

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES



Food assistance for refugees A lifeline of hope

Since 2012, the World Food Programme (WFP) has provided refugees in Lebanon with food assistance, first with food parcels, then paper vouchers and now with e-cards.

Around 650,000 Syrian refugees currently receive USD 27 each month on an e-card which can be used in local shops across the country to buy fresh food. Refugees of other nationalities also receive such cash for food. The system behind the transfer was developed with WFP's global partner MasterCard and with the local financial service provider Banque Libano-Française. The e-card approach works well in Lebanon where there is plenty of food on shop shelves and where the supporting technological payment system is commonplace.

Furthermore, the system grants refugees agency in determining the makeup of their meals, an important social, psychological and cultural anchor for families living in uncertain times.

Since late 2016, WFP joined forces with UNICEF and UNHCR to expand the accounts within the e-card – or Common Card. Now, each of the organisations transfer separate amounts to refugee families on one e-card.

WFP prioritises food assistance for the most vulnerable refugees based on criteria build on results of the annual vulnerability assessments and other socio-economic information.

WFP's cash-based assistance not only provides a lifeline of hope to refugee families, it also provides a substantial boost to the Lebanese economy. Since the programme began, over USD 1.5 billion has been directly injected into the economy through the e-card system. Lebanese shopkeepers have benefitted, expanding shops, employing additional staff and increasing their profits.

Since 2017, WFP has also provided an additional family top-up of USD 175 to the neediest families. That cash can be withdrawn from automated teller machines (ATMs) and spent on families' most basic needs, food other otherwise.

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