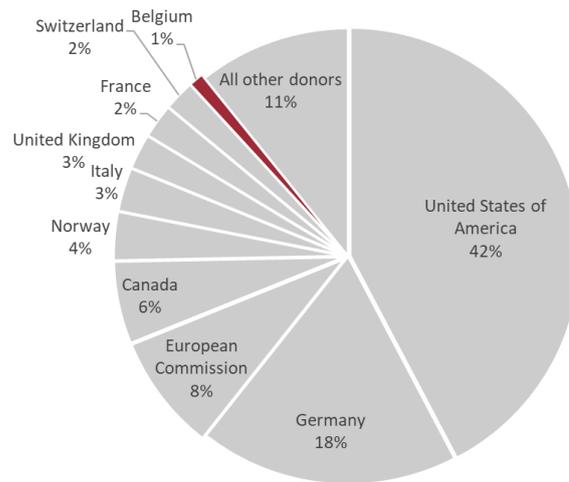
Figure 2: Evolution of the 4 funding instruments in Lebanon for 2014-2021



Source: ADE based on DGD data.

It is important to review Belgium’s contribution compared with other donors. Figure 3 shows the distribution of HA funds to Lebanon by donor in 2021. The amount of HA funds from Belgium is relatively small (1% of total HA funds) compared to the other donors.

Figure 3: Global Humanitarian Funds to Lebanon in 2021



Source: ADE based on DGD data.

1.3. Methodology

The in-country evaluation visit to Lebanon took place from 24–28 May 2022. The visit was carried out by the evaluation team leader, Martine Van de Velde, and the national expert, Chaza Akik. The team met with the current main recipients of Belgium’s humanitarian funding, which include UNRWA, WFP, UNHCR, OCHA, Caritas and Amel association. The team also met with donor representatives, visited a number of interventions and met with persons who are supported through these interventions. A detailed overview of the stakeholders met can be found in Annex A, whilst the schedule of the in-country visit is included in Annex B. The country report presents the main findings for Lebanon and is structured around the ten key evaluation questions. Findings and lessons drawn from Lebanon’s case study will support the evidence base for the main evaluation report.

2. Findings

2.1. Relevance

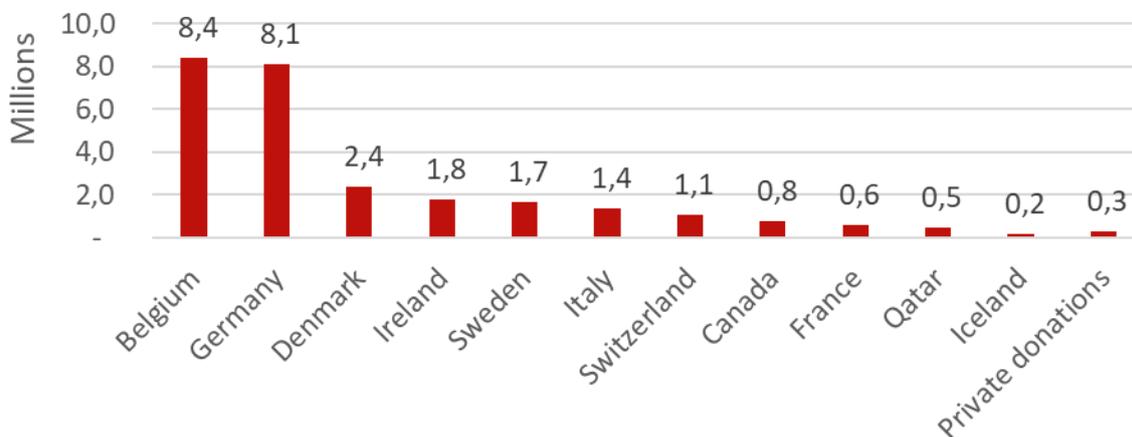
2.1.1. EQ1 – To what extent do the two financial instruments (programmes and projects) respond to: 1) the geographical and thematic priorities of the humanitarian aid strategy, and 2) the needs of local populations?

The humanitarian priorities funded with Belgium’s assistance are aligned with the needs identified in several of the main documents guiding the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in Lebanon, including the consecutive Lebanon Crisis Response Plans (LCRP) and the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR). These guidance documents illustrate that refugee households are not able to afford essential goods and services that ensure minimum living standards. Refugees’ resilience and capacity to cope with increasing food insecurity and to reduce dependency on assistance have significantly declined in recent years.

Belgium's financial assistance to address food insecurity through the support of cash-based transfers (CBT) and in-kind food assistance to the refugees (WFP) or through more resilience focused interventions (Oxfam, CRB) targeted the needs of vulnerable people of concern. Supporting multi-purpose cash assistance (UNHCR) addresses the protection concerns that over half of Syrian refugees (57 percent) are now living in abject poverty. Protection concerns are widespread, especially for the most vulnerable (women, children, the elderly and people with a disability). Syrian and Palestinian refugee children face obstacles such as access to basic education, child labour and early marriage. Addressing obstacles for Palestinian refugee children to access education was supported through the Education in Emergencies (EiE) programme (UNRWA).

Belgium is currently the largest contributor to the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF) managed by OCHA and allocates unearmarked funding to evidence-based priorities identified by the humanitarian sector, prioritising cross-cutting issues of gender, gender-based violence (GBV), disability and prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation (PSEA).

