

The Role of Misinformation on Cash and Voucher Assistance for Social Cohesion in Lebanon

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Acknowledgements

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Executive summary

Background

Since 2019, Lebanon has been experiencing a prolonged socioeconomic crisis, exacerbated by political instability, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Beirut Port explosion in 2020, and regional conflicts. The country also hosts the highest number of refugees per capita globally, particularly from Syria, and major aid operations since 2011. Humanitarian Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) has been a critical response mechanism, providing essential support to both Syrians refugees and vulnerable Lebanese populations. However, the use of CVA has also become a point of contention, fuelling social tensions between Lebanese citizens and Syrian refugees.

Objectives

This report, commissioned from Key Aid Consulting by CAMEALEON, investigates the role of misinformation surrounding CVA in influencing perceptions and its subsequent effects on social cohesion in Lebanon. It focuses on the social cohesion between and within Lebanese and Syrian communities since the 2019 economic and financial crises in Lebanon. The study aims to contribute to mitigating the negative impact of misinformation around humanitarian CVA on social cohesion in Lebanon and more specifically to:

1. Determine the main pieces of (mis)information circulating around CVA that cause social cohesion issues in Lebanon;
2. Identify the causal pathways through which (mis)information translates into public misperceptions in Lebanon;
3. Assess the impacts of (mis)information around CVA on behavioural patterns and social cohesion.

These findings will inform programmatic actions to mitigate the impact of misinformation on social cohesion, improve the communication strategies of humanitarian actors, and strengthen advocacy at the political level.

Methodology

This study uses a mixed-method approach and relies on a thorough desk review, an analysis of social and traditional media, interviews with 18 key informants from the media and humanitarian organisations as well as group discussions with 125 Lebanese and Syrian CVA and non-CVA recipients in four regions of Lebanon.

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Pieces of (mis)information

The study identifies eight significant beliefs about CVA, covering a range of issues categorised in five themes:

- **Aid bias:** Those receiving CVA are not necessarily those who need it the most, targeting is opaque and based on luck. Coverage is partial (mostly perceived as Syrian receiving proportionally more support than Lebanese).
- **Unfair job competition:** Receiving CVA enables Syrians to accept lower wages, leading to unfair competition between Lebanese and Syrian low-skilled workers on the labour market.
- **Unequal access to services:** Illustrated by the perception that CVA helps Syrians access better schooling options, disadvantaging Lebanese children.
- **Diversion strategies:** Beliefs around both Syrian and Lebanese families manipulating the aid system, such as Syrians having more children to qualify for higher amounts of assistance.
- **Political agenda:** The allocation of international aid funding to Lebanon is politically driven.

They have all led to heightened mistrust of international aid organisations, increased social tensions between and within communities, and, in some cases, direct acts of violence.

Causal pathways and Spreading mechanisms

Misinformation about CVA spreads through several channels, including:

- **Interactions with aid workers:** Misinformation often originates from interactions between aid or social workers and recipients, and is then spread by word-of-mouth within communities.
- **Social media:** Platforms like Facebook, X, and WhatsApp are primary sources for disseminating misinformation, which quickly spread to large audiences.
- **Traditional media:** Some mainstream media outlets have been amplifying misinformation and politicising CVA issues, particularly in relation to refugee support.

In both Lebanese and Syrian communities, misinformation thrives on the lack of transparency in aid targeting. This is compounded by the broader political climate in Lebanon, where tensions between these two communities have historical roots. Focusing solely on the main pathways through which misinformation spreads and becomes public is limiting. It is also important to consider the broader context of individuals and the cognitive biases that influence their thinking.

Four case studies annexed to the report illustrate the causal pathways and spreading mechanisms.

Impact of misinformation

Misinformation has negative effects on social cohesion. It has fuelled physical violence, evictions, hate speech, and political unrest, with Syrian refugees often being scapegoated for Lebanon's economic difficulties. Both Lebanese and Syrian communities exhibit growing mistrust of one another, and within each community, between CVA recipients and non-recipient, and of the aid



The Role of Misinformation on Cash and Voucher Assistance for Social Cohesion in Lebanon sector. Misinformation has contributed to a sense of social fragmentation within and between communities. In particular, the belief that certain groups are unfairly benefiting from CVA has weakened communal ties and increased social tensions.

Several behavioural patterns have emerged or changed as a result of misinformation, including i) the misrepresentation of one's circumstances to appear more eligible for CVA; ii) fact-checking: communities tend to verify rumours through informal channels such as social media or personal networks, often reinforcing misinformation rather than clarifying it; and iii) tension-driven actions: in some cases, misinformation has led to protests, destruction of property (e.g., ATMs used by Syrians), and discriminatory actions such as curfews and evictions targeted at Syrian refugees.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: Topics of misinformation around CVA in Lebanon strongly align with major elements of dissatisfaction around aid globally.

Conclusion 2: The spread of misinformation often starts with frontliners.

Conclusion 3: Lack of transparency, especially around the targeting of CVA, provides a fertile ground for misinformation and leads to mistrust of international organisations.

Conclusion 4: Misinformation on CVA can harm social cohesion.

Recommendations

An overarching recommendation is to strengthen efforts on transparency and accountability related to the PMT targeting approach. This may require a fundamental revision of the PMT targeting approach and should be discussed as a priority by the main CVA actors and donors. While it is usually recommended as a first step to be proactive and prevent the spread of misinformation, the study shows that misinformation on CVA in Lebanon has already harmed social cohesion and led to mistrust of CVA actors. Rebuilding trust is therefore the first step recommended.

Recommendation 1: Work with the actors that the community already trusts

- **Build local networks of actors trusted by the community:** Trust in CVA actors is eroded and people need to feel confident with their source of information. They have to be identified at the local level. Understand who is trusted and why.
- **Develop clear and simple messages – first and foremost on targeting:** Use the existing CVA coordination structure in Lebanon to agree on messaging and build on the work already carried out in the humanitarian community.
- **Connect the identified trusted networks with reliable actors** who have accurate information about CVA.

Recommendation 2: Build or reinforce a two-way communication with the community

- **Listen actively to people and close the feedback loop:** Asking people what has disappointed them helps to rebuild trust and to identify misperceptions. Closing the feedback loop with communities on their information needs also strengthens the information ecosystem.



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- **Be transparent about your track record of reliability:** Each organisation has its own limitations, starting with its budget restrictions. Public criticism should not be covered up to avoid laying the ground for misinformation.

Recommendation 3: Enhance capacity for pre-bunking and debunking misinformation

- **Allocate or reinforce resources for communication within the operations:** These resources should be mainly allocated to operations typically under the Accountability to Affected Populations component.
- **Develop a specialised misinformation toolkit leveraging global knowledge:** Include training modules, misinformation detection tools and monitoring indicators.
- **Train aid workers, volunteers and “actors trusted by the community” (“debunking”)** on the misinformation toolkit.
- **Develop resilience to misinformation (“pre-bunking”):** Organise workshops with the communities on strategies to detect and resist manipulative messages before they disseminate.
- **Monitor false rumours around CVA online and offline:** Gather data from social and traditional media analyses, as well as offline data piggybacking on existing surveys and assessments. Act quickly on monitoring results: Debunking false rumours is much more difficult the longer you wait.

Recommendation 4: Strengthen partnerships and advocacy

- **Collaborate with alternative media outlets** such as Megaphone, Jaafar talk, Nabad, and Shababik and develop a healthy information ecosystem with independent media outlets.
- **Advocate for policy change with a focus on enhancing the government's role in combating misinformation.** Create alliances to advocate for improved content moderation policies on tech platforms.

Recommendation 5: Promote referrals to community healing and support initiatives

- **Promote referrals to development programmes such as healing and reconciliation programmes** between Syrian and Lebanese communities.

Recommendation 6: Leverage technology for information dissemination

- **Develop a one-stop shop digital platform** to provide evidence-based information about CVA.



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Acronyms

CFM	Complaints and Feedback Mechanism
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance
DNN	Deep Neural Network
E-NPTP	Emergency National Poverty Targeting Program
ESSN	Emergency Crisis and COVID-19 Response Social Safety Net Project
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organization
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
LBP	Lebanese pound
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LOUISE	Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organisational System for E-Cards
MPC	Multi-Purpose Cash
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSPS	National Social Protection Strategy
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PMT	Proxy Means Test
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
USD	US dollar
VASyR	Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees



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WB World Bank

WFP World Food Programme

Terminology

The table below provides definitions for key terms used in the report.

Table 1: Key terminology¹

Term	Definition relevant to this study
Anchoring effect	This refers to the common human tendency to rely too heavily on the first piece of information encountered (the "anchor") when making a judgement or a decision, even if that information is inaccurate or irrelevant.
Causal pathway	The following definition best corresponds to the way Key Aid intends to use the term Causal Pathway in this study: "The processes or pathways through which an outcome is brought into being." ² In other words, what are the factors, processes and pathways through which misinformation translates into perception or belief. E.g.: what explains why individual X believes that Syrian refugees steal jobs from the Lebanese? Is it their social status, the information they have access to, their personal bias or all of these factors?
Confirmation bias	This is the tendency to seek out, interpret and remember information that supports one's pre-existing beliefs or opinions , while ignoring or dismissing information that contradicts them.
Debunking	Debunking or fact-checking is the correction of misinformation ; it also involves addressing why the misinformation is incorrect and/or providing accurate information.
Misinformation	The literature differentiates between the terms misinformation, disinformation and malinformation. ³ In this study, misinformation is used as an umbrella term to include false or inaccurate information, rumours, contextless information and lack of information, and therefore disinformation and malinformation.
Perception	The University of Michigan defines perception as "a thought, belief, or opinion, often held by many people and based on appearances." ⁴ For this study, perception is understood as someone's belief vis-à-vis a piece of misinformation. Perception and belief are used interchangeably.
Pre-bunking	Pre-bunking is a proactive strategy that counters potential misinformation by warning people and equipping them with psychological resistance through exposure to weakened arguments or common manipulation techniques.

¹ HiveMind. "Disinformation and 7 Common Forms of Information Disorder." 2022.

² University of Michigan. "Causal Pathways: Definition," n.d. <http://www-personal.umd.umich.edu/~delittle/Encyclopedia%20entries/Causal%20mechanisms.htm>.

³ Misinformation involves the unintentional spread of inaccurate information, often due to genuine mistakes or misinterpretation. Disinformation involves the deliberate dissemination of false information with the intent to deceive or manipulate, serving specific agendas or causing confusion. Mal-information entails the intentional release of private or confidential information for personal, corporate, or political gain.

⁴ University of Michigan. "Causal Pathways: Definition," n.d. <http://www-personal.umd.umich.edu/~delittle/Encyclopedia%20entries/Causal%20mechanisms.htm>.



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Proxy Test	Means A targeting method used to estimate households' socio-economic vulnerability (like in Lebanon) or consumption levels indirectly by assessing observable characteristics rather than directly asking for income data. PMT uses a statistical model that requires a representative survey with information on expenditure (proxy for income), food security indicators and a variety of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics as well as a registration database containing relevant variables. ⁵
Spreading mechanisms	The various methods or channels through which information is disseminated or circulated among individuals or groups.

⁵ Adapted from [UNHCR, WFP Joint guidance Targeting of Assistance to Meet Basic Needs](#).

I. Background and objectives

I.1. Context (as of August 2024)

Since 2019, Lebanon has undergone a series of grave crises; all of which have fundamentally affected the country's socioeconomic fabric. Lebanon's economic and financial crisis was ranked as one of the ten worst globally since the 19th century (and potentially in the top three).⁶ In 2022, the World Bank (WB) reclassified Lebanon from its upper-middle income status to a lower income one.⁷ The country's liquidity crisis has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Beirut Port explosion, an enduring political stalemate, and spillover effects of the war in Gaza. Since October 2023, an alarming escalation of hostilities in South Lebanon has led to internal displacement and casualties. As of 15 August 2024, 111,940 individuals have been displaced from South Lebanon.⁸ Lebanon also hosts the highest population of refugees per capita in the world. Of the 1,5 million Syrian refugees living in Lebanon, half only were registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as of December 2023.⁹

The Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) targets 1,5 million Lebanese, 1,3 million displaced Syrians and 168,026 Palestinian refugees.¹⁰ As per the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) 2023 overview report, most humanitarian needs are in the social stability,¹¹ health, energy and food security sectors.¹² To respond to these, Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) has been used at scale by a variety of actors, both as part of the humanitarian response and as an instrument for social assistance. For the past few years, the use of CVA as an aid modality has been challenged by the depreciation of the Lebanese pound (LBP), rampant inflation and fluctuating exchange rates. Joint advocacy from the humanitarian aid community towards the government led to the reintroduction of a dual currency redemption (LBP and USD) in May 2023 (as it was the case before the bank crisis of 2019).

National social assistance targeting mainly poor Lebanese households has been scaled up since 2019, while humanitarian CVA targeting mainly displaced Syrians has decreased due to funding cuts. In February 2024, the government launched its first National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS), which includes a shock-responsive component.¹³ As government ownership is increasing, the

⁶ World Bank, "Lebanon Economic Monitor – Lebanon Sinking (To the top 3)", Spring 2021.

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/394741622469174252/pdf/Lebanon-Economic-Monitor-Lebanon-Sinking-to-the-Top-3.pdf>

⁷ World Bank. "Lebanon Overview," November 2022.

⁸ OCHA, "Flash update #25", August 2024

⁹ UNHCR, Factsheet Lebanon, December 2023. <https://www.unhcr.org/lb/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2024/01/UNHCR-Lebanon-FactSheet-December-2023-Final.pdf>

¹⁰ LCRP 2024 mid-year update.

¹¹ Social stability in the context of the LCRP means "supporting municipalities, local institutions and other conflict resolution actors within all communities, so as to prevent social tensions generated or exacerbated by the Syrian crisis from resulting in conflict between and among the displaced, and /or between the displaced and host communities", according to the Glossary of the Social Stability sector, 2019.

¹² UN OCHA. "Escalating Needs in Lebanon: A 2023 Overview." 2023.

¹³ It covers Lebanese citizens and migrant workers legally residing in Lebanon and their families. It assigned all matters related to refugees and displaced persons to the international community. <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/10986/file/NSPS%20-%20Strategy%20Overview%20EN%20.pdf>



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existing social assistance is still heavily dependent on international funding and remains fragmented across three programmes.¹⁴

Under humanitarian aid programmes, CVA is mainly delivered as multi-purpose cash (MPC) through the joint WFP-UNHCR multi-purpose cash operation. MPC is distributed through three projects with identical implementation methods and transfer values: UNHCR and WFP's joint Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance, WFP's Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance and UNHCR's Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance. Additionally, WFP provides food e-vouchers redeemable at contracted shops to help refugees with food needs. UNHCR runs cash programmes for refugees, including protection cash, cash for shelter, and winter cash assistance. The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), the Lebanese Red Cross, Mercy Corps, Action Against Hunger and World Vision are also delivering CVA to Syrian refugees and poor Lebanese households.

Lebanon's multiple crises have deepened longstanding structural issues, including an unreliable power supply and inadequate water systems, while exacerbating the country's economic downturn, political instability, and social unrest. These challenges have particularly strained sectors like education and health care, fuelling anti-refugee rhetoric in both the media and online platforms.¹⁵

CVA has been part of the anti-refugee rhetoric, with posts and comments on social media portraying refugees as benefiting disproportionately from assistance at the expense of Lebanese citizens. This has intensified the narrative that refugees are responsible for draining resources and social services. Past experiences, including the use of CVA prior to 2019, have played a significant role in shaping this rhetoric.¹⁶ The resentment that began developing in earlier periods has now become more pronounced on social media platforms. This growing hostility has contributed to deteriorating communal relations and increased the number of violent incidents, underscoring the lasting impact of these narratives on Lebanon's present social cohesion.¹⁷

The quality of **Lebanese intra-group relations** has significantly deteriorated since 2019 and is worsened by the inability of municipalities to provide basic services in times of crisis.¹⁸ In 2018, only four percent of Lebanese perceived negatively¹⁹ their intra-group relations, while 32% did in April 2024.²⁰ For the same periods, **Lebanese-Syrian intercommunal relations** were rated negatively respectively at 21% and 33%. Looking at how Syrians and Lebanese view their intercommunal relationships offers an important nuance: Syrians perceive their relationships with Lebanese much more positively than the Lebanese do. At their highest negative level, more than half of the Lebanese interviewed qualified their relations with Syrians negatively; while less than a third of Syrians did. In

¹⁴ (i) The emergency National Poverty Targeting Program (E-NPTP) targeting the poorest Lebanese households with MPC; (ii) the Emergency Crisis and COVID-19 Response Social Safety Net Project (ESSN), also known as AMAN, expanding its reach to the extreme poor in a shock-responsive manner. Together, the E-NPTP and ESSN programmes are estimated to assist 23 percent of Lebanese resident households according to the World Bank, [Social Assessment Lebanon Emergency Crisis and Covid-19 Response Social Safety Net Project, February 2023](#); and (iii) the National Disability Allowance that provides cash transfers for people with disabilities.

¹⁵ See for example: Justin Salhani, Targeted: How Misinformation Puts Lebanon's Syrian Refugees in Danger, 2024.

¹⁶ House of Peace and UNDP. Conflict Sensitive Cash Assistance in Lebanon. March 2, 2023.

¹⁷ UNDP "What is Up on WhatsApp? A study on the impact of WhatsApp on tensions in Lebanon", 2024.

¹⁸ See [ARK/UNDP Dashboard on social tensions throughout Lebanon](#)

¹⁹ "Negatively" refers to "negative" or "very negative".

²⁰ See ARK/UNDP, Factsheet on [Regular Perception Surveys on Social Tensions throughout Lebanon](#), Wave 18, 2024 (see Wave XVIII, April 2024 and Wave IV, June 2018).



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April 2024, only 11% of Syrians perceived their relations with the Lebanese negatively, while 35% of Lebanese did.

