

CAMEALEON Research Agenda

CAMEALEON is NGO-led research and learning network established in 2017 to support the effectiveness and accountability of social assistance for refugees and host communities in Lebanon. It is co-managed by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Oxfam, and Solidarités International (SI), in collaboration with Lebanese and international partners, including academic institutions and think tanks.

In its third phase, CAMEALEON uses a soft approach based on learning and advocacy to inform policymaking on social assistance in Lebanon. The initiative works closely with the Government of Lebanon, UN agencies, NGOs, and civil society organizations to address evidence gaps and improve social assistance outcomes.

Key Pillars of Action:

- **Effectiveness** – Assessing the performance of large-scale social assistance programs.
- **Accountability** – Strengthening systems to ensure aid is responsive to affected populations.
- **Learning & Advocacy** – Sharing findings and promoting evidence-based decision-making.

As part of CAMEALEON's operational framework, we plan to collaborate with universities, research institutes, policy partners and consultants on the following research priorities covering 2024 - 2026:

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

The research aimed to shed light on the lived experiences of affected populations in relation to misinformation on cash assistance and the pathways through which misinformation contributes to misperceptions and negative outcomes for social stability. It aimed to examine the impact of social misinformation on Lebanese and Syrian communities and understand its dissemination channels. The findings will help agencies enhance social stability in their analyses, develop targeted communication plans, and design easily communicable cash programs. Additionally, the insights will inform the creation of “socially friendly” terms and recommendations for monitoring cash-related indicators in communal relations surveys. The results were shared

through the Lebanon coordination structures, learning events, and multimedia products, contributing to more transparent, participatory, and accountable social assistance and humanitarian CVA programs.

Added Value: The findings help agencies enhance social stability in their analyses by generating insights and recommendation for developing targeted communication plans, designing easily communicable cash programs, and monitoring cash-related indicators in communal relations surveys.

2. Opportunities and Barriers for PWDs in Accessing Social Protection and CVA Programs in Lebanon

The research aims to identify the barriers that People with Disabilities (PWDs) face in accessing Cash and Voucher Assistance programs and social assistance programs (NPTP and NDA) from the perspective of PWDs. It will explore structural and social barriers preventing PWDs from registering for or receiving benefits, considering demographic factors such as gender, age, type of disability, and geography. The study will identify best practices for accurately assessing disability, addressing information gaps, and enhancing targeting mechanisms to better reach those in need.

Added Value: This study gives voice to people with disabilities, revealing the hidden barriers they face in accessing aid — and offers actionable recommendations to improve inclusive design, targeting, and delivery of social protection assistance.

3. The Bottom Poor and Social Assistance Programs in Lebanon

The research aims to understand the perspectives and experiences of users and non-users of Social Assistance programs in Lebanon (eg: NPTP, ESSN). It will explore the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of the bottom-poor households regarding the design, targeting, and implementation of these programs, considering factors such as gender, age, disability, and geography. The study will assess the perceived benefits and drawbacks of inclusion and exclusion from these programs on households' ability to cope with acute and chronic stressors and improve their lives, across various domains such as health, education, food security, employment, and social stability. It will identify the barriers faced by users and non-users in accessing social assistance, including informational, structural, and social barriers, and how these barriers vary by

demographics. Finally, the research will develop key recommendations to improve the inclusiveness and effectiveness of social protection programs, identifying best practices for addressing information and coverage gaps to better reach the poorest and most vulnerable households.

Added Value: The research will develop key recommendations to improve the inclusiveness and effectiveness of social protection programs, identifying best practices for addressing information and coverage gaps to better reach the poorest and most vulnerable households from a bottom-up perspective.

4. Participatory Approach to Assessing the Access to CVA and the Social Protection Systems for Older Persons in Lebanon

The study seeks to understand the perspectives of the most vulnerable Lebanese older persons with regards of CVA programs and social assistance schemes to inform effective, inclusive and accessible programming. It will identify the barriers that older persons face in their access to programs and develop policy recommendation and best practices from a bottom-up perspective to accurately assess their needs, addressing information gaps and enhancing targeting mechanisms to reach those most in need of cash assistance. The study will also emphasize the use of gendered lens to further identify the challenges and experiences of the most vulnerable older persons.

Added Value: This study aims to understand the perspectives of the most vulnerable Lebanese older persons regarding CVA programs and social assistance schemes, in order to inform the design of effective, inclusive, and accessible programming.