Figure 4: Donor contributions to Lebanon’s Humanitarian Fund (2021)



Interventions supported through Belgium's humanitarian assistance are addressing priority needs. However, it is not evident as to what extent the selection of interventions was based on Belgium's own understanding of the needs and priorities since Belgium has mostly relied on the guidance received from its in-country partners.

2.1.2. EQ2 – To what extent and through what mechanisms have developments in the international humanitarian landscape and international commitments been taken into account in the implementation of programs and projects?

The humanitarian projects and programmes funded by Belgium were aligned with the LCRP for the Syrian refugee crisis. Belgium humanitarian assistance enabled humanitarian actors to reach vulnerable Syrian and Palestinian refugees as well as vulnerable Lebanese population groups. Interventions were focused on reaching the most vulnerable population groups through cash assistance, supporting livelihoods, protection and access to education. Belgium's funding evolved with the changes in approaches for the international response to the Syria crisis, evolving from emergency response to resilience building.

All projects supported in Lebanon are closely aligned with the HRPs and national policies. The increased focus on resilience and the emphasis on cash-based transfers (CBT) are supportive of good humanitarian donor practices.

UN agencies and Belgian NGO partners work through national organisations for some of their interventions. To what extent the arrangements with the national partners evolved over time and go beyond a contractual arrangement to implement and deliver certain activities could not be assessed.

The LHF allocated USD 6.5 million of the total USD 27 million of contributions and pledges through national partners (directly and indirectly).¹² Given the strength of civil society actors in Lebanon, the evaluation team is of the opinion that this allocation is not sufficiently high enough. Local organisations have also a critical role to play in supporting social cohesion in communities under pressure. Whether this lower-than-expected allocation to national NGO partners is due to their lack of capacity to meet LHF requirements could not be verified. Based on in-country interviews, it was evident that the issue of localisation and expectations of Belgium regarding allocation of funding to national civil society were not sufficiently raised by Belgium in LHF advisory board.

2.1.3. EQ3 – Has the allocation of resources been done in a principled manner and in line with Belgium's commitments and international principles and commitments (Grand Bargain, European Consensus, Good Humanitarian Donorship ...)?

Partners supported by Belgium operationalise, through their projects, the four humanitarian principles – humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Partners design their interventions based on their understanding of the needs of the affected populations. Protection and accountability to affected people (AAP) are intrinsically linked to the principle of humanity. While protection and accountability are mainstreamed in all interventions supported by Belgium, the evaluation team was not able to access the results of this mainstreaming on the ground. Documentary evidence, however, indicates that collectively humanitarian actors have faced challenges in protection mainstreaming. Results from the VASyR 2021 show there are growing needs in the community, growing aid perception bias and growing barriers that people are facing when accessing humanitarian aid.¹³ Complementarity between funding instruments is mainly found between project funding and core funding to multilateral agencies.

¹² Lebanon Humanitarian Fund 2021. Overview as of December 2021.

¹³ VASyR 2021, p.13

2.2. Relevance and Connectivity

2.2.1. EQ4 – Relevance and Connectivity: How well adapted are project and program instruments to current crises to (i) respond quickly to immediate needs (humanitarian emergency), (ii) respond structurally to protracted crises as part of a long-term strategy, and (iii) ensure connectivity between instruments in crises that present both emergency needs and structural vulnerabilities (see also EQ 10)?

Lebanon is suffering from multiple crises, including the impact of the Syria conflict. Since 2019, the country has seen increasing public mistrust in the state, lack of a functioning government in 2020–2021 and deepening financial, economic and banking crises. Shortages of food, fuel, medicines, and electricity has resulted in increasing vulnerabilities and chronic poverty for most of the Lebanese and refugee populations.¹⁴

Vulnerability assessments have focused on refugee communities but have not paid sufficient attention to understanding the changes in vulnerability and the rising poverty in the Lebanese population. The root causes of the current crises in Lebanon are not linked to the refugee presence but are caused by a variety of historic and political factors. Exploring these factors is beyond the scope of this evaluation, however the international humanitarian community needs to strengthen its evidence base to ensure an inclusive targeting of the most vulnerable Lebanese population groups.

In a protracted crisis, a blanket approach covering both Syrian and Palestinian refugees is not the most effective approach nor is it the most efficient. For example, over 29,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria were being supported by UNRWA in 2021, which is also, through its mandate, providing support to Palestine refugees in Lebanon (PRL). A high number of Syrian refugees is supported by UNHCR and WFP (1.4 million¹⁵). In addition, the worsening poverty amongst the Lebanese population means that humanitarian agencies need to move further towards an approach of targeting those most in need rather than focussing solely on refugee status.

The interventions funded by Belgium have not yet sufficiently considered Lebanon's deepening crisis and the worsening humanitarian situation for vulnerable Lebanese population groups. This is, however, a reflection of the concerns of the broader donor community that has focused on responding to the Syrian refugee crisis. As a donor representative during a key informant interview (KII) mentioned: *"Donors and humanitarian actors were too focused on the Syrian presence and we were insufficiently aware of the developments around us"*.

Belgium joined the international response to the Beirut port explosion in 2020 and provided funding for the emergency response through its allocation of EUR 2.5 million. Whether this allocation was based on careful consideration of the needs is questionable. It was mentioned by key informants during the in-country visit that Belgium, as a small donor, should avoid providing funding for a sudden on-set emergency when the response is sufficiently supported by larger donors. The evaluation team supports to certain extent this feedback. When only limited funding is available this can be strategically targeted toward addressing a critical gap in the response.