I.2. Scope and objectives

The overall objective of this study is to contribute to mitigating the negative impact of (mis)information around humanitarian CVA on social cohesion in Lebanon. The study sheds light on the lived experiences of Syrians and Lebanese in relation to (mis)information on **humanitarian CVA since 2019**, i.e. since the economic and financial crises in Lebanon. It also identifies the pathways through which (mis)information contributes to misperceptions and negative outcomes for social cohesion among the Lebanese and Syrian communities. The study focuses on social cohesion within and between the Lebanese and Syrian communities.

There are **three specific objectives**:

1. Determine the main pieces of misinformation circulating around CVA that cause social cohesion issues in Lebanon;
2. Identify the causal pathways through which misinformation translates into public (mis)perceptions in Lebanon;
3. Assess the impacts of misinformation around CVA on behavioural patterns and social cohesion.

The findings will **support humanitarian organisations** to strengthen (i) social cohesion considerations in context analysis and risk assessments; (ii) communication with Syrian and Lebanese communities, across CVA recipients and non-CVA recipients; and (iii) advocacy efforts at political level. The study does not provide specific guidelines or a toolkit on how to tackle misinformation – this falls out of its scope. Instead, **it provides recommendations and case studies highlighting ongoing efforts in Lebanon.**

The study is contributing directly to the 2022–2023 LCRP, which highlights the need to mitigate tensions (particularly between Lebanese and Syrians) and risks in order to avoid compromising *"partners' ability to continue or scale-up transfer values and coverage"*.²¹ The recommendations complement and contribute to important efforts from the humanitarian and development sector²² as well as from media organisations.²³

²¹ Government of Lebanon and United Nations, "[Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2022-2023](#)", p.67, January 2022

²² Such as UNDP guidance on conflict sensitivity, ARK–UNDP platform on social tensions; Social Stability Working Group.

²³ "Megaphone" for example provides a critical angle to major news in Lebanon and debunked on Instagram eight myths circulating about Syrian refugees in May 2023 [Megaphone | منغافون | The racist campaign against Syrian refugees is founded on a set of lies and myths that have been systematically propagated in media and... | Instagram](#)



II. Methodology

II.1. Methodology overview

The research team collaborated closely with CAMEALEON throughout all phases of the consultancy, consisting of the following steps:

Figure 1: Consultancy steps



The study used a mixed-method approach, incorporating a thorough desk review, social media scoping and analysis, traditional media analysis, key informant interviews (KIIs) with media and humanitarian experts in Lebanon and focus group discussions (FGDs) with both Lebanese and Syrian CVA and non-CVA recipients in four different regions in Lebanon (see Table 2). The study focuses on the use of cash and voucher by humanitarian organisations, and FGDs participants were sampled based on their status towards humanitarian CVA (recipient or non-recipient).

During the inception phase, eight key pieces of (mis)information about CVA were prioritised as contributing to social cohesion issues in Lebanon.²⁴ The research team used the following criteria to support identification: (i) the link with CVA and relevance to the work of humanitarian aid agencies; (ii) the feasibility of providing actionable recommendations to mitigate the impact on social cohesion; (iii) the balance between the Syrian and Lebanese perspectives; and (iv) the prevalence within the three data sources: the desk review, the preliminary KIIs and the social media scoping (triangulation). Education was selected to represent the perceptions around access to services (by CVA and non-CVA recipients as well as Syrian and Lebanese households).

Figure 2 below provides an overview of the data collection methods and number of data sources within each.

²⁴ See [Social media scoping](#) for the full list of (mis)information identified.



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Figure 2: Data collection overview

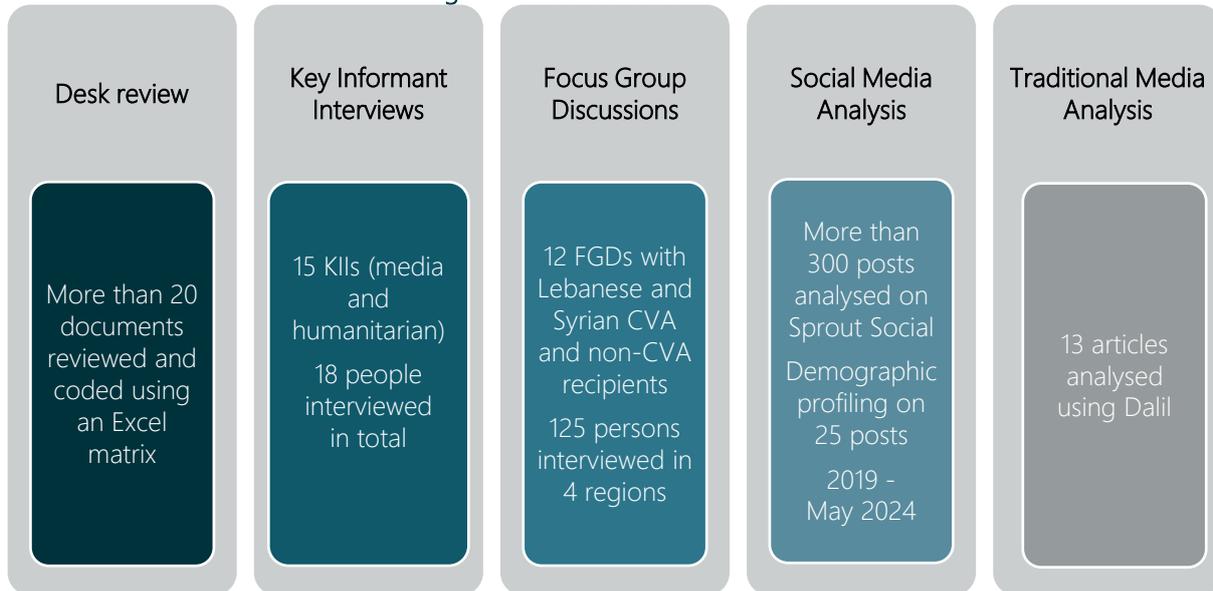


Table 2 below summarises key information per data collection method and a detailed methodology is available in Annex [IX.4 Detailed methodology](#).

Table 2: Key points per data collection method

Desk review	Key Aid used the desk review for two purposes: (i) to get acquainted with the topics of the study and to identify sources of social tensions as well as pieces of misinformation related to CVA, and (ii) to collect and gather data for each of the research matrices' indicators during the data collection and analysis phase.
KIIs	During the inception phase, Key Aid conducted 9 remote preliminary key informant interviews with a questionnaire inspired by the ToRs' research questions. Key informants included both media and humanitarian aid specialists, which was crucial to get both perspectives to refine the research scope of the study. During the data collection phase, Key Aid conducted 6 key informant interviews. The objective of these KIIs was to collect additional data from informants working closely with aid recipients and to complement the data collected during the preliminary KIIs.
FGDs	The objective of the FGDs was to shed light on the causal pathways that link misinformation with misperceptions, and to compare the findings from the field with the social media analysis. Key Aid conducted 12 FGDs across Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Bekaa and the North regions . The sample included both men and women, elderly people and youth, as well as people with disabilities. Participants were either current self-reported CVA recipients, or non/former CVA recipients (even if they were receiving another type of aid at the time of the data collection).
Social Media Analysis	Key Aid used the Sprout Social Software to analyse more than 300 posts about CVA on X and Facebook . Key Aid further conducted peaks analysis to investigate any significant peaks in misinformation dissemination as well as demographic profiling on a selective sample of the total dataset, which was examined in a qualitative manner.



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Traditional Media Analysis	Key Aid used Dalil – an AI-powered tool that detects misinformation through its press article analyser so the user can evaluate articles for accuracy, objectivity and reliability – for a traditional media analysis. Dalil also makes it possible to quantify bias and propaganda.
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Following data collection, Key Aid facilitated a recommendations co-construction workshop with CAMEALEON and other relevant stakeholders. The objective of the workshop was to **co-construct actionable, impactful, and feasible recommendations on the basis of the study’s findings**. Key Aid presented the study findings and their preliminary recommendations, which were then collaboratively discussed and constructed. Final recommendations are presented in this report, in [section VII](#).

II.2. Limitations and mitigation measures

The table below highlights limitations to the research study and the mitigation measures assessed or adopted.

Table 3: Limitations to the research study and mitigating measures

Limitations	Description	Mitigating measures
Security and access constraints	Geographical areas for the FGDs had to be limited to Beirut, Tripoli, Mount Lebanon and Bekaa. Baalbek and the South were excluded due to the security situation. Akaar was removed as CAMEALEON’s partners were not carrying out programmes there.	Based on experience, the research team discouraged the use of online FGDs and CAMEALEON’s partners strongly advised against including IDPs from areas that cannot be visited (due to ongoing challenges faced by the IDPs). These areas had to be excluded.
Insufficient participants who are “non-CVA recipients” to conduct FGDs	Non-CVA recipients were difficult to identify as, by definition, they are not on CAMEALEON partners’ lists.	Participant lists from other programmes were used. However, the distinction between former CVA recipients and non-CVA recipients could not be made.
Insufficient access to WFP and UNHCR MPC recipients	CAMEALEON did not have access to the lists of those receiving multi-purpose cash from WFP and UNHCR, which are the main actors delivering humanitarian CVA in Lebanon.	The Social Media analysis and the desk review (in particular the 2023 evaluation of UNHCR/WFP joint action for multi-purpose cash assistance in Lebanon ²⁵) could partially mitigate this issue. The research team relied on CAMEALEON’s partners and on NRC’s multisectoral needs assessment data carried out in 2022 and 2023 in Lebanon.

²⁵ UNHCR & WFP. Evaluation of the UNHCR/WFP Joint Action for Multipurpose Cash Assistance in Lebanon (2019–2021). 2023



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Lack of buy-in of the study's recommendations and risk of duplicating other initiatives	Many studies have been published in relation to social cohesion in Lebanon. Some alternative media and CVA actors are already carrying out initiatives to counter misinformation on CVA; and organisations such as UNDP are dealing with social stability issues in Lebanon at scale.	A "user-centred" approach was adopted through contacting CVA actors and media from the very beginning (KIIs). The organisation of a workshop to co-construct the recommendations with partners was essential to build on current initiatives and ensure buy-in. The case studies are also an essential part of the research to foster knowledge-sharing on best practices.
Limitations inherent to the use of a social media software	Technical limitations are detailed in the methodology section of the social media analysis. They pertain to the automation of the sentiment analysis, dialect and spelling variations, limited detailed geographical data and demographic filtering as well as limitation in historical data before 2022 for Facebook.	The research team assessed thoroughly the social media listening software available in the market. Sprout Social was the one that offered the most robust analytics within a reasonable budget (following negotiations). The research team and CAMEALEON had initially thought that the demographic profiling could support the FGDs' sampling. However, considering the limitation in demographic filtering, Key Aid suggested a sampling plan based on identified variables (CVA and non CVA recipients/ Lebanese and Syrian households) from the literature review and the KIIs.

III. Pieces of (mis)information

What are the main pieces of (mis)information circulating about CVA that caused social cohesion issues in Lebanon from 2019 to 2024?

Eight key pieces of (mis)information about CVA were prioritised as contributing to social cohesion issues in Lebanon. They were identified through social media scoping, preliminary key informant interviews and a desk review. Field-testing revealed that these pieces of information are perceived differently by participants; some hold more weight than others; and a fact-checking exercise concluded that not all are false rumours. Recognising the influence each piece of information holds and understanding how it distorts the truth is crucial to identifying targeted entry points for mitigating the impact of misinformation through recommendations.



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This section discusses eight main pieces of (mis)information and analyses: the “weight” of each piece, i.e. how much it circulates (using FGDs, social media analysis and KIIs);²⁶ how differently it impacts distinct groups (as per the sampling done for the FGDs); and to which extent it is a false rumour or not, which was done through a fact-checking exercise (using the desk review and KIIs). These are summarised in the below table.

²⁶ The research team used the categories “low, medium, high and very high” to qualify the weight of each piece of (mis)information; and whether it was the opinion of, respectively, “less than the average”, “about the average”, “more than the average” or “well beyond the average” of the stakeholders, which was then triangulated. All along this section, the research team points to the source of information triangulated (social media analysis, KIIs and FGDs) including to how many KIIs and FGDs were of that opinion.



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Table 4: Final selection of rumours

Themes	Existing pieces of (mis)information about CVA	Weight	Fact-checking
Aid bias – Targeting and legitimacy of CVA programmes. Those receiving aid are not necessarily those who need it the most: aid is inadequate or does not reach the most in need.	(1) Syrians receive CVA without any targeting. Lebanese people are left behind by international aid programmes. <i>(Lebanese perspective)</i>	Very high but nuanced	False
	(2) Syrian refugees receive “better aid” in dollars, while the Lebanese receive CVA in lira. <i>(Lebanese perspective)</i>	Low (in 2024) Used to be high	False
	(3) Some Syrians go back to work in Syria and return to Lebanon just to collect aid. <i>(Lebanese perspective)</i>	Medium	Difficult to verify as a result of limited monitoring
	(4) International aid organisations are more attentive to Lebanese people’s voice than Syrians’. <i>(Syrian perspective)</i>	Low	False
Labour market CVA impacts job competition between Lebanese people and Syrians.	(5) CVA exacerbates tensions on the labour market by enabling Syrian refugees to accept lower wages, driving competition for low-skilled jobs. <i>(Lebanese perspective)</i>	Medium	Difficult to verify as a result of limited evidence
Education CVA helps Syrians to access school, thus disadvantaging Lebanese.	(6) Schooling is provided free of charge for Syrians, which disadvantages Lebanese. <i>(Lebanese perspective)</i>	Medium	Difficult to verify as a result of limited evidence
Diversion strategies People take advantage of the aid targeting system.	(7a) Syrian families give birth to many children to receive more CVA. <i>(Lebanese perspective)</i>	High	Difficult to verify considering the nature of the statement
	(7b) Lebanese families live with extended family members to fit into the criteria to receive aid. <i>(Syrian perspective)</i>	High	Difficult to verify considering the nature of the statement
Political agenda Aid is politically driven	(8) International aid is politically driven, with an agenda to sustainably keep Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Such manipulation narrows down resources available to support the Lebanese nationals. <i>(Lebanese perspective)</i>	High	Beyond the scope of the study



III.1. Targeting is based on luck

This (mis)information holds the most significant weight, i.e. the greatest volume of circulation among all the pieces of (mis)information identified.

In eight of out 12 FGDs, participants consistently believed that targeting was done based on luck, without any pre-defined criteria. In only one FGD, a few participants mentioned that NGOs explained the targeting criteria. Similarly, according to ARK–UNDP perception surveys, as of April 2024, only 23 percent of Syrians and Lebanese²⁷ thought that international assistance goes to those who need it the most. This is a sharp decline from May 2019, when 52 percent had a positive view of international assistance targeting.²⁸ Both Syrian and Lebanese respondents expressed general frustration in FGDs *vis-à-vis* CVA targeting, perceiving the process as inconsistent, opaque, and seemingly random or luck based.²⁹ **The idea that CVA recipients (Lebanese and refugees alike) receive assistance without targeting was echoed multiple times in FGDs by Lebanese and Syrian recipients and non-recipients.** FGD participants reacted intensely when asked about CVA targeting, with emotions ranging from anger to frustration, in all regions visited. Lebanese recipients complained that targeting depends on the “mood” of the person conducting the targeting exercise, while some Syrians felt similarly confused and excluded due to a lack of clear criteria. The persistence of these beliefs has significantly affected perceptions of fairness and equity in aid distribution, especially for the Lebanese (see next section).³⁰

The social media analysis underscores frustrations among the Lebanese community in particular, believing that Syrian refugees receive aid unfairly, leading to accusations of partial treatment. This is further explained in the next section (see section III.2). Two examples of posts selected from the social media analysis:

“No association calls except for someone financially well-off, but a poor person, they don't help him.”

“Despite having a card from the UN, I don't benefit from it at all. And despite having two children under the age of two, the luxury you talk about is just something we see on phones. Many things were promised in the name of my children, but unfortunately, we didn't see anything.”

Fact-checking: Targeting is based on a complex formula and is opaque. Targeting for CVA is programme specific, yet fact-checking on targeting confirms its opacity. As early as 2017 a study on humanitarian MPC Proxy Means Test (PMT) targeting in Lebanon highlighted frustration among the community as agencies had not been sharing the targeting formula with the community nor with field staff. It revealed similar quotes from FGDs e.g. “It is luck! The computer picks names and assistance is given to those names”.³¹ In 2016³² UNHCR and WFP initiated a joint PMT “desk formula”

²⁷ With minor differences in the perception between Syrians and Lebanese.

²⁸ ARK/UNDP, Overview of Communal Relations in Lebanon, Wave XVIII, April 2024 and Wave V, May 2019.

²⁹ In eight out of 12 FGDs, participants believed that targeting has no criteria and is based on luck.

³⁰ In six out of 12 FGDs, participants perceived consistently aid distribution as subjective and that the amount varies.

³¹ Lebanon Cash Consortium (LCC), “Community consultation on targeting”, July 2017

³² While the 2017 above-mentioned study on targeting was being carried out



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targeting approach in collaboration with other CVA actors meaning that no household visit was needed anymore.³³ This complex econometric formula is derived from the Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees (VASyR) run through the UNHCR proGress database that holds data on all refugees known to UNHCR.³⁴

Such targeting approach is described in the literature on Lebanon and globally as opaque and poorly understood by many, including humanitarian actors.³⁵ The formula is kept secret by both the government of Lebanon (for social assistance) and international organisations.³⁶ This is usually explained as a need to avoid prospective beneficiaries from manipulating or misrepresenting their assets. In Lebanon, weak rule of law and issues of corruption at government level may also drive this opacity.

There is a widespread recognition of the PMT targeting approach's limitations and advantages in Lebanon. While it helps identifying beneficiaries at scale in an efficient and impartial way, it comes with trade-offs in key areas such as transparency and accountability towards beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of aid.³⁷ This is especially problematic in a context like Lebanon where households who are classified as severely vulnerable are not able to be included because of funding constraints.³⁸ This leads to further confusion.

