



The Common Cash Facility

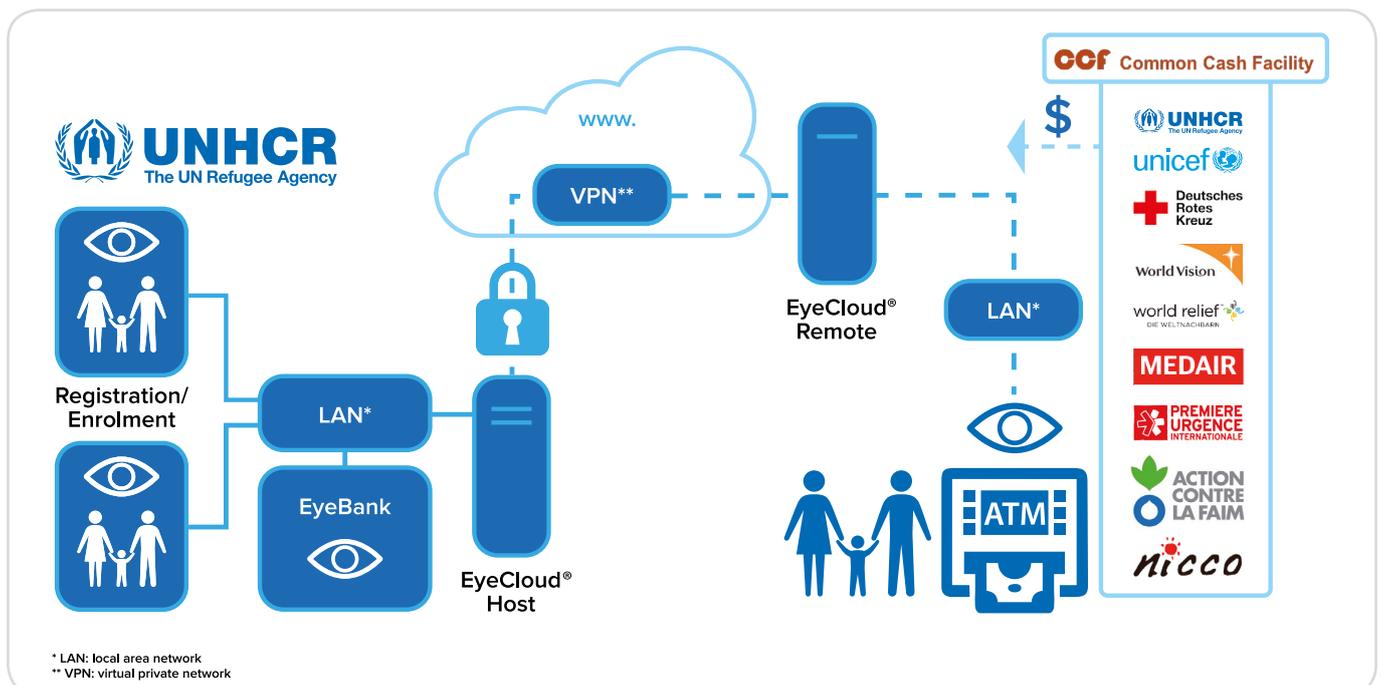
Partnering for Better Cash Assistance to Refugees in Jordan

WHAT IS THE COMMON CASH FACILITY?

The Common Cash Facility (CCF) is a platform used by UN agencies and NGOs to **deliver more than 90 per cent of the cash assistance** provided to the most vulnerable refugees in Jordan who live outside camps.

It is based on an **innovative public-private partnership** between UNHCR, the Cairo Amman Bank and the biometrics company IrisGuard.

Refugees withdraw cash from cash points using iris scanning without the need for a card or PIN. The ATM authenticates the beneficiaries by linking to UNHCR's secure biometric registration data of refugees¹ through an encrypted network connection known as EyeCloud®.



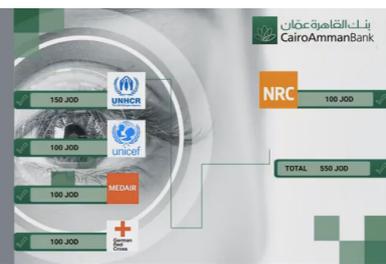
¹ Iris scanning measures the unique patterns in a person's irises, which are used to verify and authenticate identity. In Jordan, UNHCR uses iris scanning during the registration of refugees.

Aimed at creating shared value for all organizations, the cash transfer arrangement was developed and procured by UNHCR and **made available to all humanitarian partners** on a direct and equal basis, with **no management fees**.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Every month refugees who qualify for cash assistance receive an SMS informing them when the cash is available for withdrawal.

After scanning their irises at the ATM, refugees see a digital wallet that shows the amount allocated by each humanitarian organization, where applicable. The funds will be withdrawn from each organization's bank accounts.



Ensuring financial integrity and accountability, at the end of the month each organization receives a reconciliation report from the bank detailing each beneficiary's account status.

The withdrawal system is **fraud-proof**. Using iris scans guarantees that **cash reaches the intended recipients** not just once, but every time money is withdrawn from the account.