5. Streamlining Cash Coordination in Lebanon

This study critically evaluates Lebanon's cash coordination mechanisms—benchmarked against IASC guidance and building on the LDCF joint cash mission findings—to pinpoint and streamline key processes. In collaboration with the LDCF and CWG, it will assess the impact of dwindling humanitarian funding, clarify UN, NGO, government and local-actor roles, and explore localization within national social protection schemes. Attending to Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian needs and drawing on LDCF and CWG analyses as well as global best practices, it will propose concise, actionable reforms for a more agile, cost-efficient coordination model.

Added Value: This research offers actionable insights to streamline cash coordination in Lebanon, helping maximize impact and efficiency in a resource-constrained humanitarian environment.

6. The Role of Civil Society as Local First Responders in the Lebanese Emergency Response

The study will investigate the initial first response to the conflict in southern Lebanon at the beginning of September 2024. It will identify key non-formal response actors in the early phases of the displacement and seek to understand how those actors supported local communities and displaced households across targeted areas in Lebanon. The study will investigate what happened in the period before assistance was provided through the government shock responsive programs and formal humanitarian actors, and the extent to which it continued and interacted with the formal response. Findings from the study will be analysed to determine opportunities for leveraging civil society within future anticipatory action.

Added Value: This study highlights the vital, often under looked role of civil society as first responders in crisis, offering insights on how to better integrate local actors into future anticipatory and formal response systems.

7. Impact and Effectiveness of Cash Plus Livelihood Programming for Lebanese Host Communities in Lebanon

The research aims to explore how to effectively link and complement short-term emergency cash distribution with medium-to-long-term livelihoods assistance, assessing its long-term impact on beneficiaries' livelihoods. The hired consultants will conduct an in-depth evaluation to assess the impact of SI's and Oxfam's cash plus livelihoods programming on economic well-being, access to basic services, food security, livelihoods, and overall resilience of beneficiary households in Lebanon. Additionally, the evaluation will determine the effectiveness of the cash plus livelihoods approach in achieving intended outcomes, identify key factors contributing to its success or challenges, and provide recommendations for optimizing programming strategies to enhance their impact and effectiveness on the livelihoods of vulnerable populations in Lebanon. Solidarités International (SI) will implement the research in close collaboration with CAMEALEON, with Mercy Corps joining the data collection and analysis efforts to contribute its technical expertise and field insights.

Added Value: The study will inform the design of Cash Plus interventions by exploring the effectiveness of the cash plus approach in achieving intended outcomes, share lessons learnt and recommendations and provide a roadmap on the needed considerations when designing and reviewing such interventions in Lebanon.

8. Assessing the Link Between Cash Assistance and Debt Among Vulnerable Households in Lebanon

The study aims to investigate the influence of increased debt on protection threats among vulnerable Syrian and Lebanese households. It will identify prominent trends in protection threats correlated with high debt levels and determine the primary sources of debt and their impacts on wellbeing. The study will assess how hyperinflation affects HH debt dynamics, explore the effects of debt relief on well-being and social cohesion, and examine the role of different cash assistance modalities in alleviating debt. Additionally, the research will analyse the relationship between debt types and vulnerability levels, identify systemic challenges in targeting the most vulnerable HHs, and evaluate the influence of cultural and contextual factors on cash assistance utilization. Finally, it will determine the effectiveness of cash assistance in reducing debt and vulnerabilities across various sectors such as health, education, and livelihoods. Oxfam will implement the research in close collaboration with CAMEALEON, with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) lending its expertise to oversee and execute the data collection and processing efforts.

Added Value: This research is expected to provide crucial insights to enhance the design and implementation of cash programs by identifying prominent trends in protection threats correlated with high debt levels, ensuring they align with the overarching goal of mitigating vulnerabilities within the refugee and host communities.

Policy Briefs and Papers:

1. From Insight to Impact: Leveraging Evidence for Social Assistance Policy in Lebanon

The learning brief summarized outcome of CAMEALEON'S event that took place in August 2023, which resulted the following outcomes: (1) it identified numerous opportunities and potential interventions to bolster the social protection system in Lebanon; (2) it served as an entry point into further discussions between humanitarian stakeholders, donors and governmental agencies to improve coordination and improve the outcomes for recipients of social assistance; and (3) it yielded a comprehensive list of key takeaways, opportunities and recommendations that will be shared with participants and non-participants.

Added Value: This policy paper lies in its ability to transform stakeholder dialogue into concrete, evidence-informed policy direction. By highlighting coordination gaps, sharing practical lessons from humanitarian cash programming, and offering targeted reform opportunities, it serves as a strategic tool for aligning humanitarian and governmental efforts toward more inclusive, accountable, and sustainable social protection in Lebanon.