Actors in Lebanon have been taking steps to improve transparency of targeting. E.g. (i) UNHCR's and WFP's initiatives include yearly workshops on targeting and communication for outreach volunteers, the "HELP" platform³⁹ – although not aimed at Lebanese (but only at refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people) – with a (succinct) Q&A on eligibility for cash assistance, a General Cash Q&A (for frontliners, call centre operators, and partners), including sections on how targeting is done; and a video on eligibility and selection for cash assistance;⁴⁰ and (ii) Mercy Corps' recommendation to "adopt a targeting approach that is easily understood by communities. The humanitarian imperative of assisting the most vulnerable needs to be balanced with the do-no-harm principle and considerations around avoiding unintentional tensions in the community."⁴¹

While humanitarian key informants noted progress on targeting clarity over time, they highlighted a lack of detailed knowledge about CVA targeting criteria. KIIs with aid workers⁴² confirmed that,

³³ In 2016, a broader collaborative model for harmonising CVA operations was devised by WFP and UNHCR in collaboration with the UNICEF in addition to the Lebanon Cash Consortium (LCC) made of six NGOs led by Save the Children. UNHCR & WFP. Evaluation of the UNHCR/WFP Joint Action for Multipurpose Cash Assistance in Lebanon (2019–2021). 2023

³⁴ UNHCR & WFP. Evaluation of the UNHCR/WFP Joint Action for MPC, 2023

³⁵ e.g. UNHCR & WFP. Evaluation of the UNHCR/WFP Joint Action for MPC in Lebanon, 2023; BASIC. Key considerations for targeting social assistance [defined as cash assistance provided through social protection and humanitarian sectors] in situations of protracted crises, 2022.

³⁶ R. Hanna, B. Olken. "Universal Basic Incomes versus Targeted Transfers: Anti-Poverty Programs in Developing Countries", 2018 and this was confirmed in the case of Lebanon (CAMEALEON).

³⁷ UNHCR & WFP. Evaluation of the UNHCR/WFP Joint Action for MPC, 2023

³⁸ In June 2022, of the 264,000 households that were Severely Vulnerable and eligible for MPC, only 176,000 received it (Source: Basic Assistance Working Group). This is further aggravated by the decrease of funding since 2023, which led to scale down the number of assisted Lebanese and refugee households and of the transfer value (see e.g. [WFP annual country report of 2023](#)).

³⁹ See the HELP website here: <https://help.unhcr.org/lebanon/en/welcome/cash-assistance/>

⁴⁰ UNHCR: WFP: 2023: "Management response [to the evaluation of their Joint Action for Multipurpose Cash Assistance in Lebanon (2019–2021)]", under the recommendation 1.3.2, p.13.

⁴¹ Mercy Corps. "Will Our Opinion Matter?", 2023.

⁴² Mentioned by three KIIs.



The Role of Misinformation on Cash and Voucher Assistance for Social Cohesion in Lebanon while targeting criteria do exist, communicating them remains difficult, sensitive, and complicated, contributing to the confusion and mistrust surrounding aid distribution. KIIs underscored a nuance in the importance of balancing transparency and keeping a low public profile about the distribution of aid to Syrians and other non-Lebanese groups.⁴³ Both the desk review and the KIIs revealed that existing negative perceptions of the aid sector and of refugees in Lebanon complicate efforts to increase transparency. This pushes organisations, particularly international ones, to be as discreet as possible.

III.2. Syrians receive more and better assistance than Lebanese

While the lack of understanding of the targeting process is shared by both Syrians and Lebanese (CVA recipients and non-recipients), **the Lebanese interviewed in FGDs underscored their belief that assistance disproportionately covers Syrian to the detriment of Lebanese.** They also asserted that the assistance received by Syrians is greater in terms of amounts and better currency-wise, which intensifies feelings of unfairness.⁴⁴ The perception that vulnerable Lebanese have been neglected by international assistance has been highly prevalent among both the Lebanese and the Syrian populations. It was adhered to by 88 percent of ARK–UNDP survey respondents as of July 2017 and 81 percent in April 2024.⁴⁵

The social media analysis underscores frustrations among the Lebanese community, believing that Syrian refugees receive aid unfairly, leading to accusations of unfair treatment. The discourse circulating on social media reveals that some Lebanese demand that aid be directed to their own marginalised population, stating that aid agencies are only there for the refugees.

Similarly, the currency used for assistance sparks debates. Before May 2023, when the dollarisation of aid occurred, this piece of information gave rise to debate at national and international levels.⁴⁶ The rumour was that Syrian refugees received aid in USD (considered to be “better aid”), while the Lebanese received assistance in LBP. The social media analysis highlights assertions that Syrian refugees receive aid in USD, resulting in Lebanese claims that aid benefits refugees more than the local population. As of today, field-testing has shown that both the Syrian and the Lebanese are now aware that CVA can always be retrieved in USD for both social assistance and humanitarian aid.⁴⁷

Fact-checking:

CVA DISPROPORTIONALLY COVERING SYRIAN IS A FALSE RUMOUR

⁴³ Mentioned by 3 KIIs.

⁴⁴ Six out of 12 FGDs consistently perceived aid distribution as subjective and that the amount varies.

⁴⁵ ARK/UNDP, Overview of Communal Relations in Lebanon, Wave XVIII, April 2024 and Wave I, July 2017.

⁴⁶ Social Media analysis and KIIs; CALP Network. “Good Practice Review on Cash Assistance in Contexts of High Inflation and Depreciation - Case Study Lebanon,” 2021.

⁴⁷ All FGDs.



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Before the start of the Lebanese financial crisis in 2019, Syrians formed the vast majority of the recipients of CVA distributed by humanitarian actors, which was at the time justified by the much lower needs of Lebanese.⁴⁸ This trend has changed due to the multiple crises that have been affecting the Lebanese and the subsequent increased of CVA for Lebanese individuals (by government-led social assistance and humanitarian organisations). However, CVA for Lebanese through social assistance was slower to scale-up.⁴⁹

According to WFP, CVA is today provided to both Syrians and Lebanese at scale, through social assistance and humanitarian aid.⁵⁰ A few data from the main CVA actors illustrate the CVA coverage of Lebanese and Syrians: (i) WFP provided humanitarian CVA to 627,400 Syrian refugees in June 2024 (through MPC, cash-for-food and food e-cards); in addition, WFP reached 410,500 Lebanese with CVA in May and June 2024 through the NPTP and delivered CVA for 403,700 Lebanese enrolled in the ESSN programme on behalf of the government of Lebanon;⁵¹ (ii) UNHCR provides CVA to Syrian refugees mainly (due to its mandate): in the second trimester of 2024, UNHCR provided MPC to 410,429 Syrian and implemented other sectoral CVA programmes targeting both Lebanese nationals and Syrian refugees⁵²; and (iii) as of September 2024, the ESSN with the migration of the NPTP beneficiaries was expected to exceed the target of providing CVA to 160,000 Lebanese households (mainly through MPC).⁵³

SYRIANS RECEIVE “BETTER AID” IN TERMS OF AID MODALITY THAN LEBANESE IN SOME CONTEXTS

The selection of aid modality is sometimes done according to the nationality instead of beneficiaries preference. While government-led programmes are largely covering Lebanese through MPC, neither UNHCR nor WFP provide MPC to Lebanese. Instead, they both provide restricted CVA and WFP provides in-kind food too⁵⁴ (some international organisations do deliver MPC to Lebanese, [see section 1.1](#)). The preference of beneficiaries for MPC over CVA is well-known (both globally and in Lebanon). International organisations providing “better aid” to Syrians than to Lebanese may contribute to inter-communal tensions. It may also exacerbate Lebanese intra-communal tensions between Lebanese receiving MPC from government-led social assistance and Lebanese receiving

⁴⁸ UNHCR estimates that the proportion of Syrian refugee households in poverty was 69 percent in 2018 and reached 91 percent in 2021; while the Lebanese household poverty rate increased from 27 percent in 2018 to 75 percent in 2021. This was also confirmed by KII.

⁴⁹ CALP Network. “Good Practice Review on Cash Assistance in Contexts of High Inflation and Depreciation - Case Study Lebanon,” 2021 and World Bank Group. “Targeting Poor Households in Lebanon”. April 2020.

⁵⁰ Key informant at WFP Lebanon. “A Year In Review (2023),” March 2024; WFP. “Lebanon Situation Report – June 2024”, July 2024

⁵¹ The NPTP is funded by WFP donors and the ESSN programme is funded through a World Bank loan to the Government of Lebanon, with WFP implementing cash transfers as a service provider and therefore beneficiaries aren’t counted as “WFP’s beneficiaries” but rather as Government’s beneficiaries.

⁵² the Emergency Protection Cash Assistance to address urgent protection needs or risks, Cash for Shelter and Protection Cash programmes. No data was available on the number of Lebanese nationals supported by UNHCR through CVA at the time of writing the report.

⁵³ This includes overlaps with the previous data mentioned under WFP for ESSN beneficiaries.

⁵⁴ WFP. “Lebanon Situation Report – June 2024”, July 2024



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CVA from international organisations. There is little justification in the context of Lebanon for more restricted modalities⁵⁵.

SYRIANS RECEIVING “BETTER AID” IN USD WHILE LEBANESE RECEIVE CVA IN LBP IS A FALSE RUMOUR

Prior to May 2023, CVA to Syrian refugees was largely distributed in LBP (with the exception of a few small-scale CVA programmes that served host and refugee communities such as WFP Cash for Work and UNICEF Haddi programmes).⁵⁶ MPC and the majority of humanitarian CVA were then dollarised to counter the effects of inflation and currency devaluation, as well as reduce some protection risks.⁵⁷ CVA through social assistance to Lebanese has been distributed in USD since September 2021 i.e. a year and a half before aid to refugees was dollarised.⁵⁸ However, public sector employees were paid in LBP when the dollarisation of international aid to Syrian refugees took effect, which could have created tensions. The Caretaker Social Affairs Minister Hector Hajjar had opposed the idea of dollarizing Syrian refugees aid as “this would create unfairness since public sector employees, who go on “constant strikes” due to the deterioration of the purchasing power of their salaries, are paid in lira.”⁵⁹

III.3. Syrians come and go to collect aid

According to the aid workers interviewed, this belief is widespread. It is also one of the two pervasive rumours identified in the evaluation of WFP-UNHCR’s joint action for MPC (along with the rumour on refugees receiving aid in USD).⁶⁰ This was confirmed by the social media analysis, which identified statements suggesting that Syrian refugees receive cash through various means, including aid and jobs, and then leave for Syria and return to Lebanon just to collect payments. For example, a post claimed:

“[A Syrian] receives aid in dollars and goes down to Syria. He sends \$600 to Syria, returns to Lebanon, and benefits from selling aid items in the local market. This means he gets \$600 from the UN and \$600 from selling items, living better than a Lebanese person.”

Yet, FGD participants reacted less strongly about it, revealing that people had mixed feelings about this issue, which did not appear to be particularly contentious among the population.

Fact-checking: The authors could not verify this piece of information with full confidence due to a lack of documentation on the matter. Some KIIs indicated it is probably false and an

⁵⁵ WFP receives earmarked contributions to specific modalities from some donors (despite WFP advocacy). Other justifications for in-kind food include contingency measures in case a scale-up of in-kind would be needed, which shouldn’t be linked to the nationality. [WFP Lebanon Programme Overview - August 2024](#).

⁵⁶ Mercy Corps. “Thematic Report: End of the Lira? The Impact of Dollarization on Lebanese Households,” November 2023 and CALP Network. “Good Practice Review on Cash Assistance.” 2021

⁵⁷ CALP Network. “Good Practice Review on Cash Assistance.” 2021.

⁵⁸ WFP. “WFP Lebanon: National Poverty Targeting Programme & Institutional Capacity Strengthening.” July 2022

⁵⁹ <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1338582/unhcr-dollar-aid-to-syrian-refugees-a-mistake-hajjar-accuses.html>

⁶⁰ UNHCR & WFP. Evaluation of the UNHCR/WFP Joint Action for MPC, 2023. pp 65-66



The Role of Misinformation on Cash and Voucher Assistance for Social Cohesion in Lebanon oversimplification for the most part (i.e. travelling back and forth between Lebanon and Syria is not easy for everyone).⁶¹

III.4. Aid organisations are more attentive to Lebanese

The claim that aid organisations are more attentive to Lebanese people’s voices, as perceived by Syrians, holds less weight than expected. Although it was identified in the desk review, the data collection revealed that this belief does not circulate widely. Rather, Syrians generally feel that their needs are unmet, but they do not specifically state that aid organisations prioritise the Lebanese population; instead, they express frustration that aid organisations are not meeting everyone’s needs simultaneously. FGDs revealed that this significant frustration is shared by both Lebanese and Syrian communities about the perceived inconsistencies and lack of transparency in the aid distribution process (as mentioned previously in [section III.1](#)). This issue, rather than the notion that Lebanese voices are prioritised, is what drives much of the dissatisfaction and mistrust between the two communities.

Fact-checking: Aid organisations are not more attentive to the needs of Lebanese citizens than to those of Syrians. Rather, the coverage seemed to have been proportional to the needs taking into account government-led social assistance and within the remits of available fundings.⁶² The tensions are driven by the opacity of targeting and the distinction, across nationalities, between those receiving and those not receiving CVA.

III.5. CVA impacts job competition between Lebanese and Syrians

There is a strong belief that Syrians and Lebanese compete over the same (low-skilled) jobs, yet this competition is not necessarily perceived as being exacerbated by Syrians receiving CVA.

Competition over low-skilled jobs has been a major source of tension between Syrians and Lebanese according to ARK–UNDP perception surveys.⁶³ Participants in four FGD groups further supported this view. The general sentiment across Tripoli, Bekaa, and Mount Lebanon is that Syrians’ involvement in the labour market leads to job competition and economic strain for Lebanese people. Lebanese CVA recipients in these regions often view the presence of Syrians as economically detrimental, citing the displacement of local workers to other areas and increased competition. They expressed frustration over wage disparities and job market pressures.

⁶¹ Two KILs.

⁶² Key informant and WFP Lebanon, “A Year In Review (2023),” March 2024; WFP, “Lebanon Situation Report – June 2024”, July 2024

⁶³ One out of two ARK–UNDP survey respondents, ARK–UNDP, Overview of Communal Relations in Lebanon (since 2017 the ARK UNDP first surveys in 2017)



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However, such perceptions were applicable to all Syrians, not just those receiving CVA. Lebanese non-CVA recipients, however, expressed concerns about Syrians receiving aid while holding jobs. In some rarer cases, participants felt that the presence of Syrians had indirectly benefited them by increasing aid availability in the country.⁶⁴

Social media discussions reflected this divide: while some users argued that refugees contribute positively to the economy by filling essential jobs, the dominant sentiment was concern over the displacement of Lebanese workers and the exploitation of refugees in low-wage jobs. On social media, many Lebanese citizens expressed frustration and anger, convinced that Syrians have distorted the labour market. Hostile comments often spread, with many wishing that refugees leave as soon as possible. One user stated:

"They still get jobs, leaving Lebanese unemployed."

Thus highlighting the perception that refugees are taking jobs from local citizens and contributing to unemployment. There is also frustration among Lebanese citizens who perceive refugees as receiving preferential treatment in terms of access to employment opportunities.⁶⁵ Among key informants, two considered this issue important, while others had mixed feelings or did not react to this piece of (mis)information.⁶⁶

Fact-checking: The effects of CVA on labour markets and job competition are still debated worldwide. Some studies have stated that cash transfers that are made without an explicit employment focus tend to result in little to no change in adult labour, for the exception of the elderly and some refugees, who tend to reduce the number of hours they work.⁶⁷ In Lebanon, recent labour market analysis studies are scarce, and evidence of this remains thin. Yet, some research has shown that cash-for-work has had an impact on rural labour markets and less so on urban labour markets, with Syrians being paid to work on a seasonal basis. In the agricultural sector specifically, an increase in Syrian workers is estimated to have caused daily wages to decrease by 60 percent.⁶⁸ Other studies conducted by the World Bank, which focused on the creation of Syrian businesses, found little evidence that Syrian-run businesses displaced Lebanese businesses.⁶⁹ KIIs have also pointed out that this is a difficult matter to assess. Some suggested that it could be the case in the agricultural sector, if this occurs.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Mentioned in two FGDs.

⁶⁵ Social Media Analysis.

⁶⁶ KIIs.

⁶⁷ For example: Sarah Baird; David McKenzie; Berk Özler. "The Effects of Cash Transfers on Adult Labor Market Outcomes," 2018.

⁶⁸ Stronger Cities Consortium. "Enacting Urban Cash for Work Programmes in Lebanon in Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis." IIED, 2017

⁶⁹ World Bank. "Lebanon - Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syrian Conflict," 2020.

⁷⁰ Two KIIs.



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III.6. Schooling is provided free of charge for Syrians, disadvantaging the Lebanese

All key informants interviewed share the same perception that CVA helps Syrians access schools. The extent to which increased access to education for Syrians has a negative effective on Lebanese students, spurred debate.

In FGDs, the perception of Syrian refugees' access to education in Lebanon revealed significant concerns among Lebanese CVA recipients and non-recipients, characterised by feelings of unfairness. In Tripoli, Lebanese non-recipients acknowledged that Syrian children have access to education. They also expressed frustration with the Lebanese national education system rather than with the refugees themselves.⁷¹ In Bekaa, Lebanese CVA recipients deemed unfair that some Syrian students attend private schools, while their own children are limited to public schools.⁷² In Mount Lebanon, perceptions of inequity are intensified by the belief that Syrian children receive preferential treatment, leading to longer waiting lists for Lebanese students.⁷³

Social media discussions echoed these frustrations, with many believing that Syrian children benefit from UN-funded education of international standards. Assertions circulate that Syrian children receive UN aid to attend school for free, while their teachers are underpaid or not paid at all due to corruption issues in the public system and negligence from aid agencies (see section III.8).⁷⁴ A post noted:

"The hired teacher, especially one with no other job, is at the mercy of UN organizations. They teach evening classes for Syrian refugee students but receive very little after the state takes a cut. Transportation costs often exceed their earnings. Meanwhile, refugee families receive monthly dollar aid from UN organizations, but the teachers get nothing and are directly exploited by the state."