2.3. Effectiveness

2.3.1. EQ5 - To what extent have program and project objectives been achieved? Have the programs and projects contributed to sufficient coverage of crisis-affected populations? What are the effects (intended or unintended) on the target populations?

¹⁴ <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/08/lebanons-politics>

¹⁵ WFP. 2022. WFP Lebanon 2021 in Review.

The design and reporting on projects by some of the partners lacks analysis and sufficient detail on results achieved through Belgian funding. For this evaluation the team has relied on the available documentary evidence, complemented with primary evidence gathered during the in-country mission for its analysis. Instead of presenting purely the results, this section presents the analysis based on the five selected interventions funded in relation to Belgium's humanitarian strategy.

UNRWA – Education in Emergencies (EiE)

Education in Emergencies (EiE) for Palestine Refugee Children – Phase III. Support from Belgium: EUR 3.5 million (2022- ongoing)

UNRWA, the UN agency mandated to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable Palestine refugees, is faced with a dire ongoing financial crisis that has forced it to cut services, resulting in a situation where the agency can no longer adequately ensure that no one is left unaided. UNRWA's core financial resources are overstretched and are not able to keep up with the rising levels of poverty and increasing humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees in the Agency's five fields of operation. UNRWA is facing a serious financial deficit and core funding alone can no longer ensure that a minimum level of services is maintained.

In this context, Belgium's support to UNRWA has been valuable as it has enabled the agency to directly address barriers to education for the most vulnerable children by providing support for transportation costs and stationery, support that UNRWA's programme budget was unable to cover if Belgium had not provided the funding.

"Due to the economic crisis we can't afford the cost of transportation. While the cash assistance is not enough to cover all costs it does help a bit." – Teacher

"Children need to work after school and have often no time for home learning. In certain families, children cannot return home after school before collecting 100 plastic bottles for which the family gets some money." – School counsellor

"Children from Palestine Refugees from Lebanon (PRL) are not covered for transportation costs. This is not right. All students should have access based on need." – School counsellor

This project has been supported for three consecutive phases by Belgium with the aim of mitigating the rise in school dropouts due to poverty. The project is implemented at a regional level with interventions supported in the Agency's five fields of operation and an emphasis on Lebanon and Gaza. In each field of operation, the interventions are tailored to the specific needs of the most vulnerable children. Evidence gathered in Lebanon during the field visit clearly demonstrated the effectiveness and impact of covering transportation costs on school attendance and retention for vulnerable children.

"Without transportation subsidies two-thirds of the children would not have made it through the school year." – KII with school principal

Belgium has also funded school counsellors to provide psychosocial support (PSS) to the students who face difficulties dealing with the stresses caused by poverty and domestic violence.

The evaluation team's visit to the Agency's Al Hawareth school in the Bekaa Valley and the focus group discussions confirmed that the financial contributions (thanks to Belgian funding) to the most vulnerable families do make a difference. Some 610 students (out of a total of 814 students) receive school transportation support. If no transportation costs

are provided then only an estimated 300 students would be able to attend school. This was evident when there was a delay in 2021 in the Belgium funding agreement being approved. This meant that for one month transportation costs were not covered and students were not able to reach their schools. Because of UNRWA's dire financial situation the agency is unable to advance funding for activities that do not fall under their programme budget and which are expected to be financed separately by donor countries.

There is an opportunity for the Agency to improve the outcome level reporting for donors, which is acknowledged by UNRWA management. The EiE strategy has been developed by the UNRWA Education Department in HQ Amman with contextual and operational adaptations at the field level. From the EiE reports to Belgium, it is difficult to gain a full appreciation of the results achieved so far. While EiE clearly makes a difference to the lives of vulnerable children who would otherwise not have access to education, UNRWA is not able to fully reflect this in its reporting. EiE is a programme funded by different donors. From the UNRWA EiE reports it is difficult to gain an understanding of how different initiatives funded by different donors complement one another. At the moment the reporting is done to individual donors and the report does not all donor supported initiatives.

It is not evident whether there have been strategic dialogues on EiE between UNRWA HQ and D5. Belgium has been a trusted donor for EiE and it is the evaluation team's opinion that funding should continue to be provided. Based on a strategic review and priority settings agreed by both sides it is recommended that the project should be provided with a minimum three-year funding cycle to prevent delays in the approval processes, which have negatively impacted on school attendance in the past. The budget should, however, be reviewed to ensure that assistance to the students is being prioritised and is based on needs and with no distinction made between PRL and PRS students.

Overall, supporting school transportation costs has been critical in ensuring access to education for the most vulnerable refugee students. The intervention was therefore well targeted.

WFP – Cash / Food Assistance – 2020 - ongoing

WFP's response is aligned with the Emergency Response Plan (ERP) for Lebanon. The ERP is strictly humanitarian and calls for time-bound assistance to save lives and alleviate the suffering of targeted populations.¹⁶ In 2020, Belgium provided two contributions to WFP Lebanon: (i) EUR 1.5 million for life-saving food assistance using CBT; and (ii) EUR 2.5 million for the emergency response following the Beirut port explosion. In July 2021, D5 gave WFP Lebanon the approval to use both 2020 contributions for the emergency in-kind food distribution scale-up. Both grants were extended – until December 2021 for the emergency response grant and until January 2022 for the CBT grant. Both grants were utilised to respond to the needs of vulnerable Lebanese households.

