

Vulnerability Screening

February 2021

Lebanon

Introduction

Since October 2019, Lebanon has been subject to several turning points covering a multitude of dimensions each contributing separately to the deterioration of the different aspects of living conditions and quality of life in Lebanon. The spark of the nationwide protests and revolution in October 2019 marked the exordium of the economic crisis and led to social instability. A subsequent chain of unfortunate events followed including the response of the banking sector and the devaluation of the Lebanese Lira against the USD, the outbreak of COVID-19's first wave and the Beirut port Blast in August 2020 coupled with the second wave of COVID-19. The combined impact of these events paralyzed the local market begetting the closure of many businesses and further crippling the economy leading to increased domestic poverty and the exertion of an enormous strain on both vulnerable Lebanese and displaced populations. Additionally, Lebanon's central bank has warned that it could run out of money to pay subsidies on basic goods by early 2021. If this happens, observers, including the United Nations and local NGOs warned that if authorities stop subsidizing certain goods (especially flour, fuel, and medication) prices will rise, potentially leaving over three-quarters of Lebanese living in poverty. On this note, World Vision Lebanon (WVL), aimed at assessing the perception of beneficiaries regarding this fact and to check to what extent stopping subsidies can impact their livelihoods.

World Vision Lebanon (WVL) has previously conducted several assessments to understand the impact of the different events on samples of registered children (RC) and their families. Given the persistent economic deterioration, WVL conducted similar assessments aiming to evaluate the current living conditions of different households (RCs and their families along with other vulnerable groups) and therefore use the generated information to guide decision making for different kinds of assistances and projects. This factsheet summarizes the findings several assessments conducted with these vulnerable groups across different time-shots in 2020 and January 2021. The results, and mainly the ones relevant to food security were triangulated with the findings from the subsidies assessment.

Methodology

Data from different projects under WVL were compiled and utilized. Firstly, a quantitative method was adopted to collect the data through phone interviews. For this component, a pragmatic approach, pertinent to each project goal and target location, was used to select the locations.

A qualitative component was added to supplement the findings from the compiled quantitative data, through a set of 35 KIIs conducted in seven WVL areas development programmes (ADP) (5 KIIs in each Akkar, Bint Jbeil, BML, Central Bekaa, West Bekaa, Marjeyoun and Zahle). The interviews were facilitated by the monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (Mel) coordinator. The qualitative component aimed to further understand the perceptions of households around the subsidized items and the perceived impact of the proposed subsidy removal on the quality of life of these households and hence the vulnerabilities.

The tool used for this assessment was developed by WVL's technical team comprising several open and close ended questions. The main purpose for the development of the tool was assessing different beneficiaries to help guide decision making for in-kind (mainly food) assistance and cash assistance.

The tool aims to capture through the blend of open and close ended questions, 11 vulnerability criteria identified by the technical team. A scoring system was developed to help guide the decisions of the eligibility of the households assessed to the distributions. The scoring relied on a complex system adopting a conditional filtering to generate scorecards under each criterion followed by a weighting system for the criteria to yield a final comprehensive score. The initial scoring system was further re-calibrated during November 2020 to help the scale respond more to the deteriorating economic situation and to the re-calibration of the SMEB values and therefore be more sensitive to empirical evidence.



Vulnerability Criteria Screened:

1. Single-headed elderly household (64+) or single-headed below age household (<18).
2. Head of household suffers from a severe chronic illness.
3. Family dependency ratio above 4:1.
4. Families with no working member and no fixed/monthly income.
5. Families with one or more member (s) suffering from a chronic illness or immunodeficiency, or with a disability.
6. Families with a single woman head of household (for example, widow divorced, or the only adult in the family).
7. Households with income below SMEB proxy.
8. Households engaged in negative coping mechanism during the past 2 months to access essential needs.
9. Households with food storage at home that serves for less than 2 weeks.
10. Households with lactating or pregnant woman.
11. Households with WV sponsorship registered children.



DEMOGRAPHICS

Head of household Age:

The age of head of household ranged between 16 to 103 years old with an average of 49 years old.

Head of household sex:

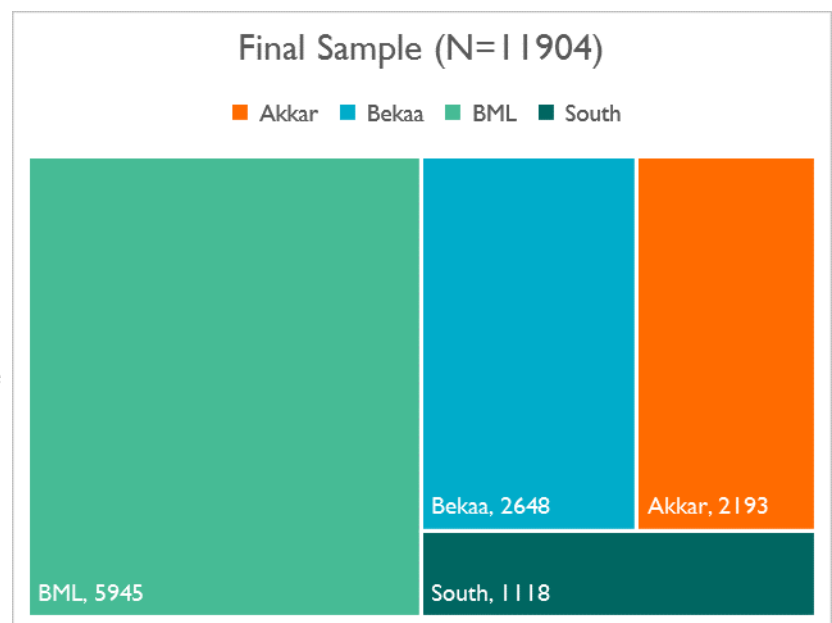
The majority of the head of households were males (80.9%) compared to females (19.1%).

Head of household Nationality:

The majority of the screened households were Lebanese (88.9%), followed by Syrian household (8.5%) and the remaining minority was almost equally divided between Palestinians (1.5%) and other nationalities (1.1%).

Family Size:

Average family size was 5 members, ranging between a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 21 members.





VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS

Single-headed elderly household or single-headed below age household

3.6% of the screened households were either single-headed elderly households or single-headed below age households.



Head of household suffers from a severe chronic illness

32.2% of the screened households reported the head of the household to be suffering from a chronic illness.



Families with one or more member(s) suffering from a chronic illness or immunodeficiency, or living with a disability

35.9% of the screened households reported having one or more member(s) suffering from a chronic disease or living with a disability .



Families with four or more dependents



44.7% of the screened households were families with four or more dependents.

Families with no working member or no fixed/monthly income

49.0% of the screened households had no working members or no fixed income.

- The highest percentage was recorded in Akkar (58.9%) followed by BML (54.7%).



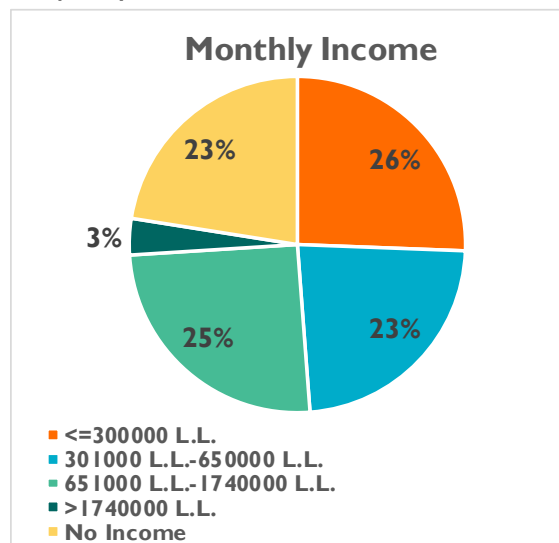
- **1.9%** of the households had a working member below 18 years old. Bekaa having the biggest share in this percentage (**3.5%**)

- **71.0%** of the households had a working member above 18 years old.

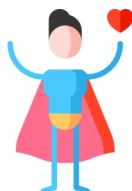
Households with income below SMEB proxy



96.4% of the screened households try to survive on an income below the SMEB proxy.



Families with a single woman head of household (widow, divorced, or the only adult in the family)



19.1% of the screened households reported having a single woman head of household.

Households with lactating or pregnant women



7.8% of the screened households reported having a lactating or pregnant woman.

Households with food storage at home that serves for less than 2 weeks



90.3% of the screened households did not have food storage at home to last for more than 2 weeks.

- **61.6%** of the households did not have food storage at home and of those who had, **81.0%** reported it to last for not more than 2 weeks.



Amidst the probability of the removal of subsidies, the qualitative key informant interviews revealed the vast majority mentioned some food items to be subsidized to their knowledge and were uncertain about the subsidy status perceiving it as questionable.

“Coffee, flour, fuel, sugar, rice, oil (are subsidized). I believe the subsidy removal already started gradually as prices of bread and fuel started to increase”

Lebanese Female, Central Bekaa

Regarding the extent of their reliance on subsidized items, the majority revealed that their food consumption variety includes the food items subsidized but they tend to search for the cheapest available items regardless of the subsidies. Subsidized items were perceived as not accessible for everyone due to limited supply quantities, purchasing power and behavior of some traders who tend to hide these products. Some revealed that even when accessible they are still expensive.

“I don't rely on subsidized items, what I look for mainly when shopping food items are the cheapest brands regardless of being subsidized or not”

Lebanese Female, Central Bekaa

“Not all people are able to benefit from these subsidized items since a lot of these items are expensive, thus the poor people and those who have no work are not able to get these items, and this applies to all people in Lebanon. Yes, it happens a lot to me that I go and look for the subsidized items and I don't find so I come back home without buying anything else.”