Fact-checking: According to UNICEF, an increasing number of Lebanese nationals are enrolling their children in public schools to cope with the economic pressures they are experiencing, which contradicts the idea that cash for education for Syrians disadvantages Lebanese. Yet, whether it affects the quality of education for Lebanese, due to, for example, the afternoon/morning shifts put in place for Lebanese and Syrian groups, remains unclear due to a lack of documentation on the topic.

Some Syrian households receive CVA for education (including MPC allowing to cover for educational needs). The education assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs for Lebanese families has been discontinued, but other cash-for-education programmes for Lebanese households exist.⁷⁵

⁷¹ FGDs in Tripoli.

⁷² FGDs in Bekaa.

⁷³ FGDs in Mount Lebanon.

⁷⁴ Social Media Analysis.

⁷⁵ Verified by the authors through the desk review.



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- UNICEF's Cash for Education Program reached around 190 000 Lebanese children⁷⁶ in 2022 and 2023 through monthly cash assistance.⁷⁷ This includes the Haddi Programme, which targets 82,000 children (30% Lebanese, 50% Syrian and 20% Palestinian), who are already benefiting from UNICEF education and child protection services. Since mid-2021, the Haddi programme aims to provide a monthly unconditional cash grant to children benefiting from UNICEF education and child protection services.⁷⁸
- Other programmes such as Relief International's provision of cash for education, along with mental and psychological support. The cash portion of the programme is unrestricted and provided upon the condition that parents retain their children in school. The programme targets children aged between 6 and 18 years who are registered for the second shift in public schools (Syrian), but also includes Lebanese children enrolled in the first shift.⁷⁹

III.7. Aid diversion strategies by households

Lebanese and Syrian households believe different (mis)information about diversion strategies allegedly used by households from other nationalities to bypass the system and access assistance. These beliefs are circulating significantly in Lebanon, exacerbated by the opacity of targeting ([section III.1](#)). Targeting is perceived as luck-based and not legitimate; people are therefore more likely to cheat the system. While noticing the unclarity of the targeting criteria, people might still act according to what they observe in their neighbourhood, which in turns fuels misinformation. For Lebanese, Syrian families give birth to many children to receive more CVA. For Syrians, Lebanese families live with extended family members to fit into the criteria to receive aid.

All FGDs confirmed a strong belief in these claims, which often elicited intense emotions among participants. Interestingly, most FGD participants provided examples of people around them resorting to such diversion strategies but reported never acting as such themselves.⁸⁰ The social media analysis also confirmed the strong belief in these claims: the conversation often depicted the strategies employed by both Syrian refugees and Lebanese citizens. Below is a social media post related to this piece of (mis)information:

"The UN organisation, the destroyer of nations, is paying them so much. That's why they marry four wives and have many children. They have secured food cards, winter cards, school assistance cards, and free births from the UN. It's like a disguised occupation."

Fact-checking: There is no literature on diversion strategies in Lebanon, which are notoriously hard to investigate and document. Two key informants, however, suggested that UN agencies introduced

⁷⁶ See: <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/stories/transforming-lives-cash-education-program>

⁷⁷ See: <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/stories/transforming-lives-cash-education-program>

⁷⁸ See: <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/lebanons-child-grant-haddi>; and Helene Juillard; Rediet Abebe Kabeta; Dana Nabulsi. "Building a Cash Plus Response in Lebanon." CAMEALEON, 2022.

⁷⁹ Helene Juillard; Rediet Abebe Kabeta; Dana Nabulsi. "Building a Cash Plus Response in Lebanon." CAMEALEON, 2022.

⁸⁰ All FGDs.



The Role of Misinformation on Cash and Voucher Assistance for Social Cohesion in Lebanon caps on the number of eligible people per household, which render these diversion strategies ineffective.

III.8. The allocation of international aid funding to Lebanon is politically driven

This piece of (mis)information is not CVA specific but holds significant weight nationally. This was frequently highlighted by key informants, including media informants.⁸¹ It was particularly visible in the social media analysis with regard to aid in general (i.e. not CVA specific), which emphasised perceptions of political influence in aid distribution. The social media analysis showed that many Lebanese users suspect that aid is swayed by political connections and sectarian identities, with accusations of favouritism and political manipulation. Some claim that data on the refugee crisis is intentionally concealed to prevent Syrians from relocating to Europe. Feedback from FGDs was more varied and nuanced: about 60 percent agreed that CVA distribution is mainly a humanitarian effort. As an example of what the other 40 percent could feel, a female Lebanese FGD participant and CVA recipient in Mount Lebanon expressed the belief that CVA distribution was influenced by sectarian interests, which was, according to her, particularly visible in response to the Beirut Port explosion in 2020.

This piece of (mis)information about the impartiality of aid is intertwined with the first one about targeting: it questions the legitimacy of those receiving aid and challenges the trust towards the aid sector in general.

Fact-checking this piece of information goes beyond the scope of the study.

IV. Causal pathways and spreading mechanisms

What are the causal pathways through which misinformation translated into public (mis)perceptions in Lebanon in 2019–2024?

Misinformation about CVA most commonly spreads via i) information provided when delivering CVA (accurate, unwittingly or deliberately inaccurate) or during visits from aid and social actors that is interpreted incorrectly by neighbours observing them, ii) word-of-mouth with family members and neighbours, and iii) social media.

The spread of misinformation is influenced by feelings of unfairness, historical tensions, cultural values, and cognitive biases (such as people believing the first piece of information they receive even if it is not accurate). Traditional media play a dual role (i) sometimes as an amplifier of

⁸¹ Mentioned by 4 key informants.



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misperceptions about CVA and as a tool for politicising the CVA portfolio; (ii) or as a source of accurate facts on CVA.

Four case studies in annex illustrate the causal pathways.

This section examines the main pathways through which misinformation leads to false perceptions and the factors that shape those beliefs. Focusing solely on the main pathways through which misinformation spreads and becomes public is limiting. It is also important to consider the broader context of individuals and the cognitive biases that influence their thinking. While providing clear and accurate information is often seen as the solution to correcting misinformation,⁸² this approach does not account for the cognitive,⁸³ social, and emotional factors that shape how people form beliefs and determine what they consider to be true.⁸⁴

IV.1.1. Main pathways

The most common pathway through which misinformation spreads in Lebanon regarding CVA programmes typically begins with direct contact from aid and social actors. When they first approach households or contact individuals directly, this interaction often serves as the initial source of information about aid programmes. However, this first contact can sometimes lead to confusion or misinterpretation, particularly if the communication is inaccurate, missing or accurate but unclear, or if the recipients do not fully understand the process. This lack of clarity leaves room for misinformation to take root. **Following the initial contact, social media plays a crucial role in spreading misinformation.** FGD participants often turn to platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp to share their experiences or seek information. Unfortunately, social media is rife with rumours and false narratives, which can easily spread within online communities. **As such, digital literacy and high smart phone penetration rates in Lebanon are a double-edged sword in terms of spreading rumours but also getting access to information.** As misinformation circulates on social media, it begins to shape perceptions, often reinforcing misunderstandings or creating new ones. These online discussions frequently spill over into offline conversations, where word-of-mouth further amplifies the misinformation.

In Tripoli, FGDs revealed that Lebanese non-CVA recipients recognise the role of social media in spreading rumours, and often regard it as unreliable. One participant noted,

"Social media spreads rumours a lot. But we don't always believe them, it's gossip."

Additionally, participants in the Mount Lebanon FGD reported feeling angered and disillusioned by misleading social media coverage more than traditional media. This scepticism indicates a tendency

⁸² Ecker, Ullrich K. H., Stephan Lewandowsky, John Cook, Philipp Schmid, Lisa K. Fazio, Nadia Brashier, Panayiota Kendeou, Emily K. Vraga, and Michelle A. Amazeen. "The Psychological Drivers of Misinformation Belief and Its Resistance to Correction." Volume 1 (January 2022).

⁸³ UNDP. "Behavioural Science Support the Prevention of Violent Extremism." 2021.

⁸⁴ Simis, Melanie J., Heather Madden, Michael A. Cacciatore, and Sarah K. Yeo. "The Lure of Rationality: Why Does the Deficit Model Persist in Science Communication?" Public Understanding of Science 25, no. 4 (2016): 400–414.



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to dismiss social media information as not necessarily factual. The good news is that people are developing some immunity towards fake news. However, **the challenge is compounded by the lack of a reliable unified source to verify information**, leaving people confused amidst conflicting information. This situation could have been mitigated had the external communication platforms and materials been prioritised by the Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organisational System for E-Cards (LOUISE).⁸⁵

After hearing about CVA programmes through social media and word-of-mouth, individuals may decide to visit or call the humanitarian organisation directly to enquire about the assistance. This step, intended to clarify and verify the information, sometimes becomes another point where misinformation can spread, especially if the organisation's response is inconsistent with what the individual has already heard. Finally, the act of withdrawing cash at ATMs, which is visible as it is done in public, becomes a topic of discussion within communities. Seeing others withdraw cash often sparks conversations and speculation, which can lead to further spread of misinformation if the facts about who is eligible and how the aid is distributed are not clear. **This entire pathway – from direct contact by humanitarian or social workers to social media, word-of-mouth and visible actions like ATM withdrawals – illustrates how misinformation can become deeply embedded in public perceptions of CVA programmes.**

The analysis of traditional media carried out using the Dalil tool revealed that **the traditional media's portrayal of CVA** varies significantly, with articles categorised as Fact-Based⁸⁶, Questionable,⁸⁷ and Nonsense.⁸⁸ The authors selected different articles based on (i) a balance in political opinions; and (ii) the five selected themes identified during the inception phase of the study, also used in the social media analysis (see [annex IX.2.2](#)). Among the articles analysed, some were well researched and unbiased, others, particularly those discussing the labour market and political issues related to Syrian refugees, contained high levels of propaganda and emotive language, resulting in questionable credibility. The analysis of the articles selected shows 60% of articles were fact-based, 30% were questionable, and 10% were identified as nonsense. This analysis underscored the dual role of traditional media in Lebanon – providing accurate information but also acting as an amplifier of misinformation and biased narratives about CVA. This amplification of falsehoods fuels social fragmentation and anger, particularly towards Syrian refugees.

While FGDs did not state that traditional media were the main channels used to obtain information about CVA, the KIs indicated that traditional media contribute to the spread of misinformation, with

⁸⁵ [Julliard H., Pelly I., LOUISE Learning Review, February 2020](#)

⁸⁶ Articles that are grounded in verifiable data, research, and credible sources. These articles present objective information, often supported by statistics, expert opinions, and documented evidence. They aim to inform readers accurately and provide a balanced view of the subject matter, allowing for informed conclusions.

⁸⁷ Articles that exhibit signs of bias or lack of rigour in their reporting. These may include sensationalist headlines, anecdotal evidence, or a heavy reliance on opinions rather than facts. While they may contain some factual information, their overall credibility is compromised due to potential misinformation, lack of reliable sources, or a one-sided perspective.

⁸⁸ Articles that lack coherent meaning, relevance, or factual basis. These articles often contain absurd claims, misleading information, or are entirely fictional. They may be written in a way that appears legitimate but ultimately fails to convey any useful or truthful content.



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a focus on politicising the CVA portfolio, thus exacerbating misunderstandings and feelings of injustice within the community.

IV.1.2. Secondary pathways

Secondary pathways explore what influences the spread of misinformation on CVA and how misinformation shapes misperceptions.

Both Lebanese and Syrians express frustration over perceived disparities in CVA targeting, particularly Lebanese who feel that their economic struggles are overlooked in favour of refugees. Some Lebanese believe that previous patterns of aid response, particularly before the 2019 crises, favoured Syrians, resulting in a perceived disparity in CVA distribution (justified at the time by higher needs for refugees, see [section III.2](#)). Visible disparities between CVA recipients and non-recipients, and in some cases, between communities, amplify feelings of injustice, influenced by the “anchoring effect,”⁸⁹ where the visible relative wealth of a few aid recipients becomes a reference point for comparison.⁹⁰

According to the ARK–UNDP perception surveys, 55 percent of Lebanese interviewed see competition for services and utilities as a main source of tension between Lebanese and Syrians, 52 percent believe that it is the competition for lower-skilled jobs; while 78 percent feel the high number of Syrians strains resources.⁹¹ This sense of relative deprivation, where those who feel they receive less aid or face job insecurity, fuels resentment and feelings of injustice, contributing to heightened tensions and misinformation regarding CVA. Individuals interpret and spread information in a way that confirms their pre-existing beliefs (“confirmation bias”⁹²).

Even after misinformation is “debunked” or does not circulate anymore, it can still affect people because they might hold onto the original false information. This happens because people often stick to their beliefs, especially if those beliefs align with their social groups. When confronted with corrections, they might reject the new information to avoid feeling uncomfortable or to fit in with their peers. Additionally, repeated exposure to false claims can make them seem more believable, reinforcing their impact.⁹³

The circulation of fake news online and offline builds on the existing tensions between Lebanese and Syrians, threatening social stability. The same ARK–UNDP overview indicates that 88 percent of Lebanese and 59 percent of Syrians considered that their pre-existing relations do not help current community dynamics. The issue stems from Syria’s decade-long interference in Lebanon and the involvement of certain political parties, particularly Hezbollah, in the Syrian Civil War, which has

⁸⁹ Provenzale, Emanuele. "Anchoring Bias and the Primary Responsibility of People on Disinformation." IARI (October 24, 2023).

⁹⁰ Smith, Heather J., and Yuen J. Huo. "Relative Deprivation: How Subjective Experiences of Inequality Influence Social Behavior and Health." *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2014): 231–238.

⁹¹ ARK/UNDP, Overview of Communal Relations in Lebanon, Wave XVIII, April 2024

⁹² Ling, Rich. "Confirmation Bias in the Era of Mobile News Consumption: The Social and Psychological Dimensions." 2020.

⁹³ Nature Reviews Psychology, "The psychological drivers of misinformation belief and its resistance to correction", 2022



The Role of Misinformation on Cash and Voucher Assistance for Social Cohesion in Lebanon affected regional dynamics. This historical context continues to shape current perceptions, as longstanding grievances and stereotypes are used to justify tensions and negative feelings.

Negative perceptions of aid exist in both communities but are not widely accepted. For instance, in Tripoli, resentment towards Syrians receiving aid exists among Lebanese non-CVA recipients, yet not everyone shares this sentiment. As one participant stated:

"People say all around us that Syrians are better than us [receive more aid]. We don't believe that."

While resentment is present, it does not reflect a consensus. Many Syrians are aware misinformation circulates about their community. In Mount Lebanon, Lebanese CVA recipients display scepticism towards negative information about aid distribution.

V. The impact of (mis)information

What have been the effects of misinformation around CVA in Lebanon on behavioural patterns and social cohesion in 2019–2024?

V.1. Peaks in volume of (mis)information on social media and in social tensions across time

This section outlines whether peaks in the volume of messages posted on social media in relation to the (mis)information themes correlate with higher communal tensions (ARK–UNDP surveys and FGDs). It then gives an overview of the social media analysis during the peak windows selected.

The table below provides an overview of the peaks in time identified via the social media scoping, the FDGs and the ARK–UNDP perception surveys on social tensions (not for the Syrian intra-group relations due to the ARK–UNDP dashboard’s limitations).

Table 5: Peaks in social media volume of messages and in social tensions in time

Data Source	Peaks in volume of (mis)information pieces discussed on social media and peaks in social tensions
Social Media Scoping	From April to August 2020
	From May to September 2022
	From March to August 2023
ARK–UNDP	Intra-Lebanese tensions: December 2021; April 2022; and July 2022.
	Inter Lebanese-Syrian tensions: March 2019; August 2021; December 2021; July 2022; and March 2023.
FGD	Since the Beirut port explosion on 4 August 2020 (FGD in Mount Lebanon).

This overview shows two periods correlating: July 2022 and March 2023. A focus group singled out a specific event associated with lower trust within and between communities: the Beirut port explosion in August 2020. For example, one participant shared:



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"Before 4 August (2020), we all liked each other! After, there were so many tensions! Between neighbours, friends, within the communities."

In addition, the economic crisis and the fluctuating exchange rates were most prevalent between 2022 and June 2023. Overall, there is no strong correlation between the peaks in conversation on social media and the peaks of tensions identified through the ARK-UNDP surveys.

V.1.1. Social media analysis – Peak #1: July 2022

In July 2022, there were (i) higher volumes of messages posted on social media in relation to the (mis)information themes identified (social media scoping); and (ii) higher intra-Lebanese and inter Lebanese-Syrian tensions (ARK-UNDP surveys); this also coincides with the after port explosion period highlighted in FGDs.

On social media, from May to September 2022, posts about aid programmes and aid actors in Lebanon were marked by a complex interplay of humanitarian efforts, economic crisis, and sociopolitical dynamics.

Several messages highlighted the significant role played by NGOs and various UN agencies. The engagement of these organisations often fills gaps left by the state, especially in services and infrastructure, reflecting a dependency that has grown due to the state's inefficiencies or failures.

The economic crisis was a recurring theme, with messages often discussing how the crisis exacerbated the challenges of aid distribution and increased the need for support. There were mentions of the local currency's devaluation affecting how aid was given. These included discussions about receiving aid in local vs. foreign currency.

Accusations of mismanagement and corruption in the distribution of aid were prevalent. There were claims that aid did not always reach the neediest but was instead diverted to those who were politically connected or economically better off.

Many other posts also touched on broader social and political issues, such as the treatment of refugees and displaced persons, the environmental impact of local policies, and the role of international sanctions. These factors were often interlinked with discussions about aid, as political stability and policies directly affect how effectively aid can be distributed and utilised. Overall, the sentiment in these messages tended to be negative, tinged with frustration and cynicism about the motives of those distributing aid, and the effectiveness of such programmes. This reflects a broader distrust in both national and international bodies in handling the crises effectively.