The evaluation team appreciates the arguments underpinning WFP's decision to switch from CBT to in-kind food assistance. However, for Belgium, supporting cash assistance is part of its objectives in its humanitarian strategy.

The initial proposal to the Government of Belgium, after the Beirut port explosion, was for one month in-kind food assistance to families followed by CBT to vulnerable Lebanese families based on criteria to identify the most vulnerable groups (household income, elderly, disability, female-headed households) and economic vulnerability indicators. WFP has established mechanisms for both in-kind food and CBT assistance. The purpose of the CBT intervention was to increase household purchasing power to enable people to meet their food and other basic needs. In-kind food distribution to the most vulnerable people

¹⁶ Emergency Response Plan Lebanon 2021-2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/lebanon-emergency-response-plan-2021-2022-august-2021-enar>

affected by the port explosion was to be gradually phased out while CBT would be scaled-up for the most affected and vulnerable to boost the local economy, support recovery and meet basic needs.

In practice, cash assistance was not provided and was totally replaced by in-kind food assistance. This choice was explained during KIIs with WFP management and during a site visit by the evaluation team to the WFP warehouse in Beirut.

The justification provided by WFP was that food access and availability had become major issues with food prices out of reach for most and with retailers facing serious challenges to restock and keep their businesses afloat. Rising inflation and price fluctuations and the challenges of adjusting the currency value of CBT meant that in-kind food assistance was selected as the only viable modality for the emergency response to ensure beneficiaries' food needs were fully met.¹⁷ An additional element that influenced the decision was the lack of sufficient funding to provide cash assistance to vulnerable Lebanese in a sustainable manner over a longer time period. The in-kind food distribution modality was already set up when the funding from Belgium arrived. Belgian funding was not sufficient to allow for a new set up of a complementary CBT system.

The evaluation team visited one of the distribution sites in Beirut close to the port explosion area and managed by one of WFP's local partners. The evaluation team found that the site was very well managed, efficient and respecting beneficiaries' dignity and confidentiality.

Based on the feedback received from women in the FGD it is evident that the intervention was well received and made a difference in families' lives. However, all participants highlighted that while the in-kind food assistance made a difference, the preference would have been a top-up of cash assistance. The same composition of the food basket contributed to dissatisfaction with consuming the same foods. Families missed having fresh produce and were not able to afford dairy products, meat or vegetables and fruits. At the same time, the women stated that they did not want the in-kind food distribution stopped entirely, mainly because of their inability to afford these food products given increasing market prices.

"Nobody in the government is helping. There is increased poverty and hunger. A monthly salary of 1 million Lebanese Lira is now worth USD 30, enough to buy one bottle of cooking oil. Children are dropping out of school because parents can't afford the fees and schools are often not opening because salaries are not paid. Kids pay the price." – Woman participating in the FGD

UNHCR – Multi-purpose cash assistance – completed

UNHCR Lebanon supports both Lebanese communities and refugees. UNHCR coordinates the protection response for all refugees in Lebanon with the Government, UN agencies, as well as local and international partners, including registration; protection/border monitoring and advocacy; legal aid; civil documentation; psychosocial support; child protection; prevention and response to gender-based violence; and resettlement to third countries.

UNHCR is targeting 144,000 households (or 707,827 individuals) to receive multi-purpose cash assistance on a monthly basis in 2022. The number of households eligible for cash assistance are all refugees living below the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB), which is currently 264,000 households (or approximately 1,320,000 individuals) for Syrian refugees.

¹⁷ WFP Lebanon. Country Strategic Plan (2018-2022). Proposal to the Government of Belgium. WFP Lebanon Annual Country report 2021, pg 15.

UNHCR's financial requirements in Lebanon have not been met for a number of years and it is expected that for 2022 UNHCR's operations in Lebanon will be significantly underfunded. As of 7 June 2022, only 29% of the financial requirements (total of USD 534.3 million) were met.¹⁸

Belgium provided multipurpose cash assistance to UNHCR Lebanon to meet the needs of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees during the periods 06/2017 – 06/2019 and 09/2019 – 09/2020. Since then, no additional project funding has been provided to UNHCR in Lebanon. However, Belgium has remained a donor providing unearmarked contributions to UNHCR's operations globally.¹⁹

It was not clear from the reports, or from the key informant interviews, whether it was Belgium's decision or UNHCR's to not allocate funding to Lebanon after 2020. Seen the increased vulnerability of the refugees in Lebanon the evaluation is of the opinion that not providing support to a leading humanitarian actor to support critical cash assistance to the most vulnerable is not aligned with Belgium's humanitarian strategy.

UNOCHA – Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF)

In 2021, Belgium was the largest contributor to Lebanon's Humanitarian Fund, which is managed by OCHA. In 2021, total contributions worth USD 27 million were made, of which 8.4 million was given by Belgium. Belgium was the only donor in 2021 with a multi-year contribution agreement, whilst Belgium also sits on the advisory board of the fund. An overview of the different donor's contributions in 2021 is given in **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**

During the in-country mission, the focus of engagement with UN-OCHA was on the localisation strategy of the LHF. Under LHF allocations in 2021, USD1.9 million was indirectly sub-granted by International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) to National NGOs (NNGOs) and 4.6 million directly to national NGOs.