At the end of the month, refugees who do not withdraw funds will be contacted by the CCF humanitarian partner. If after various attempts they cannot be reached, their names will be taken off the list of beneficiaries and the funds will be used to assist families on the waiting list.

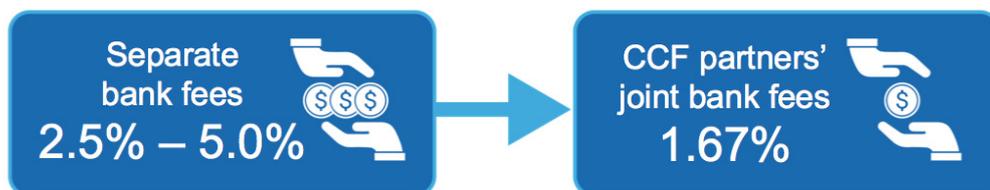
VALUE FOR MONEY

It provides **value for money** as it maximizes the impact of donors' funds: the agencies participating in the facility used to pay between 2.5% and 5% in bank fees, whereas a joint approach under the CCF has allowed them collectively to bring the cost down to 1.67%.

The lower costs of digital banking, coupled with economies of scale through several partners coming together, improve **efficiency** and allow CCF partners to reach more families.

By using a jointly developed² **inter-agency vulnerability framework** based on agreed socio-economic indicators, the CCF brings improved **effectiveness** to all partners.

Partners put their technical expertise together to jointly define a common targeting approach in areas such as shelter, education, health, food and protection, to ensure that the right assistance is provided to those in need.



² The Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) was developed by five UN agencies, five INGOs and two donors that agreed on a definition of vulnerability and developed models by which to measure and track it across time.

For more information: <http://innovation.unhcr.org/understanding-vulnerability-can-maximize-aid-effectiveness/>

PARTNERSHIP

The Common Cash Facility is **jointly managed** by representatives from participating organizations³, which include UNHCR, UNICEF, the German Red Cross, World Relief Germany, World Vision, Medair, Première Urgence - Aide Médicale Internationale, Action contre la Faim and Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development.

All humanitarian partners joining the facility – large and small – can access the financial service provider on an equal and direct basis, under the same terms and conditions and at the **same record-low overheads**, with no entry or exit barriers.

This means that a small NGO processing a one-off payment for a limited number of refugees benefits from the same low fees as a large agency delivering monthly cash assistance to tens of thousands of refugees.

No agency acts as ‘platform manager’, thereby maintaining the **integrity and importance of the full spectrum of humanitarian assistance provision**.

WHO BENEFITS?

REFUGEE PROFILE IN JORDAN (out-of-camp)



Nearly 4 out of 5 Syrian refugees in Jordan live outside camps



1 out of 3 Syrian refugee households is headed by women



93% of refugee families are living below the poverty line as they have exhausted their savings after years in exile. Most are in debt, putting them at risk of eviction



51% are children



30% of Syrian refugees in Jordan have special needs

Refugees

- The CCF provides **predictability of assistance** to the most vulnerable refugee families.
- Receiving regular cash transfers reduces the pressure on refugee households to generate income through negative coping strategies⁴ such as child labour, early marriage, begging, survival sex and exploitative or dangerous labour.
- The CCF also provides timely assistance addressing specific **protection** risks: in urgent cases, such as eviction or medical fees, refugees can withdraw cash assistance within 24 hours.
- Refugees can contact UNHCR's call centre if there are any problems or if they want to have their case reconsidered for assistance. Under the CCF agreement, UNHCR's call centre works directly with partner agency helplines and focal points creating a seamless **referral mechanism**.
- Refugees spend cash assistance in local markets in **support of the local economy**. This results in **protection** dividends through strengthened relationships between refugee and host communities.

Aid agencies

- The CCF allows all organizations to deliver their assistance at lower banking costs by negotiating advantageous bank fees due to the **strength of its pooled funding**.
- All partners, large or small, get the **same lower bank fees** (in 2016 these were 1.67%).
- By removing the excessive focus on procurement and ownership of the transfer arrangements, humanitarian organizations are able to invest more time in their core business – to **help people in need**.

Donors

- The CCF encourages **coordination among partners** for better assistance and **eliminates duplication of assistance**.
- It brings **value for money** by stretching aid budgets and ensuring that the assistance reaches the designated recipients.
- Biometric identification **reduces fraud** and improves effectiveness and transparency.
- The CCF allows each organization to work directly with the bank, thereby **satisfying reporting, financial regulations and audit requirements**.

CCF IN NUMBERS:

Refugees* who received cash assistance from CCF partners in 2016:
40,000 families (more than 90% of refugees living outside camps who receive cash assistance)

Refugees registered with UNHCR living outside camps: 592,000 individuals

Vulnerable refugees on the waiting list: 11,531 families

Cash assistance transfers by CCF partners in 2016: USD 118 million

* Refugees who benefit from cash assistance come from 17 countries, including Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia among others

For more information, please contact: JORAMCCF@unhcr.org

April 2017

⁴ Cash Transfers For Refugees. The Economic and Social Effects of a Programme in Jordan. Overseas Development Institute (ODI) 2017. <https://www.odi.org/publications/10705-cash-transfers-refugees-economic-and-social-effects-programme-jordan>