Although FGD participants did not report strong tension peaks over time, they did mention these issues.

V.1.2. Social media analysis – Peak #2: March 2023

In March 2023, there were (i) higher volumes of messages posted on social media in relation to the (mis)information themes identified (social media scoping); and (ii) higher inter Lebanese-Syrian



The Role of Misinformation on Cash and Voucher Assistance for Social Cohesion in Lebanon tensions (ARK–UNDP surveys); this also coincides with the after port explosion period highlighted in a FGD. This is similar to July 2022, apart from intra-Lebanese tensions for which no peak occurred (according to ARK–UNDP surveys).

On social media, from March to August 2023, the conversations concerning aid programmes and socioeconomic conditions primarily illustrated the ongoing tension and dissatisfaction regarding the distribution and management of aid in Lebanon, affecting both local citizens and Syrian refugees. Specifically, there was a persistent frustration about the allocation of international aid, with numerous claims that aid operations were not transparent or fair. Lebanese nationals felt that aid was disproportionately directed towards Syrian refugees, often at the expense of the local population who were also facing economic hardship.

Also relevant is the discourse of aid being heavily intertwined with sociopolitical issues. There is considerable debate over the presence of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, with some advocating for their return to Syria due to the burden on Lebanese infrastructure and services, while others emphasise the humanitarian obligation to protect and support them.

The sentiment in this period was mainly negative, with intense scrutiny on aid programmes and aid actors, amidst ongoing economic challenges.

Here too, even if FGD participants did not report strong tension peaks over time, these issues are highly relevant.

Social media should be used as a tool to monitor the information ecosystem, detect misinformation as well as rumours surrounding CVA (even if not false rumours), subsequent frustrations and hate speech. UNDP-ARK regular perception surveys are a practical tool within CVA actors' grasp to take the pulse of tensions and monitor their drivers.

V.2. Negative effects on social cohesion

This section underscores some correlations between CVA (mis)information and negative effects on social cohesion including: resorting to violence, increased mistrust within communities, distrust toward the aid and public sectors, and tensions between Lebanese and Syrian communities.⁹⁴

TENSIONS AND VIOLENCE DIRECTED TOWARDS OTHER COMMUNITIES

Tensions between the Lebanese and Syrian communities are largely fuelled by misinformation surrounding CVA (e.g. opacity of targeting, unfair coverage).⁹⁵ The worsening situation in the country, exacerbated by corruption within institutions like banks and the government, has contributed to growing inequality⁹⁶ and increased pressure on the insufficient aid funding allocated

⁹⁴The research team focused as much as possible on (mis)information related to CVA. When CVA is not specified, it means that the information relates to aid more generally or that it was unsure whether it was directly attributable to CVA.

⁹⁵ All KIIs and eight of 12 FGDs.

⁹⁶ See, for example: World Bank. "Lebanon Public Finance Review: Ponzi Finance?," 2022.



The Role of Misinformation on Cash and Voucher Assistance for Social Cohesion in Lebanon to Lebanon. Intergroup tensions and violence further intensify when misinformation is exploited by political powers and amplified by traditional and social media (see section IV).

Some illustrations of the rise in intergroup tensions and conflicts:

- (1) **Violence against people:** Between 2019 and 2023, as Lebanon's economic situation worsened, reports of violence surged, including evictions, raids, physical altercations, the burning of Syrian tents, and robberies targeting Syrians returning from ATMs.⁹⁷ In 2019 already, "an estimated 10% of Syrian households assessed during the May–June VASyR reported having experienced some type of harassment," whether direct physical harassment or extortion.⁹⁸
- (2) **Vandalism:** In Tripoli for example, angry citizens destroyed an ATM of the Lebanese French Bank where Syrians were queuing and chased away Syrian refugees receiving UN funds.⁹⁹
- (3) **Political violence:** This includes discriminatory curfews imposed by some municipalities on Syrians for example, or unjustified arrests at checkpoints.¹⁰⁰
- (4) **Hate speech on social media:** The use of the hashtags "our land is not for displaced Syrians" or "no to Syrians in Lebanon" ties into the rise of nationalism.¹⁰¹ It is challenging to determine whether misinformation about CVA is fuelling increased nationalism or if the surge in nationalism is exacerbating CVA-related rumours – it is likely a combination of both (see section IV). On social media, some Lebanese expressed their lack of trust towards Syrian refugees, using violent tone and hostile comments, or their wish that refugees would leave as soon as possible.¹⁰² Many have also expressed frustration and concern over what they perceive as the preferential treatment of refugees in accessing essential services. Online abuse on social media has also included the sharing of pictures of Syrians at work with derogatory captions.¹⁰³

INCREASED MISTRUST WITHIN LEBANESE AND SYRIAN COMMUNITIES

From 2019, the economic downturn in Lebanon led to an influx of aid and increased use of CVA, which increased tensions within communities. This phenomenon is largely documented at the national level.¹⁰⁴ Fieldwork revealed that these tensions were particularly evident in Burj Hammoud (Mount Lebanon) at the neighbourhood level following the August 2020 port explosion and the subsequent CVA distribution.¹⁰⁵ The prevailing opinion was that, within the same neighbourhood, some individuals received CVA while others with similar needs did not, which fuelled tensions and increased mistrust between CVA and non-CVA recipients. In the Syrian communities, the feeling was

⁹⁷ Eight KIIs.

⁹⁸ "Social Cohesion Chapter," n.d.

⁹⁹ Social Media Analysis.

¹⁰⁰ Arab Centre. "The Plight and Politics of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," 2023; Mentioned by two KIIs.

¹⁰¹ Arab Centre. "The Plight and Politics of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," 2023; Social Media Analysis.

¹⁰² Social Media Analysis.

¹⁰³ Mentioned by one participant at an FGD in Tripoli.

¹⁰⁴ All relevant desk review documents.

¹⁰⁵ Four FGDs participants mentioned this clearly.



The Role of Misinformation on Cash and Voucher Assistance for Social Cohesion in Lebanon similar but less tied to a specific time or place. Instead, it was a more general sense that people’s needs were not being met, contributing to intracommunity tensions.¹⁰⁶

INCREASED MISTRUST OF LEBANESE AND SYRIAN COMMUNITIES VIS-À-VIS THE AID SECTOR

In some cases, the belief that targeting is unjust or random leads people to blame the aid sector more than other communities. This reflects a rise in mistrust of the aid sector among both Lebanese and Syrian communities.¹⁰⁷ This was mentioned specifically in groups where tensions within and between communities were less palpable (e.g. Tripoli) and where tensions exist within communities (Mount Lebanon), for both CVA and non-CVA recipients:

"Before the subject of NGOs arose, we were all one community, whether from different nationalities or sects/religions. NGOs have divided us."
"We feel like it's unfair, some people receive aid they don't deserve. We don't get angry at other people, we get angry at organisations."

This perception was also shared by some aid workers themselves. This sentiment is also present and apparent on social media: this includes engaging in aggressive dialogue when expressing mistrust of authorities and aid programmes:

"The United Nations just want to please the donors, which are mostly countries that want to keep Syrians in Lebanon."
"You think the aid you gave to Syrian refugees in Lebanon is assistance? No, it's not called aid; it's a mockery."
"Associations of so-called civil society and traditional leaders are partners to defend the presence of Syrians in Lebanon, because they are profiting from them."

V.3. Change in behavioural patterns

CHANGING BEHAVIOUR OUT OF FEAR

As a result of misinformation and subsequent negative effects on social cohesion, some Syrians reported changing their behaviours out of fear. For instance, Syrian men may stay indoors to avoid harassment or arrests at checkpoints, sending women out instead, leading to reliance on women for accessing basic services and seeking assistance.¹⁰⁸ Some have tried to change their accents, and others simply stay indoors.¹⁰⁹

FACT-CHECKING AS A BEHAVIOURAL PATTERN

Both aid recipients and non-recipients tend to verify circulating (mis)information, or to fact-check it. Communities sometimes consult complaints and feedback mechanisms (CFM), NGO staff or

¹⁰⁶ FGDs with Syrian participants.

¹⁰⁷ Four FGDs (Tripoli, Beirut, Bekka and Mount Lebanon).

¹⁰⁸ Example given by one KI.

¹⁰⁹ Forced Migration Overview. "Coping Strategies among Self-Settled Syrians in Lebanon," n.d; Madeline Edwards. "Syrians in Lebanon Stay Indoors as Fears of Xenophobic Violence Grow," n.d.



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UN agencies to verify the accuracy of rumours about aid targeting.¹¹⁰ This behaviour is positive because it aims to verify potentially false information.

While the reflex to check facts seems to be pertinent to Syrian communities, it seems to be less so for Lebanese communities, or less effective.¹¹¹ This is most probably due to the fact that information and communication mechanisms are better known by refugee populations than Lebanese due to the history of aid provided to Syrians in Lebanon.¹¹² Key informants identified this issue as one of the barriers preventing Lebanese communities from accessing accurate information.¹¹³ This is worsened by the fact that humanitarian organisations seem to struggle between (1) balancing the need for transparency and keeping a low profile in a highly political environment (see [section III.1](#)); and (2) the difficulties faced by organisations in being proactive in addressing misinformation, as opposed to reactive.¹¹⁴

On the other hand, individuals also happen to consult social media or turn to their social circles when wanting to fact check pieces of (mis)information.¹¹⁵ This can sometimes contribute to rumour spreading, as these channels harbour their own beliefs on the matter (see [section IV](#)).

VI. Conclusion

Conclusion 1: Topics of misinformation around CVA in Lebanon strongly align with major elements of dissatisfaction around aid globally

The research highlights eight major pieces of (mis)information that revolve around CVA or aid provided in Lebanon: i) targeting is partial and poorly executed; ii) the support received by Syrian refugees is better than the one received by Lebanese nationals in terms of currency and value; iii) aid recipients are not the most in need; iv) international aid organisations are untrustworthy; v) CVA enables Syrian recipients to unfairly compete with Lebanese nationals on the job market and (vi) to access strained services such as education; vii) those who receive assistance are manipulating the system; and viii) international aid is politically motivated.

These pieces of (mis)information do not necessarily exist because of the use of CVA at scale, nor are they specific to CVA. Some rather align with overall concerns raised on humanitarian assistance. For example, in 2018 ALNAP State of the Humanitarian System identified information provision, unmet needs, and targeting as the most common concerns raised around aid across seven countries.¹¹⁶ The pieces of (mis)information also echo the rhetoric of populist political parties globally, which often use scapegoating to offer simplistic solutions to complex economic and social challenges.

¹¹⁰ Four KIs; Example: Syrian communities inquiring about CVA coverage for Lebanese versus Syrians.

¹¹¹ Three KIs.

¹¹² For the Lebanese, see the recent initiative under the ESSN to develop a grievance mechanism. The World Bank, "Stakeholder Engagement Plan", 2023.

¹¹³ Three KIs.

¹¹⁴ Three KIs. This is often due to a lack of capacity to anticipate the spread of rumours.

¹¹⁵ Two FGDs.

¹¹⁶ ALNAP (2018) The State of the Humanitarian System



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Conclusion 2: The spread of misinformation often starts with frontliners

While misinformation is often associated with social media, its spread often starts with frontliners in the context of CVA in Lebanon. Humanitarian organisations struggled to position themselves as a trusted source of information. First, as a result of their opacity when communicating around targeting. Second, because of the limited use of methods such as rumour tracking, which have been successful in Ukraine to identify and address issues related to CVA.¹¹⁷ Findings on misinformation about humanitarian aid at global level contradict the view that keeping a low profile and not being transparent would support trust and positive perceptions of the aid sector.

Both traditional and social media have amplified misinformation, contributing to a polarised environment. Traditional media, in particular, plays a dual role, sometimes providing accurate information but also serving as a tool for political agendas, further destabilising the relationship between aid recipients and non-recipients. The politicisation of aid made it difficult to build trust in humanitarian efforts. Misinformation further erodes the social capital of CVA recipients in a context where their financial capital already drastically decreased as a result of inflation.

Conclusion 3: Lack of transparency (especially around the targeting of CVA) provides a fertile ground for misinformation and mistrust of international aid organisations

The opacity in how aid is allocated has led to mistrust between Lebanese and Syrians, and within each community, but also, of international aid organisations. The complexity of the PMT targeting formula and the lack of prioritisation and budget allocated to communication on it has limited the ability of humanitarian practitioners to clearly explain who is targeted and why. Such lack of transparency has been consistently highlighted as an impediment to accountability towards affected populations in Lebanon.¹¹⁸ Globally, the lack of transparency of PMT targeting can result in distrust and fuel social and political tensions – and even more when PMT scores are very similar between households like in Lebanon.¹¹⁹

Various studies question the appropriateness of the PMT targeting approach itself to adhere to the “do-no-harm” principle of humanitarian aid in the context of Lebanon. This may require a fundamental revision of the PMT targeting approach.¹²⁰ So far, initiatives around improving targeting have put too much emphasis on the economic formula and how to minimise exclusion and inclusion errors, rather than on a two-way communication between CVA actors and communities, improving buy-in and trust from the Syrian and Lebanese communities.

This research also shows that the lack of clear communication and consistent messaging on the content of assistance and its targeting has created confusion and frustration, making it easier for misinformation to spread.

¹¹⁷ See for example: Juillard H., Charlot C., Labaume C., Minnitt N., Chene H. (2023), Evaluation of UNHCR’s Level 3 Regional Refugee Response to the crisis in Ukraine. UNHCR: Geneva.

¹¹⁸ See for example: Smith G. (2019), Cash Assistance in Lebanon: Accountability to Affected Populations. CALP, or Mercy Corps Lebanon Crisis Analytics Team, “Barriers to Accessing Aid among Lebanese”, 2023

¹¹⁹ Rachel Sabates-Wheeler; Carolina Szyg, “Key Considerations for Targeting Social Assistance in Situations of Protracted Crises”, 2022

¹²⁰ The studies are listed in UNHCR & WFP, Evaluation of the UNHCR/WFP Joint Action for MPC, 2023. p.23. See also: Mercy Corps. ‘Will Our Opinion Matter?’, 2023.



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Conclusion 4: Misinformation (particularly around the targeting of CVA programmes) exacerbates social tensions

The study highlights that, unsurprisingly, misinformation exacerbates social tensions. Misinformation, particularly around the targeting of CVA programmes, contributed to frustrations, fuelled perceptions of unfairness, and deepened divisions. It has exacerbated violence and tensions within and between communities, including physical altercations and hate speech, particularly directed at Syrian refugees.

VII. Recommendations

The recommendations presented below build on the report's findings, the desk review as well as on Key Aid's recommendations co-construction workshop with CAMEALEON and external actors. They have been selected based on their potential impact and feasibility in the Lebanese context. The findings of this study also underline the relevance and importance of previous recommendations especially on the targeting approach.¹²¹ It is time to strengthen efforts on transparency and accountability. This may require a fundamental revision of the PMT targeting approach.

Humanitarian CVA actors should work together to counter misinformation. Undertaking it alone is impossible: even if an organisation is the first interlocutor in a specific location, its work falls within a wider landscape of misinformation. **CVA actors should leverage current initiatives in the humanitarian and media sectors – both in Lebanon and globally.** CVA actors in Lebanon should link to what is being discussed at global level on humanitarian aid and misinformation such as the "Prevention of the Harmful Impact Of Hate Speech, Misinformation, and Disinformation" under the Global Compact on Refugees.¹²² The four case studies in annex illustrate some of the initiatives in Lebanon.

While it is usually recommended as a first step to be proactive and prevent the spread of misinformation, the study shows that misinformation on CVA in Lebanon has already harmed social cohesion and lead to mistrust of CVA actors.

¹²¹ These were cited in the whole report. See in particular: UNHCR & WFP. Evaluation of the UNHCR/WFP Joint Action for Multipurpose Cash Assistance in Lebanon (2019–2021). 2023; and Mercy Corps. "Will Our Opinion Matter?", 2023.

¹²² See more here: [Multi-stakeholder Pledge: Digital Protection - Prevention of the Harmful Impact of Hate Speech, Misinformation, and Disinformation | The Global Compact on Refugees | UNHCR \(globalcompactrefugees.org\)](#)



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#	For whom?	Recommendation	Timeframe	Priority
1	Recommendation 1: Work with the actors that the community already trusts			
1.1	CVA actors	Build local networks of actors trusted by the community: Trust in CVA actors is eroded and people need to feel confident with their source of information. These trusted sources can typically be teachers, religious leaders, traditional leaders, local radio stations, women's groups, musicians, among others. They have to be identified at the local level. Understand who is trusted and why.	Short Term	High
1.2	CVA actors	Develop clear and simple messages – first and foremost on targeting: Use the existing CVA coordination structure in Lebanon to agree on messaging related to the eight CVA (mis)information pieces (including housing and health in addition to education under the (mis)information piece number six). ¹²³ Build on the work already carried out in the humanitarian community such as UNHCR's HELP platform, and UN workshops on targeting and communication for outreach volunteers to clarify the formula used (see section III.1).	Short Term	High
1.3	CVA actors	Connect the identified trusted networks with reliable actors who have accurate information about CVA.	Short Term	High
2	Recommendation 2: Build or reinforce a two-way communication with the community			
2.1	CVA actors	Listen actively to people and close the feedback loop: Asking people what has disappointed them helps to rebuild trust and to identify misperceptions. Show that the organisation cares about their point of view. Share the results of your consultations back with the communities, including on informing rejected and accepted applicants with messages that can be easily understood. Closing the feedback loop with communities on their information needs strengthens the information ecosystem.	Short Term	High

¹²³ At the time of writing the report, CVA was coordinated at strategic level through the "cash task force" that includes major donors, UN agencies and NGOs. It had an operational element, but most of the technical coordination happened within the Basic Assistance Working Group (BAWG) and the sectoral working groups (mainly the Food Security Sector (FSS) Working Group).