Lebanese Male, Zahle

When asked about who will benefit from the current subsidy regimen, if it is maintained with no further reductions, almost all participants agreed not everyone will benefit equally; the financially capable and those having ties with trader will benefit and the more vulnerable will not.

“Not all people will benefit since these subsidized items are expensive and beyond the financial abilities of a lot of people to buy.”

Lebanese Female, South

Participants were hopeless about a solution to the current situation and thought financial and food assistance from NGOs (more than the government) could help however they doubted the ability of NGOs to support the great number of people affected.

Households engaged in negative coping mechanisms to access essential needs

44.9% of the screened households reported resorting to negative coping mechanisms to access essential needs.

**These mechanisms include selling household assets/goods, spending savings, purchasing food on credit, borrowing money and withdrawing children from school.*



The KIs revealed that, when asked about the impact of the subsidy removal on the household and on children's rights, almost all participants agreed that their ability to buy food would be negatively affected. The coping mechanisms mentioned were reduction in food purchase, adjustments to quality and quantity of dietary intake and reliance on cultivation as a source of food. A few participants even mentioned resorting to begging and robbery in order to be able to provide for their family. As for the impact on the most vulnerable, almost all participants mentioned that the most vulnerable will or are already "dying of hunger" and that many of them will have to resort to treacherous coping mechanisms involving crime and robbery.

"It will for sure let us lose our abilities to buy a lot of essential items that we need. We will have to cope by buying a substitute that is cheap and we will have to decrease our consumption."

Lebanese Male, South

"We may die out of hunger and people will be pushed to commit robberies and crimes to have food."

Lebanese Male, Zahle

As for the impact on children, all the participants agreed that the removal of the subsidy would influence all aspects of children's life and particularly education. Participants believed that parents will transfer their children from private to public educational institutions and others with financial constraints will tend to prioritize spending on provision of food rather than education and some would also have to resort to waged child labour.

"Children now are suffering already, they are not living their childhood, they think older than their ages, they worry if they will be having food the next day or not, they are deprived from proper food, proper clothing, even deprived from eating essential food items as meat. The current situation is letting children lose their interest in education as they have no hope to learn anymore."

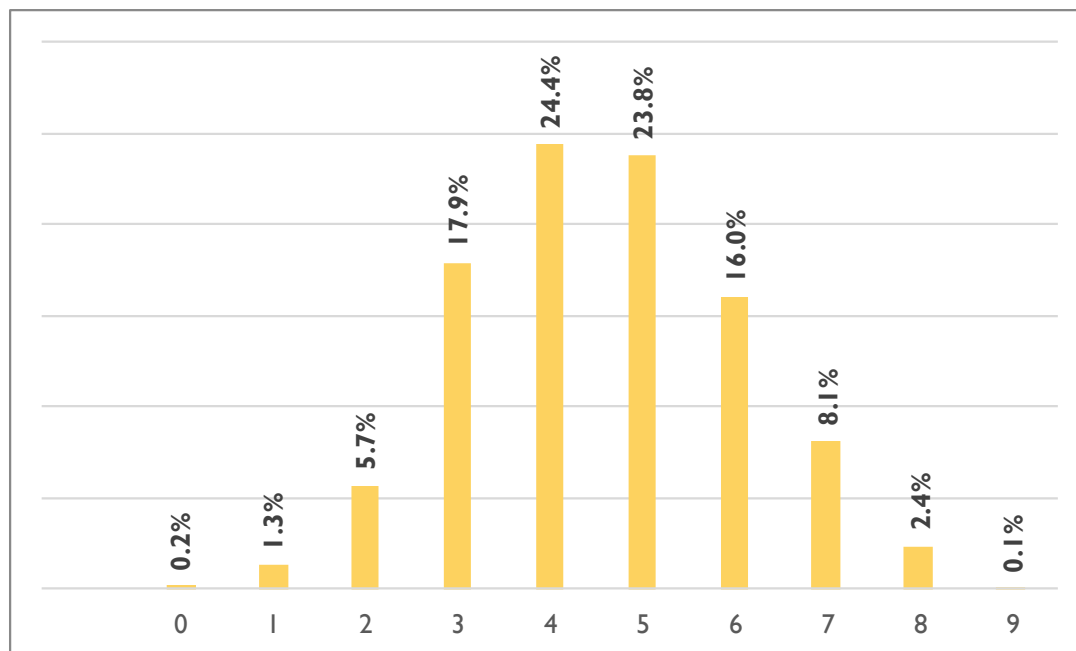
Lebanese Female, Akkar

Households with WVVL sponsorship registered children



49.3% of the screened households have at least one child registered under WVVL's sponsorship program.

Distribution of households as per sum of vulnerabilities per household (excluding RC)



Average: 4.56

The majority of the assessed households (82.1%) had 3 to 6 vulnerabilities out of 10 (excluding the RC criterion) with the bulk having 4 to 5 (48.2%, mean:4.56) which reflects an alarming situation.