

## **The role of misinformation on Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) for social cohesion in Lebanon**

### **Agenda of the workshop on findings & recommendations**

**Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> August, 10 – 11:30 am**

**The overall objective of the study “The role of misinformation on CVA for social cohesion in Lebanon”** is to contribute to mitigating the negative impact of misinformation around CVA on social cohesion in Lebanon. The study will shed light on the lived experiences of Syrian and Lebanese in relation to misinformation on CVA since 2019. It will also identify the pathways through which misinformation contributes to misperceptions and negative outcomes for social cohesion amongst the Lebanese and Syrian communities. The study will build on important initiatives from the humanitarian and development sector as well as from media organisations.

**The purpose of the workshop** is to ensure that the study is relevant and useful to the work of its end users. The objectives of the workshop are (i) to present triangulated findings from the various data sources (Desk review, Key Informant Interviews, Social and Traditional Media analysis, and Focus Groups Discussions), (ii) address any information gaps; and (iii) work on recommendations collaboratively.

#### **Agenda**

**10:00 – 10:05 am:** Introduction by CAMEALEON

**10:05 – 10:15 am:** Introduction by Key Aid Consulting on the objectives of the workshop and the study

**10:15 – 10:30 am:** Presentation of the findings and preliminary recommendations

**10:30 – 10:50 am:** Working groups on the recommendations

**10:50 – 11:20 am:** Feedback in plenary and prioritisation of the recommendations based on feasibility and impact

**11:20 – 11:30 am:** Conclusion and next steps

#### **Participants**

There was a total of **28 participants** with a good mix of actors -- from the EU Delegation, NGOs, UN organisations, policy organisations such as CALP and other practitioners – in addition to having a good level of representation from CAMEALEON.

### **Main take-aways from the workshop:**

The recommendations presented were largely assessed as feasible and impactful (see Annexes 1 & 2). The case studies will be key for the study to be operational: participants highlighted the need to have examples of actions that have worked (under the AAP component there is already some good practices). The recommendations should build on the best practices so that they could be expanded. The recommendations should be specific and operational. They should be categorised as first or second level of priority.

The depth and complexity of the issue around misinformation & CVA was underlined as well as the politization of the refugee file. Entry points should be identified to actually change perceptions and behaviours in this complex context. The finding on the low trust towards aid should be central to the recommendations.

Three recommendations were added before the voting: the ones numbered 14 (expand on positive practices under AAP/communication), 15 (create one platform with all the information related to CVA); and 16 (depoliticise misinformation). The recommendations that were assessed with the higher level of impact and feasibility are the ones numbered 6 (Enhance staff capacity to effectively debunk misinformation); 2 (Allocate budget for communication (e.g., under AAP)); 14; 15 and 3 (on debunking misinformation and a positive perception of CVA). Some recommendations should be reformulated and/or further clarified: the ones numbered 1 (transparency of targeting) and 3 (on debunking misinformation and a positive perception of CVA). The recommendations under “the policy and decision making actors” (10 to 13) should be categorised as second priority. No recommendation was assessed as to be removed.

### **Detailed report of the discussions:**

#### **Feedback from the working groups' session:**

##### Working group 1:

- New recommendation suggested on building on existing best practices. We should expand the practices within AAP that have been well received by communities (added as recommendation 14 in Mentimeter).
- On the recommendation 3 we need to think about who should be in charge of the "debunking process" -- it shouldn't be the actors towards whom the communities have low trust.
- General remarks:
  - there are reputational risks linked to the mistrust towards aid actors.
  - misinformation in Lebanon is a deep issue with several layers. The context to address the issue of misinformation is difficult and complex.

##### Working group 2:

- On recommendation 1: Transparency is a colossal issue. It is very difficult to get information on CVA distribution – even for humanitarian workers. It is very opaque. The study should focus on recommendation 1.

- Other important recommendations :
  - recommendation 6 – aid workers should be trained on transparency; and
  - recommendation 4 – increase partnerships with alternative media dedicated to this kind of issues.