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2.2	CVA actors	Be transparent about your track record of reliability: Each organisation has its own limitations, starting with its budget restrictions. Public criticism should not be covered up to avoid laying the ground for misinformation. Be open to questions and criticisms. Tailor your messages around community concerns and do not leave information gaps. Not all the eight identified pieces of (mis)information are easy to fact check. Be open about it.	Short Term	High
3	Recommendation 3: Enhance capacity for pre-bunking and debunking misinformation			
3.1	CVA actors and donors	Allocate or reinforce resources for communication within the operations: Incorporate or enhance communication budget for CVA programmes. These resources should be mainly allocated to operations (instead of communication) e.g. under Accountability to Affected Populations. They should focus on the capacity of the frontliners. Also consider resources for media collaborations (see recommendation 4.1) and monitoring capacity (see recommendation 3.5). This study could serve as an advocacy tool to convince donors.	Medium Term	High
3.2	CVA actors with experts in misinformation	Develop a specialised misinformation toolkit leveraging global knowledge: Include training modules, misinformation detection tools and monitoring indicators related to the eight rumours (including housing and health in addition to education under the (mis)information piece number six). Link up with other initiatives on misinformation and humanitarian aid. For example, at the time of writing the report, UNHCR is developing a toolkit for responding to misinformation. Other humanitarian organisations working on the matter include Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). ¹²⁴ Adapt existing tools to the context of CVA in Lebanon.	Medium Term	High
3.3	CVA actors and media	Train aid workers, volunteers and “actors trusted by the community” (“debunking”) on the misinformation toolkit: Ensure that they are prepared to handle enquiries about CVA and debunk misinformation. Frontline	Medium Term	High

¹²⁴ See for example the Webinar on [“How to manage \(mis\)information in humanitarian operations - Frontline Negotiations \(frontline-negotiations.org\)”](https://www.frontline-negotiations.org/), February 2023



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		staff play a critical role in shaping perceptions, and proper training can help prevent the spread of false information.		
3.4	CVA actors with experts in misinformation	Develop resilience to misinformation (“pre-bunking”): Organise workshops with the communities on strategies to detect and resist manipulative messages before they disseminate. The workshops can showcase common fake news and misinformation strategies, helping participants recognise them. These learning events can be paired with online tools such as a common AI Chatbots for Syrians and Lebanese, which could expose users to various scenarios and educate them on how to react upon encountering different pieces of information. While new technologies offer benefits, we acknowledge that they also carry risks. This hybrid approach that integrates both human intervention and technological tools is essential to mitigate the risks associated with the use of technology. ¹²⁵	Medium Term	High
3.5	CVA actors	Monitor false rumours around CVA online and offline: Gather data from social and traditional media analyses, as well as offline data. Avoid “assessment fatigue” by piggybacking on existing surveys and assessments. For example, by adding questions on the rumours’ themes to ARK–UNDP regular perception surveys on social tensions. Other potential entry points include the Lebanon Information Hub and Lebanon Crisis Response Plan, ¹²⁶ as well as Mercy Corps’ Data Analysis Hub. ¹²⁷ Internews ¹²⁸ provides a useful methodology to evaluate an organisation’s information landscape. Act quickly on monitoring results: debunking false rumours is much more difficult the longer you wait.	Medium Term	High
4	Recommendation 4: Strengthen partnerships and advocacy			

¹²⁵ OECD (2024), Facts not Fakes: Tackling Disinformation, Strengthening Information Integrity, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d909ff7a-en>.

¹²⁶ See: [Lebanon Information Hub \(unhcr.org\)](#).

¹²⁷ Mercy Corps’ Lebanon Crisis Analytics Team (LCAT) provides reactive and in-depth context analysis to inform the humanitarian community in Lebanon. See more here: [LCAT Reports - Mercy Corps Lebanon](#).

¹²⁸ See: [Home - Information Saves Lives | Internews](#).



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4.1	CVA actors	Collaborate with alternative media outlets such as Megaphone, Jaafar talk, Nabad, and Shababik. ¹²⁹ Ensure that journalists have access to accurate, transparent information about CVA programmes. This can help alternative media reach wider audiences and can increase the credibility of information shared with both Lebanese and Syrian communities. Humanitarian organisations should not try to control the narrative. What is needed is a healthy information ecosystem with independent media outlets. ¹³⁰	Medium Term	High
4.2	CVA actors with civil society organisations and the donor community	Advocate for policy change with a focus on enhancing the government's role in combating misinformation. Collaborate with the government without creating interference to ensure policies are in place against misinformation in Lebanon. Depoliticise the issue of misinformation to achieve outcomes for humanitarian aid. It may be beneficial to learn from the work on anti-corruption that is carried out by the donor community, civil society and the Government of Lebanon under the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF). ¹³¹ Create alliances to advocate for improved content moderation policies on tech platforms (e.g., reinforcing the work done at global level ¹³² by providing data gathered from social media (see recommendation 3.5)).	Medium Term	Medium
5	Recommendation 5: Promote referrals to community healing and support initiatives			
5.1	CVA actors and development organisations	Promote referrals to development programmes such as healing and reconciliation programmes between Syrian and Lebanese communities, aiming to enhance social cohesion and mutual understanding.	Medium Term	Medium
6	Recommendation 6: Leverage technology for information dissemination			

¹²⁹ Mikdashi, Ghinwa. A Study on Alternative Media Platforms in Lebanon. With the support of Field Researchers Hassane Chaaban and Hussein El-Sherif. Arab Resource Center for Popular Arts (Al-JANA), Maharat Foundation, and DW Akademie, November 2020.

¹³⁰ Rocio Lopez Inigo, Wayne Sharpe and Katherina Thomas, "[The space between us: Understanding trust, communication and collaboration between media and humanitarian organisations in public health emergencies](#)". Internews, 2023

¹³¹ <https://www.lebanon3rf.org/anti-corruption>

¹³² <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2024/06/global-principles-information-integrity-launch/>



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6.1	CVA actors	Develop a one-stop shop digital platform to provide evidence-based information about CVA. This platform could serve both humanitarian workers and the public, ensuring that communities have access to accurate, simple, and up-to-date information. UNHCR’s HELP platform cannot serve this purpose as it does not target the Lebanese. CVA actors should refrain from counter-arguing any posts on social media as tensions may escalate. Instead, they should link to this one-stop shop platform.	Medium Term	High
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IX. Annexes

IX.1. Social media scoping

The research team used social media as both a scoping and an analysis tool during the inception phase and the data collection phase for distinct purposes (see the figure below).

Figure 3: Use of social media analysis and scoping



During the inception phase, CAMEALEON revised the ToRs' targets to give more weight to data collection through social media than through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

This section presents the outcomes of the **social media scoping** aimed at identifying prevalent misinformation pieces related to CVA in Lebanon. The analysis of the results of the scoping, which came later in the second phase of the study, were integrated within the core text of the final report. [Sprout Social listening tool](#) was employed from 19 May 2024, with backfill for X to 1 January 2019, and for Facebook to 17 May 2022.

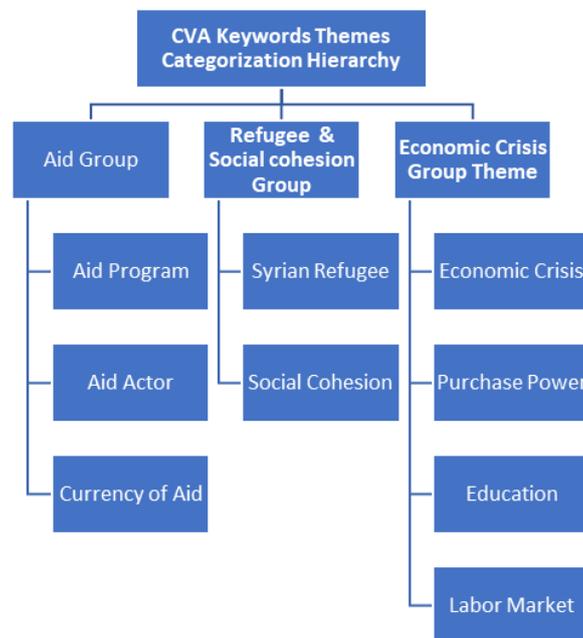
IX.1.1. Methodology

A query was created to identify how much volume is being driven by the conversation, the engagement occurring, sentiment and what they are saying over time. The **volume** is the number of messages in the reporting period. The **engagement** is the number of times messages were publicly interacted with. This includes total likes, dislikes, comments and shares on all the messages captured within the Topic. The **sentiment score** quantifies the sentiment or emotion expressed in qualitative data. The **net sentiment score** is calculated by subtracting the percentage of negative topic sentiment from the percentage of positive topic sentiment. **Entries** were filtered to include only those originating from Lebanon, with entries from elsewhere being excluded.

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The **query** encompassed predominantly Arabic keywords with a mix of keywords in English, Arabic, and Arabizi.¹³³ Due to character limitations, not all keywords preselected with CAMEALEON could be included. The remaining keywords were utilised as **filters** for the highlighted entries for classification purposes into **theme buckets**. This helped create rulesets that categorise messages into Themes. **Themes help identify patterns in messages and categorise the Topic data into distinct categories.** Themes are additional groupings to compare, filter, analyse and monitor data over time. A message is matched to a Theme if the message contains one of the keywords in the Theme query. **The Themes were organised into three Theme Groups: Aid, Economic Crisis, and Refugees.** Theme Groups help organise related Themes for comparison. By placing a Theme in a Theme Group, it is easier to analyse similar themes. This categorisation is shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Hierarchal categorisation of themes and keywords for filtering



The complete list of keywords under each theme can be found in [IX.3.4 Selection of key terms for social media queries](#).

City information was only partially captured for entries on the platform. Table 6 provides insights into the locations where some conversations were occurring, even if all accounts or entries could not be associated with a specific city.

Table 6: Number of captured entries (tweets/posts/messages) by Sprout Social Listening tool per city

Cities	Number of entries
Zahle (Bekaa)	113 entries
Beirut (Beirut)	46 entries
Jounieh (Mount-Lebanon)	13 entries
Ra's Beirut (Beirut)	7 entries

¹³³ Arabic dialect.



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Tripoli (North)	Fewer than 7
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While this methodology offers valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge certain **limitations of the Sprout Social listening tool and the overall approach**. Below are the key limitations:

1. **Sentiment Analysis:** Sprout’s sentiment default classifier uses a machine learning technique called a Deep Neural Network (DNN). When a DNN collects enough data and tags as positive, negative or neutral, the DNN can automatically figure out which words or phrases are the most relevant and ignore the rest. When Sprout receives a block of text, the DNN computes a probability score for the positive, negative and neutral labels. Sprout then selects the label with the highest probability. Given the volume of data, time, and resources available, the default sentiment learned by the system was used. Implementing a customised sentiment analysis, including reclassification with manual adjustment of sentiment ratings, would require significantly more time and resources to add to the current machine learning. Therefore, leveraging the default DNN capabilities provided the most efficient and cost-effective solution and offers a clear overview of the general sentiment of the ongoing conversation with the keywords selected.
2. **Keyword Filtering:** The necessity to hyper-filter entries due to character limitations and predefined keywords resulted in a less holistic scope. This filtering was necessary to manage the volume of data and ensure clarity in thematic classification.
3. **Dialect and Spelling Variations:** The project primarily focused on the Lebanese dialect to align with the scope of conversations originating in Lebanon. This is limited by the function's capacity available on the Sprout platform. Additionally, common spelling mistakes, like using "ø" instead of "l", were considered in the specifications provided by the team.
4. **Geographical Data:** The partial capture of city information is due to the lack of metadata attached to tweets/posts, restricting the tool's ability to provide detailed geographical data. This means that while some insights into conversation locations are provided, it does not cover all accounts.
5. **Demographic Filtering:** One of the most significant limitations is the lack of comprehensive demographic filtering capabilities. This means detailed analyses based on demographics such as gender, nationality, or CVA recipient status cannot be carried out in an automated way. Unfortunately, social media software, including Sprout Social, do not have demographic filtering capabilities. Understanding the nuances and demographic breakdown of social media discussions on aid programmes and economic crises requires an extended time sample and manual cleaning of the data to ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness. While AI and machine learning tools offer valuable assistance, they still face limitations in accuracy, bias, privacy, and contextual understanding. Therefore, a hybrid approach that combines AI capabilities with manual analysis was essential for producing reliable and ethically sound insights.



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6. **Historical Data:** The data captured for Twitter range from 1 January 2019 to 19 May 2024, and for Facebook from 17 May 2022 to 19 May 2024. This limitation in historical data is due to the backfill option provided by Sprout Social and the social media platforms.

Following the initial data collection and thematic categorisation, filtering and qualitative analysis were carried out to refine the volume of messages and identify relevant pieces of information. This phase involved several critical steps:

- **Volume Filtering:** To manage the substantial volume of data collected, a filtering process focused on the predefined themes: Aid, Economic Crisis, and Refugees. This process ensured that only the most pertinent messages were retained for further analysis. By concentrating on these themes, the dataset could be streamlined, making it more manageable and focused.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** A qualitative analysis was then conducted at the scoping stage to understand the context of the rumours and assess their relevance based on the scope of the project. Each statement was carefully examined to determine its context within the broader conversation. Statements that did not contribute meaningful insights or were off topic were excluded.
- **Misinformation Classification:** This classification was based on whether the statement contained false or misleading information that could potentially influence public perception or behaviour.

This methodology and its limitations provide a clear overview of the general sentiment and themes of the ongoing conversation with the selected keywords. These limitations necessitate a focused approach where quality was prioritised over quantity in the sample selection, aiming to glean as much insight as possible from the available data, while being mindful of the constraints imposed by the tools at our disposal. After filtering and qualitative analysis, the set of selected pieces of information was identified. These pieces of information were chosen based on their alignment with the key themes and their potential impact on public discourse.

IX.1.2. Primary results of the social media scoping

Table 7 below summarises the volume, engagements, and net sentiment scores for each theme provided by the platform to help compare key performance metrics between Themes to understand how it resonates with the audience.

Table 7: Volume, engagements and net sentiment scores for the main search themes

Theme Group	Theme	Volume	Engagements	Net Sentiment Score
Aid	Currency of Aid	1,217	51,259	-38.43
	Aid Actor	3,187	82,288	-11.06
	Aid Programme	17,694	443,572	-5.17



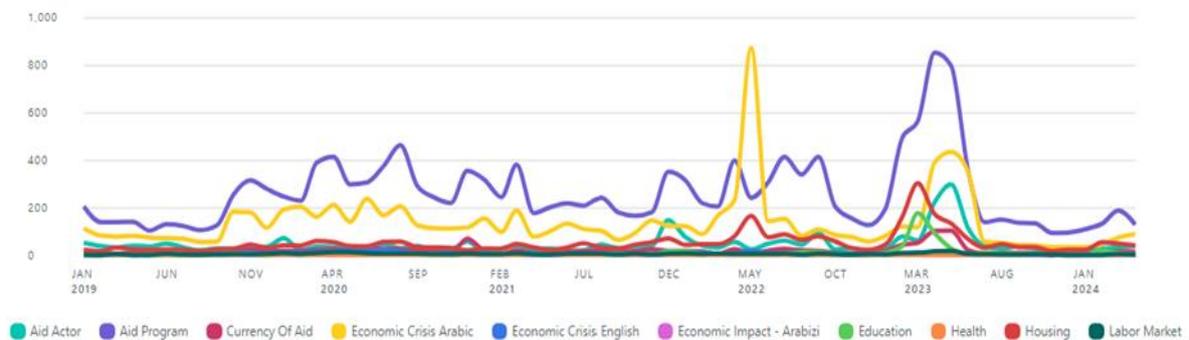
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Economic Crisis	Purchase Power	1,407	42,368	-38.84
	Labour Market	297	2,895	-16.41
	Economic Crisis	9,551	260,472	-31.05
Refugee & Social cohesion	Syrian Refugee	451	10,068	-45.17

The primary results indicate significant online discussions about various aspects of CVA programmes and the economic crisis in Lebanon. The **Aid Programme** theme had the highest volume and engagement with a **moderately negative sentiment**. **Economic crisis themes**, particularly in English and Arabic keywords, **had negative sentiment scores**, reflecting widespread concern. **Discussions about Syrian refugees** also showed **high engagement** with a **strong negative sentiment**, highlighting the contentious nature of this issue.

Figure 5 below presents the way in which conversations around Themes change over time and illustrates the temporal trends of different themes from January 2019 to May 2024. Notable peaks occur where certain themes exhibit similar trends, notably in April 2020, May 2022, and predominantly from March to August 2023, with themes such as aid programme, aid actor, economic crisis, and currency of aid overlapping. Some correlations are noticeable, like COVID-19 in April 2020 or the August 2020 port explosion, which aligns with a peak slightly before September. Timeline of events will be analysed more closely through social media analysis.

Figure 5: Volume of conversation per themes over time



IX.1.3. Preliminary analysis of the results

The scoping revealed several key misinformation pieces prevalent in online discussions surrounding CVA and the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon:

Table 8: Relevant pieces of misinformation identified through social media scoping

Aid Bias Targeting and legitimacy of CVA programmes	– Rumours circulate that Syrian refugees receive significant payments from UN agencies.
	– Accusations of aid being misused or not reaching its intended recipients, some Syrians refute receiving, claiming to live in extreme poverty and not receiving sufficient aid, along with perceptions of unfair treatment favouring refugees over Lebanese citizens.
	– Allegations that Syrian refugees receive aid in dollars.
	– Lebanese accuse refugees of benefiting more than the local population. Rumours suggest that Syrian refugees receive cash through various means, including aid and jobs, then leave to Syria and return to Lebanon just to collect payments.