Funds channelled directly through national NGOs – at 18% - remain below target as per the Localisation/Grand Bargain Commitments. The Fund management has acknowledged this shortcoming and is making efforts to increase the direct funding to the NNGOs through induction meetings, support via the project cycle, and providing feedback and guidance when submissions were unsuccessful.

Amel association

In Lebanon, the local NGO Amel is implementing a project focused on gender-based violence (GBV) entitled "Développement d'espaces sécurisés de prévention et de gestion de cas de violences basées sur le genre au Liban". The project has a budget of EUR 927,942.91, covering a duration of 24 months across the period 2021-2022, and is funded from the transition assistance supported under D5.2, which focuses on the interface between humanitarian aid and development cooperation.

Gender-based violence is heightened during crises, and this was particularly clear in the COVID-19 pandemic. In Lebanon, this was exacerbated by the political, socioeconomic, and humanitarian crises which the country has faced. Through a holistic approach, the project aims to strengthen protection against GBV by providing support to victims, sensitization, the development of innovative methodologies, the provision of safe spaces and the engagement of local authorities. With implementation in five centres in the Bekaa, Beirut, Mount Lebanon and South Lebanon regions, a target population of 25,000 is being reached.

¹⁸ UNHCR Funding Update 2022. Lebanon as of 7 June 2022. Shared by UNHCR Lebanon.

¹⁹ <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2022/03/UNHCR-Lebanon-Operational-Fact-Sheet-Jan.-2022.pdf>

2.4. Efficiency of modalities

2.4.1. EQ6 – To what extent have the modalities for implementing DGD interventions through programs and projects been conducive to achieving their respective objectives?

Annual approval processes for projects, as well as for two-year funding rounds for programmes, limit efficiency and effectiveness, especially in a protracted crisis situation and for a donor with limited resources to provide follow-up. The distinction between projects and programmes is found not to be relevant if Belgium is adopting an approach where humanitarian funding is:

- a. allocated based on needs;
- b. provided to contracted partners based on their capacity and strengths in addressing those needs.

Yearly approval processes for projects risk causing delays in the delivery of services owing to the potential for delays in the signing of contracts (section 2.3).

Belgium has funded a number of interventions, including the ones implemented by UNRWA and WFP, that are also supported by other donor agencies. However, Belgium only appears to be engaging with other donors if the funding is for the country-based Pooled Fund, given that Belgium is a member of the Fund's advisory board. The evaluation found that this is a missed opportunity for Belgium as a donor. Complementing other donor funding is an effective approach in a context where needs are high and cannot be met by one donor alone.

2.5. BAHIA project

2.5.1. EQ7 – What initial lessons can be drawn from the BAHIA project regarding the relevance and appropriateness of increased flexibility in the financing of humanitarian actions?

BAHIA funding has allowed the partner NGO Caritas in Lebanon to adjust and respond to the needs of vulnerable communities affected by Covid-19.

The evaluation team visited Caritas, Lebanon, to discuss the funding received under BAHIA. Caritas received EUR 700,000 for a period of up to 12 months. BAHIA's flexibility in adapting activities to the need as long as they fall within the logframe previously agreed upon, and the funding having been received punctually allowed Caritas to tailor specific activities to the needs of the vulnerable communities affected. This enabled Caritas' support for multipurpose cash assistance; the operation of oxygen concentrators; equipment for children with disabilities; as well as hot meals to vulnerable Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian, and migrant households. Lebanon's issues were compounded by the occurrence of both the Beirut port explosion and the Covid-19 pandemic at the same time. The BAHIA funding provided the flexibility to support both small and medium enterprises (SMEs) impacted by the port explosion.

For Caritas Lebanon there was no noticeable difference between BAHIA funds and other funding received from D5 through Caritas Belgium.

BAHIA did not contribute to improved coordination on the ground between NGOs receiving BAHIA funding since only Caritas Lebanon was implementing BAHIA funding. Having a number of multiple partners funded through BAHIA would have enabled the partners to work together in a complementary manner that would have supported mutual learning.

2.6. Organizational efficiency

2.6.1. EQ8 – To what extent has the DGD given equal attention to the following tasks in order to achieve the objectives of the humanitarian strategy: strategic steering, execution and delivery of funds, quality control of program and project implementation?

Under Belgium's public service setup, staff members with a background in development or humanitarian assistance are not always posted in countries with humanitarian crises. This results in a steeper learning curve for those posted in a country experiencing a humanitarian emergency. Having a more strategic focus and limited interventions would enable staff members to be more informed, which would bring added value to their engagement in-country.

Not having a qualified national staff member in charge of following up on humanitarian and development engagement in Lebanon reduces the knowledge base and institutional memory for Belgium's engagement in the country. Additionally, given that Belgian staff members change on average every four years, often with no overlap in personnel to ensure continuity, lack of local knowledge in the office impacts negatively on Belgium's engagement and interaction with stakeholders.

Transparency in communication with partners needs to be strengthened. For partners, it is not always evident why funding is not continued. This is especially relevant in a protracted crisis with reduced humanitarian funding and where it is good practice to inform the partners early as to whether the funding will be limited to one or two years or whether there will be a continuation. Furthermore, when funding is given as part of an ongoing cash assistance programme to refugees, then funding should especially be allocated for multiple years to allow the partner(s) to plan the disbursements.

The underlying motivation for the identification and selection process of project interventions and partners is not always evident. This is reflected in the emergency response to the Beirut port explosion where funding was allocated to WFP to provide cash assistance to those affected by the explosion. The allocation was changed to support WFP's in-kind food assistance programme, at the request of WFP, for vulnerable Lebanese communities affected by the economic crisis.