#### Working group 3:

- In general: Addressing the issue of CVA misinformation is a shared responsibility, as it extends beyond the humanitarian community.
- General point: Targeting should be based on needs, not on nationality or status; otherwise this could create perceptions of injustice.
- On the recommendation to change the narrative (recommendation 3): narratives aren't unified and are often influenced by political perspectives. On recommendation 3 the group also noted that a debunking campaign shouldn't be about a public campaign as it could be counterproductive.
- While capacity building for misinformation has been agreed upon and is already in place, there is consensus on the need for further efforts (see recommendation 6, which is the one with the higher combined legitimacy and feasibility).
- New recommendation suggested on making the information on targeting more accessible by developing a depository or website to centralise resources (added as recommendation 15 in Mentimeter).
- New recommendation suggested on leveraging lessons learned from existing communication strategies and best practices (added as recommendation 14 in Mentimeter).
- Point noted that UNHCR and WFP are aligned in disseminating consistent information.
- Recommendation 4 was highlighted with the crucial role of media, advocating for enhanced coordination with traditional media channels.

#### Main points discussed in plenary:

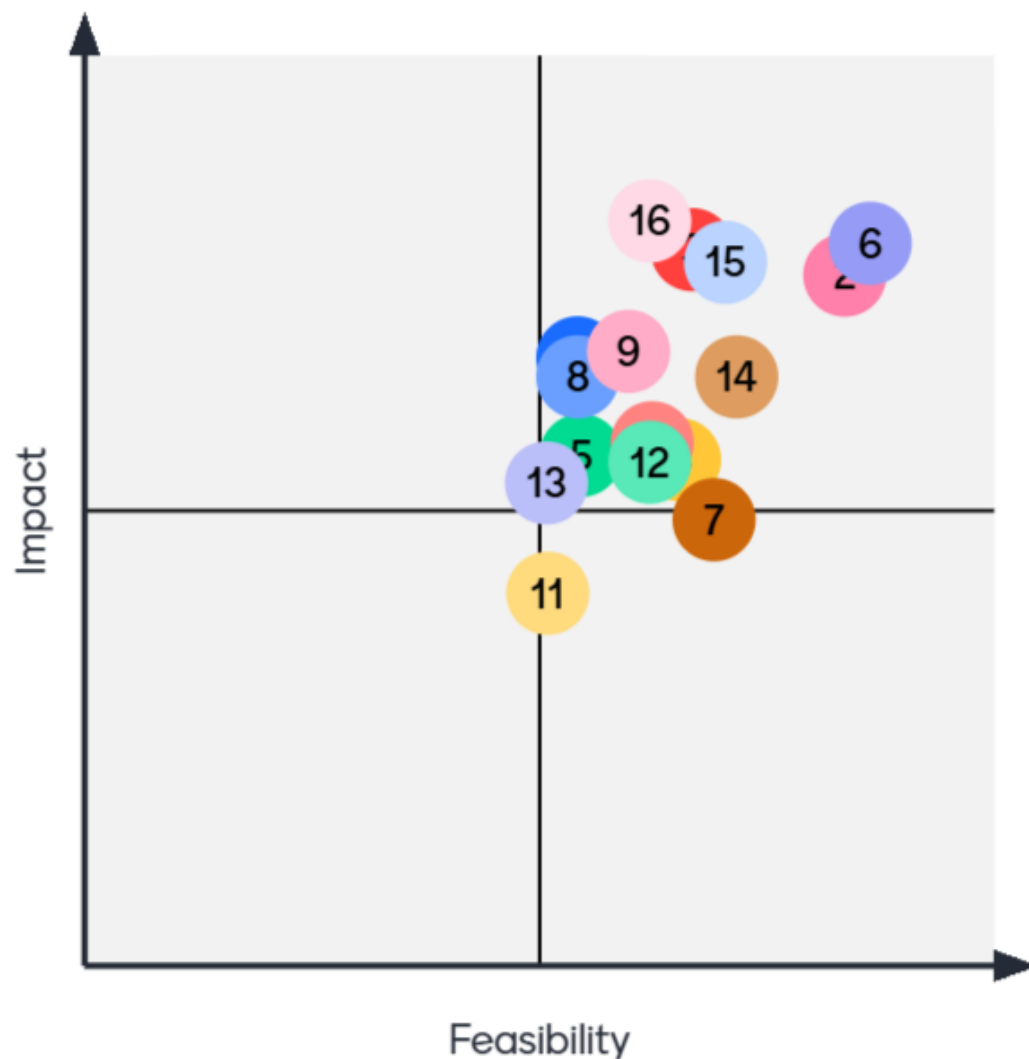
- The recommendations need to be expanded, operational and specific. The study should include how to concretely implement the recommendations and should give examples.
- Most of the agencies have AAP component with several activities related to the topic. Positive practices and lessons learned should be expanded.
- The elephant in the room is the politization of the refugee file. There is also a lot of scapegoating. This is out of control. What is the best approach to act taking this into account?
- Entry points for all the recommendations should be identified to actually change behaviours. Which strategies have worked best with regard to changing behaviours and perceptions?
- UNDP is producing a toolbox on monitoring and evaluation in a conflict sensitive way. On recommendation 7, there is a need to avoid an "assessment fatigue" through surveys and to make sure that this study isn't redundant with what is already done by the sector. Key Aid Consulting clarified that the recommendation 7 is about piggybacking on existing initiatives such as incorporating questions related to misinformation within existing surveys.
- The lack of trust in the aid sector and how to address it through the recommendations is a central point of the study. There is a need to clarify whether the lack of trust is linked to misinformation, to how targeting is actually done or both.
- On recommendation 1 about transparency of targeting:

- The Proxy-MeansTesting (PMT) about the targeting method used for social assistance isn't shared by the government. Recommendation 1 should therefore be refined to reflect that reality.
- What level of transparency can be acceptable for the communities?
- Protection risks and the link to coping strategies should be developed in the final report.
- On recommendation 5 about pre-bunking strategies:
  - The implications of AI should be explained in the final report as there were some initial reservations about whether it could lead to further misinformation given the margin of errors.
  - This was clarified by Key Aid Consulting expert: AI hallucinations can be mitigated by teaching the AI model to fetch information from specific websites and feed it with specific documents to answer the questions.
  - Another point raised by a participant: While anticipatory communication happens to a limited extent, it would be very beneficial to implement quality assurance messages tackling the messaging done (language, text, and approach) by frontliners.
  - A participant warned that AI could possibly lead to frustration among community members if they are unable to reach a "human" in a humanitarian context (AI isn't enough).
  - A participant mentioned a few organisations that are trustworthy, and could be interesting for fact checking and training: CLDH, ACHR, ARM, الساحة أخبار, Megaphone

## ANNEX 1 – TABLE OF PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSULTATION

To whom?	What?
<p><b>Implementing partners</b> (at organisational level versus as common initiatives)</p>	<p><b>Increasing transparency:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Clearly communicate targeting criteria while considering complexity and protection risks.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Develop a Communication Plan:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocate budget for communication (e.g., under AAP).</li> <li>• Shift from reactive to anticipatory communication to debunk misinformation and promote a positive perception of CVA for both communities.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Enhance Collaboration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Strengthen partnerships between alternative media and implementing partners.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Programmatic Improvements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Implement pre-bunking strategies, such as a common AI Chatbot for Syrians and Lebanese to address misinformation</li> <li>•Enhance staff capacity to effectively debunk misinformation.</li> <li>•Complement UNDP Arc surveys with questions about CVA and misinformation to monitor it</li> <li>•Tackle lack of neutrality of potential aid workers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy and decision making actors</b></p>	<p><b>Promote Healing and Social Cohesion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop programs to foster healing between Syrian and Lebanese communities.</li> <li>• Implement social cohesion initiatives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Offer psychosocial support services to affected populations.</li> <li>(2) Conduct role-playing exercises to complement the UNDP Arc program.</li> <li>(3) Develop a toolbox for handling misperceptions, similar to those used for gender-based violence and children protection</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

## ANNEX 2 – OUTCOME OF THE VOTES BY THE PARTICIPANTS ON MENTIMETER



- 1 Clearly communicate targeting criteria while considering complexity and protection risks
- 2 Allocate budget for communication (e.g. under AAP).
- 3 Shift from reactive to anticipatory communication to debunk misinformation and promote a positive perception of CVA for both communities.
- 4 Strengthen partnerships between alternative media and implementing partners.
- 5 Implement pre-bunking strategies, such as a common AI Chatbot for Syrians and Lebanese to address misinformation
- 6 Enhance staff capacity to effectively debunk misinformation.
- 7 Complement UNDP Arc surveys with questions about CVA and misinformation to monitor it
- 8 Tackle lack of neutrality of potential aid workers
- 9 Develop programs to foster healing between Syrian and Lebanese communities.
- 10 Offer psychosocial support services to affected populations.
- 11 Conduct role-playing exercises to complement the UNDP Arc program.
- 12 Develop a toolbox for handling misperceptions, similar to those used for gender-based violence and children protection
- 13 Develop programs to foster healing between Syrian and Lebanese communities.
- 14 Expand positive practices that communities received well with regard to AAP/ communication
- 15 Create one platform with all the information related to CVA
- 16 Address the politicization of misinformation