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Economic Impact of Refugee Crisis	Rumours that the economic strain in Lebanon is significantly exacerbated by the presence of Syrian refugees. Many believe Syrians earn and live better than the Lebanese.
	Perceived economic strains caused by mismanagement or diversion of aid resources, with some believing that these conditions are a way for refugees to continue receiving aid.
	Belief that the economic bank fall in Lebanon is an additional reason for the Syrian economic crisis.
Labour Market	Misinformation about Syrian refugees occupying jobs, accepting lower wages, and exacerbating tensions in the labour market. There is also an implication of unfair competition for employment opportunities.
Housing, education, and health	Resentment that Syrian kids are receiving UN aid to attend school for free, while Lebanese teachers often do not receive their full salaries or are not paid at all.
	Allegations that refugees are receiving preferential treatment and resources, exacerbating housing shortages for Lebanese citizens.
	Concerns about refugees having better access to health care services than Lebanese citizens, leading to frustration and resentment.
Crimes, corruption, and theft	Accusations of crimes, corruption, and theft perpetrated by Syrian refugee groups. Some Lebanese blame refugees for the increase in crimes and corruption in Lebanon.
Diversion strategies	Allegations that Syrian refugees sell aid they receive in Lebanon.
	Allegations that Syrian refugees have more children to receive additional aid.
	Engaging in aggressive dialogue and violence over Syrians receiving aid.
	Expressing mistrust towards authorities and aid programmes.
Political Issues	Accusations that politicians and staff in control steal aid and funds meant for Syrian refugees, making huge deals and fortunes either through associations or NGOs designed to help refugees.
	Allegations of an agenda to keep Syrian refugees in Lebanon permanently and perceptions that UN agencies are manipulating aid distribution for this purpose, narrowing down all resources for living for the Lebanese.

The final selection of information pieces is presented in the core text of the final report (under [section III](#)).

IX.1.4. Selection of key terms for social media queries

The table below presents the sample of keywords under each theme:

Table 9: Sample of keywords under each theme

Themes	Keywords Arabic
Purchase Power	اسعار
	ليرة
	ليرة لبنانية
	يقبض بالليرة اللبنانية
	تضخم اقتصادي
Aid Actor	التكاليف المتضخمة
	التكاليف المعززة
	مساعدة الاتحاد الأوروبي المالية
	الأمم المتحدة
	الأمم
	منظمة غير حكومية



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	جمعيات
	قسائم الترائية
	مساعات
	معونات افضل
	تحويلات
Aid Programme	التحويلات المالية
	مساعدة
	المساعدة النقدية
	مساعدة مالية
	مساعدة اجتماعية
	دعم الأمم المتحدة
	عبي ملف
	جهات محلية
	جهات اجنبية
	المنظمات الدولية عم تدفع
	دولار
Currency of Aid	دولار فرش
	بياخو
	بيقبض دولار
	مال فوري
	حاجة
	الضغوط الاقتصادية
	التكلفة الاقتصادية
	أزمة
	الفقر
Economic Crisis	ازمة اقتصادية
	انتخابات
	ربطة خبز
	رشوة
	الاستقرار الاقتصادي والاجتماعي
	فقر
	جوع
	تراجع النشاط الاقتصادي
	تعليم
Education	المدارس الرسمية
	المدارس الرسمية اللبنانية
	اكتظاظ
	المدرسة مجانية للسوريين
	رسوم المدرسة الرسمية
Health	تضخم تكاليف المستشفيات
	المرضى السوريين
	إيجار
Housing	المستأجرين السوريين
	المستأجرون اللبنانيون
	الملاك



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	العمال الموسميين سوق العمل يقتلون بأجور أقل منافسة على الخدمات الافتقار إلى المهارات وظيفة وظائف شغل أشغال سرقة الوظائف نخفاض الأجر الأجر واسطة الضغط الوظيفي والاقتصادي التنافس الوظيفي اللبناني و السوريين تعويض العمل قطاعات الفنادق والمطاعم و عمال
Labour market	
	سوريين النازحين السوريين لاجئين لاجئين و الازمة الاقتصادية قدوم اللاجئين الازمة السورية اطفال سوريين اللاجئون السوريون
Refugee	

IX.2. Detailed methodology

IX.2.1. Social media analysis

Following the [initial scoping](#), the analysis was extended to better capture and understand the dynamics of misinformation related to CVA programmes over time.

- **Peaks Analysis:** Investigate any significant peaks in misinformation dissemination, as shown in Figure 5. This analysis is presented [in section V.1](#).
- **Demographic Profiling:** Automated demographic profiling, including gender, nationality, location, and age, is not supported by Sprout Social. Therefore, the analysis focused on a selective sample of the total dataset, which was examined in-depth in a manner similar to the qualitative research method used in interviews or focus groups. This focused analysis concentrated on about 25 key entries, posts, or rumours that are directly linked to the final selected (mis)information themes (see below).



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List of the twenty-five posts for the demographic profiling

Sample of posts in Arabic:

1. ما شفتنا شي ولا اي نوع مساعدة من كل هل مساعدات بس ليش ظلم هيك ما بعرف حتى اذا من دقلون بيعطي خطون مشغول وبيرجع واحد بدق وبران ما بتردوا ابد ابد
ما شفيت جمعية الا ما بتتصل الا بشخص مرتاح ماديا بس انسان فقير هيدا ما بحسوا فيه
2. انا رغم معي بطاقة من الأمم ولكن لا استفيد منها شي ورغم عندي طفلين تحت عمر سنتين رفاهية عم تحكو عنها مصنوعة بس نشوفها ع تلفونات قدمات كتير باسم أطفال ولأسف ما شفتنا شي
3. غياب تام لمنظمة #الأمم المتحدة في لبنان والمنظمات الشريكة من حيث تقديم المساعدات #لللاجئين السوريين في ظل " الأوضاع
4. و هلفبركه لاعلاميه كذابين ليش لتفريق وتحريف اعلامي واضح بلنسبه لللاجئين " مافي لاجئ بيقبض بدولار كلو بيقبض بلبناني ونص لمسجلين لدى المفوضيه لايقبضون شي
5. شحدو على الشعب السوري بس الله كبير وعادل بياخذ حق كل ظالم وحرامي مين من الشعب السوري عم يقبض في الدولار كلو كذب
6. انتو مفكرين المساعدة يلي اعطيتوها للاجئ سوري بالبنان مساعدة لا ما اسما مساعدة عم تضحكوا عالعالم وبين ماعم نروح " عم نسمع حكي انو عم تعطينا الامم مساعدات وبدولار وهنا ماوصلوا للمليون
تماما اذا المسؤولين عندكن بقولوا ما بدن سوريين و بنفس الوقت بدن يقبضوا مصاري من الغرب بحجة وجود " السوريين
7. هذا ليس دعم للبنان هذا دعم للبقاء السوريين في لبنان هذه الاموال رشوات جميع السياسيين الذين يصمتون عن هذه الاموال
8. المساعدات التي تستلمها جمعيات تفوقت في فسادها ونهبها على السياسيين الفاسدين الذين كانوا بالأمس يطالبون ويؤيدون نزوح المزيد من السوريين إلى لبنان لتحقيق مكاسب سياسية وأمنية
طبعا هيدا غير المساعدات يلي عم توصل على اسم السوري و تروح ع جيبية الشعب اللبناني بقدرة قادر ..بيتصل.
السوري بالجمعيات يلي على اساس عم تساعد اللاجئ السوري بقولوا مافي موارد ..و بنفس اليوم بيتفاجئ السوري أن اللبناني أخذ
9. السوري ببطلعلو 53الف دولار بي سنه اجار بيت ومدرسه و مؤاد غذئيه يعن كنو بي اوربا شو يعم عم يعطو العالم الف بس يعن فوق مو حراميه كمان واكلين حق لاجئين السوريين وفلسطينيين وحتى حق شعب لبنان مثل اجا طحين950 " حظو بي الملعب سرقو وعم يبيعو
10. لأمم المتحدة ترضي الصناديق المانحة وهي عالاغلب دول تريد بقاء السوريين في لبنان لذلك تخفي الحقائق حتى لا" يجتاحوا اوربا
11. قال وزير المهجرين عصام شرف الدين إنَّ هناك ما لا يقلّ عن 2.2 مليون لاجئ سوريّ في لبنان، مشيراً إلى أنّ تعتمد الامتناع عن كشف بيانات دقيقة حول ملف النازحين (UNHCR) المفوضية السامية للأمم المتحدة لشؤون اللاجئين "السوريين، تطبيقاً لأجندات سياسية غربية
12. وفي حديثٍ عبر وكالة "سبوتنيك" الروسية، قال شرف الدين إنّ "الجانب اللبناني طالب المجتمع الدولي بعدم التدخل بينه وأنّ "الأخيرة تمنح"، (UNHCR) وبين الحكومة السورية في ما يتعلق بملف اللاجئين"، مشيراً إلى أنّ "الغرب يمول "اللاجئ السوري مساعدات هائلة لإبقائه في لبنان
13. هيدا الكلام مش صحيح مش عايشين ب فقر ولا شي وعايشين احسن من كتير من الشعب اللبناني، طمح الكيل من " هالتبرير والاتهامات بالعنصرية من قبل مستفيدين على الراس ...صارت القصة مكشوفة جمعيات ما يسمى المجتمع المدني والزعماء التقليديين بشراكة موصوفة بالدفاع عن وجود السوريين في لبنان لانهم عم يقبضوا عليهم
14. كل مصاري اغنياء سوريا في بنوك لبنان ..ولولا بنوك لبنان والبنانيين مو ناصبين مصاريننا علينا يلي بالبنوك كنا بألف " خير لاتقول لاجئين لان لولا مصرياتنا كان اقتصادكم مودع من زمان بقى لاتحكي شي مابتفهم فيه
15. وبعدين عم يدفعو ع الشخص الف دولار ليفوت تهريب. لا ان هالبلد ان مصاري محلات واشغال ولك صبرا والضاحيه والجنوب وطرابلس كلها محلات الن. ما في معمل ما في سوبر ماركت ما في مطعم سنكريه طراشين ولك شو بدك



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- اخذين الاشغال من هالشعب المعتر ان كان فلسطيني ولا لبناني وبتقلي لاجئين خلصنا بقى يفلو لهالعالم تلاقى اشغال..ما في مؤسسه الا بيقبضو منها .انا من شاتيلا وصراحه وضع المخيم مقرف من وراهن ومن ورا تجار المخدرات.الله يرحم ايامك واهلك ونصافتك يا هالمخيم
16. قتلو طيب ليش بيشتغلو هون وبينامو بالشارع قلبي لانو بسورية ما في معاشات وهون بياخذ كثير مصاري قتلو طيب لما بياخذ مصاري ليش ما بينام بيت قلبي هيدول السوريين هيك معودين وين ما كان بيناموا المهم يطلع "مصاري وبياكل دبس فليفلة احسن ما يشتري اكل من لبنان لان حقه مصاري وهوي بدو يخبيهم حتى يروح عسورية
- وين ما بحلو السوريين بتحل المصائب واللهي ما الهن امان شابنا متعلمة وما عم بتلاقي شغل اكلوا البلد وقتلونا الله ياخذهن عننا الله يرحمك حبيبتى انت ضحية دولة فاشلة
17. ولادنا بلا شغل مش لأنهم قليلين مروه لآكن السوري شو ما طلع بتوفي معه لأنه عم يقبض من الأمم لو السوري ما عم يقبض ما كان اشتغل بارخص الاسعار وشال اللقمه من تم اللبناني
18. صرنا نحن لاجئين ببلدنا وما منأمن على حالنا او ع اولادنا نمشي وحدنا بالطرقات".
- "سراقات وجرائم ووسخ ومخدرات حتى كلاب عم يقتلو ويبيعوا لحمن لنا
19. كنا بدأنا نصدق أن السوريين/ات في #لبنان هم الأغنياء الجدد، بفضل المساعدات الأممية، التي يتقاضونها بالدولار، وهي سبب بقائهم في لبنان (كما يشيع الخطاب التحريضي)، حتى جاء تصريح النائب #نقولا صحناري (التيار الوطني الحر) ليقول العكس. ففي رأيه، يخرط كثر من السوريين/ات في الجريمة لأنهم/ن فقراء
20. ...لازم كل الناس بكل المناطق تمنع فتح المدارس لتعليم السوريين وتوقف على ابواب هالمدارس وتطردهن".
- "!!تعلمهن الأمم ببلادهم
21. لازم تكحشو السوريين لكن صرلي سنة ما عم لافي بيت وكل غلا لبيوت بسبب سوريين لك المحلات ما عاد في ايا لاجئ. هيدا بلي فاتح محل بي 50الف دولار
22. إستغلال ظروفهم المعيشية وسرقة الأموال والمساعدات التي تستلمها جمعيات تفوقت في فسادها ونهبها على السياسيين الفاسدين الذين كانوا بالأمس يطالبون ويؤيدون نزوح المزيد من السوريين إلى لبنان لتحقيق مكاسب سياسية وأمنية
23. مصاري السوريين سرقتها الحكومه اللبنانيه و السياسيين
24. في طرابلس.. غاضبون يحطمون الصراف الآلي للبنك اللبناني الفرنسي ويتردون من امامه النازحين السوريين الءي كانوا يقبضون اموالا من صندوق الأمم المتحدة.. البنك اصدر تعميما بتحويل القبض والسحب من الصراف الآلي الى فروع البنك في بيروت

Sample of posts translated into English:

1. We didn't see anything, nor any kind of help from all these aids. But why this injustice, I don't know. Even if we call them, the line is busy, and when someone calls back, they never answer. Never, ever.
No association calls except for someone financially well-off, but a poor person, they don't feel him.
2. Despite having a card from the UN, I don't benefit from it at all. And despite having two children under the age of two, the luxury you talk about is just something we see on phones. Many things were promised in the name of my children, but unfortunately, we didn't see anything.
3. Complete absence of the United Nations organisation in Lebanon and partner organisations in providing aid to Syrian refugees under these conditions.
4. This media fabrication, liars, why this obvious media distortion regarding refugees.
No refugee gets paid in dollars; they all get paid in Lebanese currency, and even the registered ones with the commission don't get anything.



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5. They beg on the Syrian people's behalf, but God is great and just; He will take the right from every oppressor and thief. Who from the Syrian people gets paid in dollars? It's all lies.
6. You think the aid you gave to Syrian refugees in Lebanon is assistance? No, it's not called help; you're mocking the world. Wherever we go, we hear talk that the UN gives us aid in dollars, but they haven't even reached a million.

Exactly, if your officials say they don't want Syrians, and at the same time, they want to collect money from the West under the pretext of the presence of Syrians.

7. This is not support for Lebanon; this is support for keeping Syrians in Lebanon. These funds are bribes to all the politicians who remain silent about this money.
8. The aid received by associations has exceeded in its corruption and looting the corrupt politicians who, in the past, demanded and supported the influx of more Syrians to Lebanon to achieve political and security gains.

Of course, this is not counting the aid that arrives in the name of the Syrian and goes into the pockets of the Lebanese people, miraculously. The Syrian calls the associations that are supposedly helping the Syrian refugee, and they say there are no resources. And on the same day, the Syrian is surprised that the Lebanese received aid.

9. The Syrian is supposed to get 53,000 dollars a year for rent, school, and food supplies, as if they were in Europe. What are they giving people? Only 950,000, meaning they are not just thieves but also eating the rights of Syrian and Palestinian refugees and even the rights of the Lebanese people. Like when flour arrived, they put it in the stadium, stole it, and started selling it.
10. The United Nations pleases the donor funds, which are mostly countries that want to keep Syrians in Lebanon, so they hide the facts so that they do not invade Europe.
11. Minister of Displaced Persons Issam Sharaf al-Din said there are no less than 2.2 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, pointing out that "the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) deliberately refrains from disclosing accurate data on the Syrian refugee issue, in line with Western political agendas."
12. In an interview with the Russian "Sputnik" agency, Sharaf al-Din said that "the Lebanese side asked the international community not to interfere between it and the Syrian government regarding the refugee issue," noting that "the West funds (UNHCR)," and that "the latter grants the Syrian refugee massive aid to keep him in Lebanon."
13. they are not living in poverty or anything. They are living better than many of the Lebanese people. We are fed up with these justifications and accusations of racism by the beneficiaries. The story has become exposed. Associations of so-called civil society and traditional leaders in a described partnership to defend the presence of Syrians in Lebanon because they are profiting from them.
14. All the money of Syria's wealthy is in Lebanese banks. If it weren't for Lebanese banks and the Lebanese not embezzling our money in the banks, we would have been fine. Don't talk about refugees because if it weren't for our money, your economy would have collapsed a long time ago, so don't speak about things you don't understand.
15. And then they pay a person a thousand dollars to smuggle in. This country has money, shops, and jobs. Sabra, the southern suburbs, and Tripoli are all their places. There is no factory, supermarket, restaurant, plumber, or painter where they are not taking jobs from the suffering people, whether Palestinian or Lebanese, and you tell me refugees? Enough already, let these people leave so others can find work. There is no institution where they



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don't earn from. I am from Shatila, and frankly, the situation in the camp is disgusting because of them and because of drug dealers. God have mercy on your days, and your cleanliness, oh this camp.

16. I told him, why do they work here and sleep on the street? He told me because there are no salaries in Syria, and here they make a lot of money.

I told him, then why don't they sleep in a house when they make money? He said those Syrians are used to sleeping anywhere as long as they make money and eat pepper paste instead of buying food from Lebanon because it costs money, and he wants to save it to go back to Syria.

17. Wherever the Syrians go, disasters happen. They are not trustworthy at all. Our educated youth can't find work. They consumed the country and killed us. God takes them away from us. God have mercy on you, my love, you are a victim of a failed state.

18. Our children are unemployed, not because they are lazy, but because the Syrian works for anything since he gets paid by the UN. If the Syrian didn't get paid, he wouldn't have worked for the cheapest prices and taken the bread from the mouth of the Lebanese.

19. We have become refugees in our country, and we don't feel safe for ourselves or our children to walk alone on the streets.

Thefts, crimes, filth, and drugs, even dogs are being killed and their meat sold.