The resources available at the embassy level are deemed insufficient when it comes to undertaking all the responsibilities carried out by the Belgian Embassy in Beirut, including the follow up of development and humanitarian interventions in addition to the regular consular services and representations.

The division of roles and responsibilities between Brussels (D5), representative offices of UN agencies and the Belgian Embassy in Beirut is not sufficiently clear. Based on the evidence gathered for this evaluation, there is not sufficient input from the Embassy in the selection process. It is not evident if this lack of consultation aims to alleviate the burden on Embassy itself. This lack of engagement results in the Embassy being insufficiently informed and unaware of Belgium's humanitarian engagement in Lebanon.

The documentation for project processing is not sufficiently comprehensive. The PRISMA data base was found, in some instances, to not have been updated with the most recent documentation or figures. Adaptations to project titles or implementation modalities by partner agencies were not always accurately reflected.

Overall, the quality of reporting from UN agencies could be improved and more feedback could be provided to Belgium on the results and changes achieved, especially where funding was provided for consecutive phases of the same project.

2.7. Connectivity and Sustainability

2.7.1. EQ10 - To what extent have projects and programs integrated the Humanitarian Aid and Development Policy Nexus? How can we best establish the conditions of connectivity to ensure a sustainable effect of humanitarian interventions, when they are intended to last? (see also EQ 4)

Nexus programming – bridging emergency relief and development – remains limited in Lebanon, including under what is funded by Belgium. One intervention implemented by Amel Association (Lebanese national NGO registered in Europe) is a project that aims to connect both a humanitarian and a development approach to provide access to basic health services, including a safe space for women SGBV survivors funded by Belgium. In parallel, Amel Association works with the Lebanese Ministry of Health to provide capacity building and strengthening of services in neglected geographical areas.

The issue of nexus programming is becoming even more important at a time when Lebanon is experiencing unprecedented multiple crises. The humanitarian situation for most of the population – both Lebanese and refugees – is becoming increasingly dire, resulting in the donor community having to make key choices on how to best support the country. Key informants highlighted that, moving forward, humanitarian interventions for Lebanon should align with the country's economic recovery plan, in conjunction with holding the government to account and ensuring that the most vulnerable are reached. This should be achieved in a manner whereby the setting up of parallel systems is avoided.

Whilst the LCRP clearly advocated for support to Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese communities, feedback indicates that the approaches were not sufficiently developed to effectively support both communities equally. This has contributed to increased tensions that currently exist between Lebanese and refugee communities. In fact, based on in-country consultations, it is evident that the economic opportunities developed by various humanitarian actors are geared towards addressing short-term needs and are not sufficiently considering sustainability where feasible and linked up with actors to address the longer-term needs of the Lebanese population.

The project supported under D5 (Nexus/Transition funding) is a solid project reaching vulnerable women survivors of SGBV with a holistic support package. While the evaluation recognises the positive results, it questions why this project was supported under Belgium's nexus/transition funding. This project could have been alternatively supported through humanitarian funding or development funding. This points to the fact that D5 needs to further develop an approach that is clearer in what it aims to achieve through its funding allocation for nexus programming.

Quote: "Persons in need, victims of violence, see no meaningful distinction between emergency and development assistance, between livelihoods and survival". (Barnett – Empire of Humanity)

2.8. Belgium's added value in the country / visibility

Belgium is considered a stable and flexible donor by humanitarian actors in Lebanon. Belgium is one of the smaller donors when the total humanitarian funding volume to the country is considered. But Belgium is an important and critical donor for the LHF and agencies such as UNRWA. However, Belgium has limited resources in the country to follow up and engage with diversity of partners it supports. Key informants indicated that, at the moment, the diversity of the funding and partners does not support an 'identity' for Belgium nor does it facilitate the selection of a niche or focus area for Belgium. Belgium can bring an added value in certain sectors but needs to be strategic in order to make a difference.

2.8.1. EQ9 – Effectiveness of advocacy and visibility: To what extent do interventions contribute to advocacy and visibility of humanitarian crises among the general public?

Visibility given to Belgium's funding in communities being supported needs to be confirmed. Partners follow the instructions provided by the Embassy, but the evaluation team queries whether this is always consistent with the visibility given to Belgium's funding in other countries. In one instance, the symbol used in communities to signify Belgium as a donor does not use the Belgian national colours or even mention 'Belgium'.

2.9. Lessons from Lebanon for Belgium's humanitarian strategy

Belgium relies on the strategies and knowledge of the partners it chooses to support. Decisions on funding are not guided by its own analysis or priority setting. Belgium has, therefore, not sufficiently developed its own view on where funding should be allocated to ensure that the most vulnerable are targeted.

This is especially the case for targeting Lebanese households. The focus should be on extreme poverty and avoiding creating aid dependency. Similarly, this should be the case when supporting refugee communities, which should be guided by socioeconomic conditions and protection concerns.

Belgium is not sufficiently strategic in its humanitarian engagement and is more often seen as a financial donor sharing the burden of the Syria response or the Lebanese crisis with the international community. This is, however, not sufficient and Belgium's voice in supporting collective messaging and advocacy on priority concerns should be developed.

The absence of a strategic focus results in a variety of interventions with several agencies and covering several different sectors. In-country this is a challenge as the limited available staff are not able to engage across all aspects of the humanitarian response, nor are they able to effectively engage with such a wide variety of agencies. At the moment, the limited capacity and presence in the country are recognised as limitations.