2. Lebanon's Social Protection System Suffers Amidst the Current War: Urgent Action Needed!

This policy paper was written in partnership with the Arab Reform Initiative (ARI) and assesses Lebanon's social protection response to the ongoing war and provides recommendations for policymakers to further develop this response and later improve the shock-responsiveness and -resilience of the country's social protection system. It concludes that for Lebanon's social protection system to become more fit for purpose, universal social security schemes should be prioritized, followed by a plan that tackles the issue of being composed of a complex web of different programs and registries. Recommendation of the papers consist of but are not limited to the need to vertically and horizontally expand the reach of social assistance by securing funding through domestic resources and improve coordination among stakeholders to ensure that vulnerable populations receive the support they need to cope with the current crisis, and have their wellbeing and livelihood constantly protected.

Added Value: The policy paper provides recommendations for policymakers to further develop and enhance coordination for the response to the war and improve the shock-responsiveness and -resilience of the country's social protection system.

3. Safety Net and Humanitarian Cash in the Emergency Response in Lebanon – What Can We Learn?

This paper focuses on the opportunities and pitfalls of the complementarities between emergency humanitarian cash response and existing safety nets. Therefore, while most CVA findings would apply across population groups, including Syrian refugees who have been equally affected by the conflict, this paper narrows the elements to the Lebanese population. The aim of this paper is to deliver a nuanced conversation surrounding ways of cash in an emergency response, and in particular the added value of having Government safety nets and humanitarian cash mutually strengthen one another. As such, this paper seeks to enhance the humanitarian response and provide recommendations to support the development and implementation of novel policies and practices to improve the cash response in Lebanon.

Added Value: This paper sought to enhance the humanitarian response and provide recommendations to support the development and implementation of novel policies and practices to improve the cash response in Lebanon.

4. The Link Between Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection in Lebanon: A Bottom-Up Perspective

CAMEALEON's team will write a policy paper for BASIC's upcoming event as a part of its agenda of knowledge-sharing and learning initiative to expand the scope and reach of its work, as well as to take part in the global discussion surrounding social protection in crises and potentially improve the ways CVA and social protection can more effectively and efficiently reach affected populations. The aim of this policy paper would be to (1) highlight the key findings of CAMEALEON's research, (2) develop concrete and novel policy recommendations on ways to enhance the accountability and effectiveness of both social assistance and humanitarian cash-based interventions, and (3) contribute to the global conversation and learning activities surrounding the enhancement of the link

between social protection and humanitarian assistance in crises from a bottom-up perspective.

Added Value: This policy paper intends to contribute to the global conversation and learning activities surrounding the enhancement of the link between social protection and humanitarian assistance and accountability to affected populations in crises from a bottom-up perspective.

5. Living Through Crisis: Adaptive Responses of Vulnerable Communities in Lebanon

This exploratory study will examine how vulnerable households in Lebanon are building adaptive capacity in the face of ongoing financial hardship. It aims to understand the strategies and approaches, both at the household and community level, that have emerged in response to multiple overlapping crises. The findings will be shared in a learning snapshot that will showcase innovative, homegrown solutions that have helped communities navigate challenges amid overlapping crises and shrinking international assistance. This study offers valuable insights into how vulnerable households and communities in Lebanon are adapting to financial insecurity through their own strategies and networks. By focusing on local, organic responses to overlapping crises, it highlights forms of resilience that are often overlooked. The findings will be shared in a learning brief that will help identify areas for further research and underscore the importance of understanding local responses in the context of diminishing international assistance.

Added Value: This learning brief is intended to be used to scope future areas of research on the adaptive capacities of households and individuals in Lebanon to pinpoint both points of leverage and underlying vulnerabilities. This piece is closely linked to the CAMEALEON study on the role of civil society and local actors in the Lebanese emergency response as it seeks to build the evidence base on local capacities in a diminishing funding landscape.

6. Foresight Policy Paper

In 2025, CAMEALEON plans to produce a comprehensive Foresight Policy Paper consolidating all major research findings. This document will synthesize key insights and trends from diverse studies, offering a forward-looking analysis of their

implications for CVA and Social Protection strategies in Lebanon. By compiling data and outcomes across multiple research projects, the Foresight Summary aims to present a coherent narrative highlighting critical gaps from the research, emerging challenges, and potential intervention opportunities. This paper will serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders, informing future program designs and policy decisions. CAMEALEON will also host a dedicated dissemination event to present these consolidated research insights and engage key stakeholders in dialogue around the paper's findings and recommendations.

Added Value: The Foresight Policy Paper brings together CAMEALEON's research to highlight critical gaps and trends in Lebanon's CVA and social protection sectors. It gives stakeholders clear, evidence-based insights to guide more effective interventions.