



## Leaner Cash Coordination in Lebanon, Moving Forward

### Policy Brief<sup>1</sup>

Lebanon's humanitarian landscape is defined by a complex, mixed setting where displaced Syrians, Palestinian refugees, and vulnerable Lebanese coexist within several systems of humanitarian aid and social protection. Cash assistance has been central to the response since 2012, but fragmented coordination has repeatedly weakened programme quality. During the 2024–2025 crisis, despite the rapid upscale of operations for Syrian refugees, many key informants reported overlapping mandates, inconsistent sectoral guidance, and delayed decision-making for cash to displaced Lebanese and other vulnerable groups. Many also reported that this resulted in duplicated assistance for some groups, while others faced long waits for support. In several instances, in-kind aid was funded and deployed despite functional markets, and sectoral cash replaced MPCA even where an integrated approach would have been more efficient. Effective, inclusive cash coordination in Lebanon is therefore not a procedural concern but a determinant of assistance quality, equity, and cost efficiency in one of the world's largest protracted mixed crises.

Donors have called for alignment with the IASC cash coordination model, immediate activation and resourcing of the CWG, inclusion of local organisations, harmonised approaches under basic needs, and regular market and needs analysis. Funding shortfalls have forced rationing, with major agencies reporting significant reductions by mid-2025.

Recent reforms set a direction of travel: the merger of CWG and Basic Assistance WG functions, elevation of the CWG under the ISCG, and a clearer ambition to define MPCA, technically coordinate sectoral cash, and structure engagement with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) for social protection linkages. These shifts move in the right direction but will require constant senior backing, predictable decision processes, and donor alignment to move from principle to practice. Local organisations, traditionally under-represented, will be represented by the LHDF and an elected co-lead.

### Five priority recommendations

**Mandate the CWG as the single technical authority for basic needs cash and the convening technical hub for sectoral cash.** HCT and RC/HC should continue reinforcing a CWG in charge of MPCA, to set, periodically review and propose transfer values based on the MEB, and facilitate cross-sector cash standards. Establish a formal and regular communication line from sectors to the CWG on cash matters.

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<sup>1</sup> This policy paper is a concise synthesis of the comprehensive analysis presented in the full report on cash coordination in Lebanon. Readers seeking methodological detail, data sources, and the complete set of findings and limitations are encouraged to consult the longer report, which constitutes the authoritative reference for this summary.

[Cash Coordination in Lebanon – Camealeon](#)

ISCG and HCT should ringfence a MPCA chapter in the LRP and institutionalize regular cash mapping as part of the 4Ws.

**Structure humanitarian-to-social-protection linkages with MoSA through a practical division of labour.** Affirm MoSA's leadership on Lebanese assistance while also maintaining a CWG role for cash in case of emergency/humanitarian crises. Use the CWG as the principal interlocutor for technical alignment with MoSA. During countrywide shocks, social protection is not yet ready to cope with the new caseloads. CWG should coordinate humanitarian cash for all population groups in emergencies when SP systems are overwhelmed or cannot provide a timely response, while investing in incremental readiness for future transition of eligible households to national programmes. Reflect on the shortcomings from the SRSN joint approach, with MoSA conducting the registration and the humanitarian community conducting the payments. In other contexts, the opposite has worked better, decentralized registration with referrals and a government-led unique delivery system has proved more efficient, timely and effective.

**Re-centre MPCA for basic needs also in emergency settings and discipline the use of sectoral cash.** Donors should adopt a MPCA first approach for life-saving basic needs for all population groups in case of emergency, with sectoral cash used only when it delivers distinct, evidenced outcomes, such as sectoral cash paired with case management or other specific sectoral service delivery.

**MoSA should embrace its role of CWG co-lead,** dedicate staff, support this reform, and facilitate linkages between the CWG and the Social Protection coordination structure.

**Donors should align donor activities and financing with the coordination architecture.** Sustain joint donor engagement through the donor coordination forum, tie funding to the use of CWG standards, resist end-year financing that undermines reform and avoid bilateral discussions that undermine the CWG. Protect budgets for the minimal CWG secretariat and information management backbone.

## Anticipated roadblocks and mitigation

Roadblocks tend to surface at pivotal decision points rather than in routine operations. They are most likely during discussions on the Lebanon Response Plan, during approval or revision of standard operating procedures, when defining transfer values and targeting parameters, and in the early hours of a crisis when pressure for speed can erode due process. At these junctures, mandate disputes, sector divergences about preferred modalities, inconsistent requirements, and divergent risk appetites may slow or derail collective action.

**Political or institutional resistance to mandate consolidation.** Mitigate through transparent due process, published minutes, and an escalation ladder from CWG to ISCG to HCT, reducing perceptions of unilateralism while keeping decisions predictable.

**Overloading nascent national systems.** Stage engagement with MoSA so that humanitarian channels continue to deliver in countrywide shocks, while bilateral assistance and development funds invest in current social protection programs but also on readiness, registries, and data protocols. Ideally, CWG should have a permanent seat in any social protection coordination, in the meantime, continue bilateral discussions and report back to the group to avoid mandate misunderstandings.

**Funding volatility.** Within the current funding context, prioritization and vulnerability criteria are one of the main concerns. Donors should protect the backbone and standards first, even when caseloads must contract. This preserves system coherence and prevents costly fragmentation if resources rebound.

A coherent, inclusive, and needs-based cash coordination system is within reach in Lebanon after many years of fragmentation. The steps above translate principles into implementable tasks that can be executed by the CWG and endorsed by the ISCG and HCT, while donors align incentives and resourcing. The result will be a faster, fairer, and more accountable cash response for the current humanitarian caseload and across all population groups in future shocks.

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 Italy, and Solidarités International (SI). <https://camealeon.org/>

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