The lack of focus means that interventions are taking place in different sectors. Being spread so thinly across many sectors makes it more difficult for Belgium to provide added value. Belgium may choose to continue providing support to multiple actors and limiting dialogue and monitoring to an annual occurrence. But this should not prevent Belgium from having one priority area for the country in order to provide added value. There is the possibility to choose this niche area in consultation with like-minded smaller donors or to provide support to certain areas in consultation with an agency like ECHO.

For its broader engagement – in addition to the area where Belgium chooses to provide added value – transparent criteria are currently absent. Criteria for Lebanon should be formulated based on Belgium's humanitarian strategy. In addition to selection criteria, Belgium is not sufficiently clear in its communication to partners on the duration of funding or why funding is stopped.

Belgium does not sufficiently align or coordinate with other like-minded donors. However, for Belgium to be part of existing coordination mechanisms it needs to have a strategic focus and be clear on the niche areas where it wants to bring added value. Working with other donor agencies would give Belgium the opportunity to share in the monitoring of partners as well as to share technical expertise.

Localisation is not being promoted enough by Belgium in its interventions. Similarly, proper localisation through facilitating a meaningful role for local partner organisations is not sufficiently prioritised by agencies who are funded by Belgium, either directly or through pooled funding mechanisms. The role of local organisations at the grassroots level is not sufficiently considered in a crisis where cohesion between different population groups is under pressure. Local actors are better able to mitigate a crisis, however their financial absorption capacity is not being sufficiently considered.

The roles and responsibilities between Beirut Embassy and D5 Brussels require clarification. Resources are limited for both, but this should not prevent minimum decision-making being shared.

At the desk in Brussels there is no country focus with responsibilities being divided by agency. This prevents Brussels from having an overall perspective on what the priorities are in Lebanon and the gaps in assistance. If this knowledge and focus does not exist in Brussels then at a minimum the overall view of the humanitarian needs and priorities in Lebanon should be provided by the staff in the Belgian embassy in Beirut.

Annex A: List of people met

| Organization | Title |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Belgium Embassy | Ambassador of Belgium |
| | Deputy Head of Mission |
| UNRWA | Chief Field Education Programme, Lebanon Field Office |
| | Education Coordinator, Psychosocial Support Programme |
| | Deputy Director (Programmes) |
| | UNRWA Acting School Principal, W-Hawaret School, Bekaa |
| UNHCR | Deputy Representative (Protection) |
| | Senior Programme CBI (Cash Based Interventions) Officer |
| | Associate Reporting Officer |
| OCHA | Head of Office |
| | Head of Humanitarian Financing Unit |
| WFP | Deputy Country Director |
| | Head of Partnerships & Communications |
| | Head of Retail/Supply Chain Unit |
| | Government Partnerships Officer |
| | Partnerships officer |
| | M&E Assistant, WFP Beirut sub-office |
| | Programme Policy Officer |
| Caritas Lebanon | Head of Grants Management |
| | Director of Programmes |
| | Programme Development and Reporting Coordinator |
| Amel Association International | Programme and Partnerships Coordinator |
| ECHO | Head of Office |

| Focus Group Discussions and site visits | |
|--|---|
| UNRWA school El-W-Hawaret School in Bekaa | FGD with 10 students (5 Boys, 5 Girls – 8 PRL and 2 PRS) – Grade 8 and 9. |
| | FGD with 6 teachers (5 Women, 1 Man) |
| | FGD with school counsellors (5 Women) |
| WFP in-kind food distribution | Site visit to the WFP warehouse in Dekwaneh |
| | Site visit to distribution facility (Forum de Beirut) |
| | FGD with 10 women receiving in-kind food distribution support. |
| Amel Association | Site visit to Mashgharah Center in West Bekaa |
| | FGD with staff (4 Women) focused on women’s health, SGBV, protection. |

Annex B: In-country schedule

| Date | Time | Organization | Activity | Unit/Department | Respondent |
|------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------------------|--|--|
| Monday 23 May | | | | Arrival in Beirut | |
| Tuesday 24 May | 7:30am-1:30pm | UNRWA | KII | CFEP Lebanon Field Office Beirut | UNRWA Education Department |
| | 3pm-4pm | | Field visit, FGDs & KIIs | CFEP Lebanon Field Office Bekaa. Visit to El Hawardet school. | School Principal, Teachers, Counsellors, Students |
| | 4pm-5:30pm | | KII | UNRWA LFO - Senior Management | Deputy Director Programmes |
| Wednesday 25 May | 9am-11:30am | WFP | Field visit & FGDs | Kost Warehouse; Food assistance distribution (in Forum Beirut) | Supply Chain staff; Cooperating Partner; Food assistance beneficiaries. |
| | 2pm-3:15pm | Caritas | KII | HQ Office | Director of Programs Head of Grants Management MEAL Officer |
| Thursday 26 May | 10am-11am | WFP | KII | WFP Country Office | (Deputy) Country Director M&E Assistant Head of Partnerships & Communication |
| | 12am-2pm | UN | KII | Former UN RC Advisor | SA and Advisor to UN |
| | 3pm-4:30pm | UNHCR | KII | UNHCR Office Beirut | Associate Reporting Officer Senior External Relations Officer Deputy Representative (Protection) Senior Programme CBI Officer |
| Friday 27 May | 08:30am-10:30am | SES | KII | Gefinor Rotana Hotel | Ambassador of Belgium Deputy Head of Mission |
| | 12-1:30pm | ECHO | KII | ECHO Office Beirut | Head of Office |
| | 2:30-4pm | OCHA | KII | OCHA Office | Head of Office LHF Manager |
| Saturday 28 May | 8:15am-2:30pm | Amel | Field Visit; FGDs; KII | AMEL association Mashgharah Center Bekaa | Programme and Partnerships Coordinator; Safe space staff members. |
| | | | | Departure from Beirut | |

Annex C: List of resources

Amel Association International. Rapport Narratif Intermédiaire. Développement d'espaces sécurisés de prévention et de gestion des cas de violences basées sur le genre au Liban.