20. We started to believe that the Syrians in Lebanon are the new rich, thanks to UN aid, which they receive in dollars, and is the reason for their stay in Lebanon (as the inciting speech claims), until MP Nicolas Sahnouli (Free Patriotic Movement) made a statement saying the opposite. In his opinion, many Syrians are involved in crime because they are poor.

21. All people in all areas should prevent the opening of schools to educate Syrians and stand at the doors of these schools to expel them... Teach them, the UN should teach them in their countries!!!

22. We should kick out the Syrians. I've been looking for a house for a year, and all the rent increase is because of the Syrians. There should be no refugee opening a shop with 50,000 dollars.

23. Exploiting their living conditions and stealing the funds and aid received by associations, which have surpassed in corruption and looting the corrupt politicians who, in the past, demanded and supported the influx of more Syrians to Lebanon to achieve political and security gains.

24. The Syrians' money was stolen by the Lebanese government and politicians.

25. In Tripoli, angry people destroyed the ATM of the Lebanese French Bank and expelled the Syrian refugees who were receiving money from the UN fund. The bank issued a circular to transfer the receiving and withdrawing from ATMs to bank branches in Beirut.

The profiling focused on the following demographic categories: gender, nationality, beneficiary status, location, and age. The analysis was done by checking each profile associated to the posts. Here are some statistics from the profiling attempt:

- Network: The rumours were sourced from Facebook and Twitter.
- Gender: Out of 25 posts, users were both male (3) and female (6), the rest are unknown users.
- Nationality: Most of the users were Lebanese (8), and one Syrian, the rest is undetermined.
- Beneficiary Status: Two users identified themselves as beneficiaries of aid programmes.

Location: Locations included Tripoli (1), Beirut (1), and the rest was not specified on their profile.

- Age: The age of the users was not consistently available.



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Unfortunately, the demographic profiling does not include enough statistics to provide insights for the research piece.

IX.2.2. Traditional Media Analysis

Table 10: Traditional media analysis articles

Article title	Traditional media platform	Theme	Brief description
UNHCR and WFP aid reduction: A threat to Syrian families in Lebanon, March 2024	LBC group	Aid Bias	The article highlights the reduction in international aid to Syrian refugees in Lebanon, detailing the impact through specific dates, figures, and official sources. It underscores the worsening conditions for affected families and strengthens credibility by seeking comments from the UNHCR and WFP. The article remains objective and fact-based, presenting the real consequences of the aid cuts without bias or emotional manipulation.
Syrian refugees to be able to withdraw cash aid in dollars by end of May: UNHCR, May 2023	L'Orient Today	Aid Bias	The article reports on UNHCR's decision to allow Syrian refugees in Lebanon to withdraw cash assistance in USD, driven by Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis. It provides accurate, well-sourced information, citing a UNHCR spokesperson and offering details on operational challenges and the rationale behind the change. The article is objective, presenting the facts without bias or emotional manipulation, and uses a straightforward headline that accurately reflects its content. Overall, it is sincere and fact-based, with no use of vague statements or misleading tactics.
UN Suspends Cash Assistance to Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, May 2023	Al Manar TV	Aid Bias	This article reports on the UN's aid halt but lacks detailed evidence and balance, mainly reflecting Lebanese officials' views and using emotive language like "crime against Lebanon." Dalil Check notes 36.9% propaganda and 4.86% bias, indicating emotional manipulation. Despite a clear headline, vague claims and noticeable bias make the article "Questionable."
Geagea to Education Minister: These Students Cannot Enroll in Our Schools, July 2024	MTV Lebanon	Education	The article reports Samir Geagea's statement on foreign student enrolment, quoting his X account without bias. While the reporting is clear and objective, Dalil Check indicates 68.79% propaganda, reflecting Geagea's use of emotive language despite the article's straightforward style.



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Jumblatt responds to Nasrallah: "This talk is unacceptable", May 2024	Lebanon 24	Education	The article critiques the effectiveness of aid distribution to Syrian refugees and advocates for keeping their children in public schools to prevent extremist influences. According to Dalil Check, it contains 80% bias, reflecting strong opinions on aid distribution and assumptions about extremism in private schools, along with 40% propaganda, using fear of extremism to influence views on education for these children.
The politics of education in Lebanon, July 2024	Al Majalla	Education	The article critiques Samir Geagea and the Lebanese Forces party's position on Syrian children's education without valid residence permits. It uses accurate citations and references international human rights laws to support its arguments while maintaining objectivity. Overall, it provides a fact-based analysis of the implications of denying education to refugee children.
Geagea: Syrian displacement is an existential threat. We will not remain silent about the negligence of officials, April 2024	Lebanese Forces Website	Labour Market	The article presents views on the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, arguing it poses an existential threat. While it includes claims about increased crime and economic losses, it lacks substantial evidence or alternative perspectives, indicating significant bias. With 36.9% propaganda and 4.86% bias according to Dalil Check, the article relies on emotive language and vague statements, raising questions about its credibility.
Dollarizing aid to Syrians: a technical or political decision? May, 2023	Lebanon 24	Political Issues	The article examines the shift to providing aid to Syrian refugees in USD, exploring its political and economic implications. It presents a biased view favouring the Lebanese government, includes unsubstantiated claims, and uses emotive language. With 26.68% propaganda and 16.93% bias according to Dalil Check, the article lacks the balance and credibility needed for reliable reporting.
Questions from Wadih Akl to the Europeans: Can you imagine that 222,000,000 refugees are coming to you?, September 2023	Al Tayyar	Political Issues	The article presents a politician's claim that the Syrian refugee crisis poses an existential threat to Lebanon, citing issues like crime and economic loss without substantial evidence. It heavily relies on Geagea's opinions, resulting in significant bias and a lack of balanced perspectives. The sensational headline and emotive language undermine the article's credibility.
Syrian Refugees Build Camp on Public Property in the South, November 2023	Kataeb.org	Aid Bias	The article discusses the construction of a Syrian refugee camp on public land in Tyre, Lebanon, amidst a fragile security situation. Despite warnings to vacate, the refugees remained until state security forces demolished the camp after



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			a directive from the Financial General Prosecutor. With 59.9% propaganda, the article employs emotive language and lacks substantial evidence, raising concerns about its credibility.
Persistent Challenges In Lebanon: UNHCR Addresses Political And Economic Instabilities, December 2023	Kataeb.org	Political Issues	The article discusses the UNHCR's response to ongoing political and economic instability in Lebanon, emphasizing the challenges faced in aiding Syrian refugees. It outlines the organisation's call for sustained international support to address the humanitarian crisis effectively. The article is fact-based, providing credible information on the situation and the UNHCR's efforts.
"Terrorists are hiding among refugees"... The situation in Lebanon is a tragedy funded by NGOs!, September 2023	Al Tayyar	Aid Bias	The article asserts that refugees harm Lebanon, linking them to terrorism and crime without credible evidence. It shows significant bias by blaming refugees for the country's economic struggles and uses emotionally charged language to provoke readers. This lack of objectivity undermines its credibility, reflected in its high levels of 95% bias and 50% propaganda.
Refugee Data Not Delivered... Lebanon on the Test of Non-Leakage, Respect for Privacy and Protection, August 2023	Annahar	Aid Bias	The article critiques Lebanon's management of refugee data, emphasizing the need for transparency and privacy. It highlights the government's shortcomings in handling accurate statistics, stressing that proper data management is crucial for effective policymaking. The discussion includes the potential impacts of poor data practices on Lebanon's sociopolitical environment.

IX.2.3. Primary data collection

After the social media analysis, the research team conducted data collection in Lebanon. Its purpose was to shed light on the causal pathways that link misinformation with misperceptions, and to compare the findings from the field with the discourse analysis findings. In the field, the data collection team conducted **12 focus group discussions (FGDs)** with Lebanese and Syrian communities, including both recipients and non-recipients of CVA (or economic programmes such as livelihood ones). The team also carried out **6 key informant interviews (KIIs)** with CVA experts and implementing agencies.

IX.2.3.1. Sampling for FGDs

IX.2.3.1.1. Key Aid's proposal during the inception phase

During the inception phase, Key Aid and CAMEALEON agreed that purposeful sampling methods would be used for FGDs, meaning that participants were selected **based on specific criteria that are**



The Role of Misinformation on Cash and Voucher Assistance for Social Cohesion in Lebanon relevant to the research objectives. Participants were then selected randomly for each FGD. During the inception phase, Key Aid considered the following criteria for the sampling:

- **General characteristics** such as age, nationality, gender;
- **Status of residence:** refugee, internally displaced person, or host community;
- **Status vis-à-vis aid:** CVA recipient (including social assistance), non-aid/CVA recipient;
- **Geographical locations:** urban vs. rural.

Based on the findings of the desk review and preliminary KIs, the **status of residence, nationality and status vis-à-vis aid** are the main criteria that seem to impact CVA perception. Key Aid therefore decided to consider these as the main separation criteria for FGDs. Men and women were meant to be equally represented, and the sampling attempted to include a diverse range of age groups, even if FGDs were mixed in terms of ages. As such, Key Aid proposed to conduct:

- **6 FGDs with self-reported CVA recipients**, either through humanitarian aid or government-led social assistance for Lebanese.

Table 11: Proposed geographical distribution for self-reported CVA recipients¹³⁴

Stakeholders – CVA recipients	Urban (Beirut or Tripoli)	Rural (Akkar or Mount Lebanon)
Syrian refugees	1	2
Lebanese host communities	2	1

- **4 FGDs Non-aid/CVA recipients**

Table 12: Proposed geographical distribution for non-aid/CVA recipients

Stakeholders – former CVA recipients	Urban (Beirut or Tripoli)	Rural (Akkar or Mount Lebanon)
Syrian refugees	1	1
Lebanese host communities	1	1

Minimum 2 FGDs were planned per type of stakeholder. According to ALNAP guidelines, saturation of information is reached when 2 to 3 FGDs are organised for each category of beneficiaries.¹³⁵ All FGDs included participants of all age groups. To the extent possible, FGDs were conducted separately for men and women. The sample proposed above was the initial suggestion provided by Key Aid.

IX.2.3.1.2. Actual sampling

Key Aid organised the data collection with CAMEALEON partners: Oxfam, NRC, and Solidarités International in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Baalbek and Tripoli. Key Aid shared the sampling plan with

¹³⁴ This table and all the ones below propose a geographical distribution of FGDs, but this can be adapted based on feasibility and availability of recipients in each region, as long as both rural and urban settings are considered.

¹³⁵ ALNAP, 'Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide'. 2016



The Role of Misinformation on Cash and Voucher Assistance for Social Cohesion in Lebanon the partners, which was then adapted to what was feasible at the time. The tables below summarise the characteristics of each FGD conducted, across all settings.

Table 13: FGD characteristics summary

Number	Location	Setting	Nationality	Aid	Gender	NGO	Region
1	Tripoli	Urban	Lebanese	CVA	Mixed	Utopia/Oxfam	North
2	Tripoli	Urban	Lebanese	Non-CVA	Mixed	Utopia/Oxfam	North
3	Tripoli	Urban	Syrian	Non-CVA	Mixed	Utopia/Oxfam	North
4	Tripoli	Urban	Syrian	CVA	Mixed	Utopia/Oxfam	North
5	Saadnayel	Rural	Lebanese	CVA	Mixed	SI	Bekaa
6	Saadnayel	Rural	Syrian	Non-CVA	Mixed	SI	Bekaa
7	Bar Elias	Rural	Syrian	Non-CVA	Mixed	SI	Bekaa
8	Bar Elias	Rural	Lebanese	CVA	Mixed	SI	Bekaa
9	Bourj Hamm	Urban	Lebanese	CVA	Female	NRC	Mount Lebanon
10	Bourj Hamm	Urban	Lebanese	CVA	Male	NRC	Mount Lebanon
11	Beirut	Urban	Syrian	Non-CVA	Male	NRC	Beirut
12	Beirut	Urban	Syrian	Non-CVA	Female	NRC	Beirut

North	4	Lebanese Non-CVA	1
Bekaa	4	Lebanese CVA	5
Mount Lebanon	2	Syrian CVA	1
Beirut	2	Syrian Non-CVA	5

Overall, the sampling plan was respected, ensuring a variety of age groups, balanced gender representation, inclusion of people with disabilities, and a range of residence and aid statuses. However, the following limitations explain deviations from the plan in other areas:

- No FGDs were conducted in Akkar due to the absence of partner NGOs in the area.
- Equal representation of CVA and non-CVA participants (6 each) was achieved, though not evenly distributed between Lebanese and Syrians. This was influenced by participant availability, which impacted the purposeful sampling.

For areas that could not be visited, data collection by phone or online surveys was not considered a viable alternative due to the critical need for in-person data collection on this topic (i.e. importance of reactivity, body language in the data analysis).

The FGDs were conducted by one consultant (either male or female depending on the FGD group) assisted by a note-taker. FGDs group size varied from **3 to 20 participants**. **They were conducted in Arabic**. The FGDs adopted a privacy-by-design approach such that personal identifying information was not collected (see section on data protection). Key Aid considered data disaggregation in the analysis only if relevant to the findings.

The **FGD guide** was revised and translated closer to the time of data collection to take into account the social media analysis after validation by CAMEALEON. Following the first FGD, the data collection team had **an internal debrief** to go over the answers received and discuss whether the guide needed to be adjusted (content or length) and whether some questions were perceived as sensitive, paying attention to gender-specific sensitivities.



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IX.2.3.2. Key Informant Interviews during data collection (KIIs)

CAMEALEON provided Key Aid with an **initial list of people** from implementing agencies to contact for in-person interviews, whether in Beirut or in other zones that are considered safe to access. The objective of these KIIs was to collect additional data from informants working closely with aid recipients and to complement the data collected during the preliminary KIIs. The consultants used the snowballing method by asking at the end of each interview for a **referral for another potential informant**. Unless the interviewee preferred to meet online, interviews were conducted in person, in **Arabic or in English** depending on the interviewee's preference. KIIs lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. In total, Key Aid conducted 6 interviews. When relevant, Key Aid organised KIIs with more than one key informant to enrich the interview. As for the FGDs, the guide was revised closer to the data collection dates, based on the social media analysis, and validated again by CAMEALEON.

IX.2.4. Post-data-collection presentation (in Lebanon)

Following the data collection, the consultants and CAMEALEON organised a **one-hour meeting post data collection**. The objectives of the post-data-collection presentation were to (i) **provide an overview of the data collection** (targets reached, locations visited, challenges encountered, and general impressions) and (ii) **to present preliminary findings**, ahead of the detailed analysis and reporting. This meeting was initially planned to take place in person in Beirut but was conducted remotely on Zoom due to scheduling conflicts.

IX.2.5. Analysis and writing phase

Throughout the research process, **qualitative (primary and secondary) data** were coded to analyse emerging trends and triangulated. This was done using a matrix on Excel organised by research question and by indicator.

The consultants facilitated a **one and a half hour online workshop** with CAMEALEON teams, **CVA actors and other final users of the research** to ensure ownership of the research outcomes afterwards. The preliminary findings were shared with CAMEALEON prior to the workshop for quality assurance.

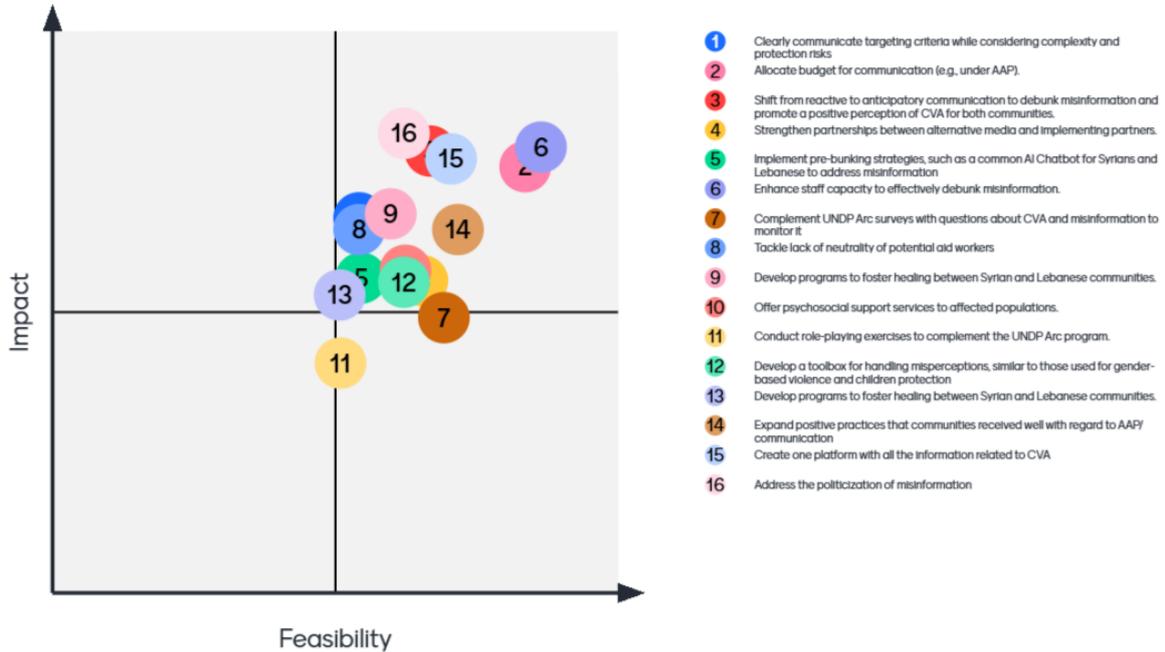
The objective of the workshop was to present triangulated findings from the different data sources, address any information gaps and work on recommendations collaboratively. (Figure 6)

This workshop occurred remotely on Zoom. Key Aid used different *Mentimeter* as an online facilitation tool.



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Figure 6: Workshop vote results on recommendations – Impact and Feasibility



The consultants then produced the first draft of the report, which was submitted to CAMEALEON on 12 September 2024. Following a round of comments and revision, it was then finalised.

IX.3. Four case studies (Shared Separate)

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