BAHIA. Results Framework.

Croix Rouge de Belgique. Fiche Unique. Food Security for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon. Starting date 1 May 2015.

ICRC. Annual report. 2015.

ICRC. Proposal for Funding to the Belgian Government. Submitted December 2014.

UNHCR. Funding Update 2022. As of 7 June 2022.

UNHCR. Contribution in support of people of concern to UNHCR in Afghanistan, DRC, Ethiopia, Iraq, Lebanon and Chad. Annex V. Multipurpose cash assistance to meet the needs of severely vulnerable Syrian refugees in Lebanon. June 2019. (Final Report July 2021).

UNHCR. Proposal for the Government of Belgium. Support for prioritised underfunded needs in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. July 2018. (Final Report October 2019).

UNHCR. Proposal for the Government of Belgium. Contribution to UNHCR efforts related to the Syria Crisis in Lebanon and Jordan and to the Iraq situation. 2017.(Final Report October 2019).

UNHCR. Multi-purpose cash assistance to meet the needs of severely vulnerable Syrian refugees in Lebanon. 2019.

United Nations – Government of Lebanon. Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) for 2022-2023.

UN OCHA. Increasing Humanitarian Needs in Lebanon. April 2022.

UN OCHA. Lebanon Humanitarian Fund. First Standard Allocation Strategy 2022.

UN OCHA. Lebanon Humanitarian Fund. 2021 Annual Report.

UN OCHA. Lebanon Humanitarian Fund. 2020 Annual Report.

UN OCHA. Lebanon Humanitarian Fund 2021 Overview. As of 31 December 2021.

UN OCHA. Emergency Response Plan Lebanon. 2021-2022.

UNRWA. Palestine refugees in Lebanon: struggling to survive. 2022.

UNRWA. Education in Emergencies for Palestine refugee children. 2021. Phase III.

UNRWA. Socio-economic survey on Palestine refugees from Syria living in Lebanon. 2020.

UNRWA. Education Department Lebanon Field Office. Situation analysis on drop-out and out-of-school PRL/PRS children, and the barriers to children attendance and retention. June 2020.

UNRWA. PSS Activities Impact on Student's Psychosocial wellbeing. 2019-2020.

UNRWA. UNRWA Student Perception Survey Report for Lebanon. 2019.

UNRWA. Education in Emergencies for Palestine refugee children. Final Report. 18 July 2016 – 30 April 2019.

UNRWA. Lebanon Field Office. Maintaining the resilience of Palestine refugees from Syria in Jordan and Lebanon. Final Evaluation Report. Funded by EU Madad. 2019.

WFP Lebanon 2021 in review.

WFP. Cash assistance in response to the Beirut explosion. Proposal to the Government of Belgium. 2020.

WFP. Country Strategic Plan (2018-2022). Proposal to the Government of Belgium. 2021.

Annex D: Abbreviations

| Acronym | Definition |
|----------------|--|
| AAP | Protection and Accountability to Affected People |
| ADE | Aide à la Décision Économique |
| AMEL | Amel Association International |
| BAHIA | Belgian Alliance for Humanitarian International Action |
| CAR | Central African Republic |
| CBI | Cash Based Interventions |
| CBT | Cash-Based Transfers |
| CFEP | Chief, Field Education Programme |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus 2019 |
| CRB | Croix-Rouge Belge |
| DGD | Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid |
| DRC | Democratic Republic of the Congo |
| ECHO | European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations |
| EiE | Education in Emergencies |
| EQ | Evaluation Question |
| ERP | Emergency Response Plan |
| EU | European Union |
| EUR | Euro |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| FPS | Federal Public Services |
| FTS | Financial Transparency System |
| GBV | Gender-Based Violence |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| HA | Humanitarian Assistance |

| Acronym | Definition |
|----------------|---|
| HCT | Humanitarian Country Team |
| HQ | Headquarters |
| ICRC | International Committee of the Red Cross |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| LCRP | Crisis Response Plans Lebanon Field Office i |
| LHF | Lebanon Humanitarian Fund |
| MEAL | Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| OCHA | Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| ODA | Official Development Assistance |
| PRL | Palestine refugees in Lebanon |
| PRS | Palestinian refugees from Syria |
| PSEA | prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation |
| PSS | psychosocial support |
| SA | Special Adviser |
| SES | Service de l'Évaluation Spéciale |
| SGBV | Sexual and gender-based violence |
| SMEB | Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNOCHA | United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| UNRWA | United Nations Relief and Works Agency |
| UNRWA LFO | United Nations Relief and Works Agency Lebanon Field Officer |
| US | United States |
| USD | United States Dollar |
| VASyR | Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon |
| WFP | World Food Program |