
Minimum Expenditure Basket for Syrian refugees

2017 Guidance note

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Background

- The Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) is a way of establishing poverty lines for refugee populations. It is emerging as the primary tool to develop a cost and market based expression of minimum needs of refugees in any given country. It broadly follows the notion of a “cost of basic needs approach” as outlined in the World Bank Poverty Manual from 2005.
- Poverty is defined as a “deprivation in well-being”, which is related to the command over commodities. In Jordan, it was agreed to develop two poverty lines, i.e. two MEBs, in order to:
 - a) Mirror the way the Government of Jordan calculates poverty lines;
 - b) Support the vulnerability calculations under the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF).
- Accordingly, the two MEBs are:
 - a) Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB)
 - b) Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB)
- The MEB is the expression of the monthly cost per capita, which allows a Syrian refugee to live a dignified life outside the camps in Jordan. This implies the full access to rights and represents the minimum needed to live in dignity. The SMEB is the expression of the monthly cost per capita, which is the minimum needed for physical survival and implies the deprivation of a series of rights.
- The poverty line approach and appeal has limitations. The approach is often contrasted with the multi-dimensional poverty index approach, which add a qualitative element to poverty calculations. The utility of a poverty line in the Jordanian refugee response context outweighs a more complex approach.

Summary of findings

Table 1: The Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB)

	JOD Per capita, Per month based on family size						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2017 Total MEB	156	235	315	399	456	514	583
2017 per capita	156	118	105	100	91	86	83
2016 Total MEB	160	240	319	388	451	515	594
2016 per capita	160	120	106	97	90	86	85
Percentage diff.	-2.8%	-2.2%	-1.5%	2.9%	1.1%	-0.2%	-1.9%

Table 2: The Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB)

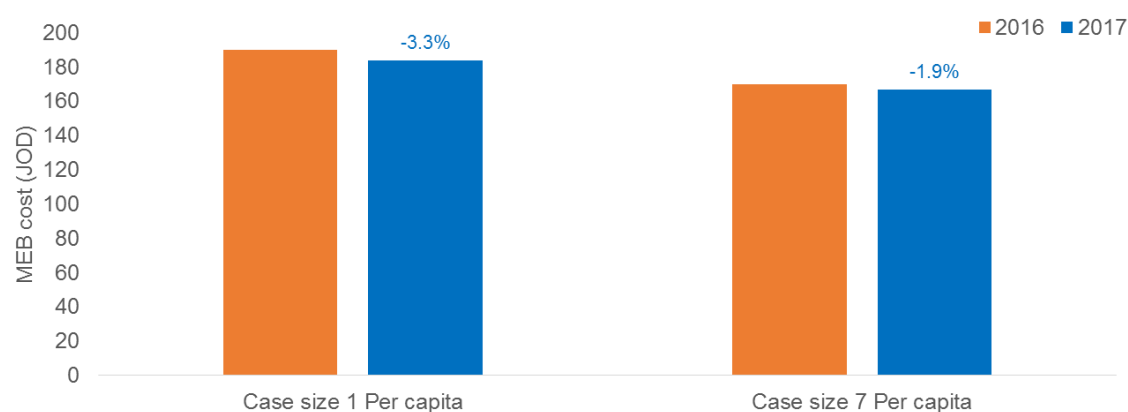
Family size	JOD Per capita, Per month based on family size						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2017 Total MEB	125	162	197	241	263	281	311
2017 per capita	125	81	66	60	53	47	44
2016 Total MEB	132	173	202	232	256	281	323
2016 per capita	132	86	67	58	51	47	46
% diff. MEB	-4.9%	-6.1%	-2.1%	3.8%	2.5%	0.1%	-3.6%

2016 – 2017 comparison

The overall MEB has not changed significantly

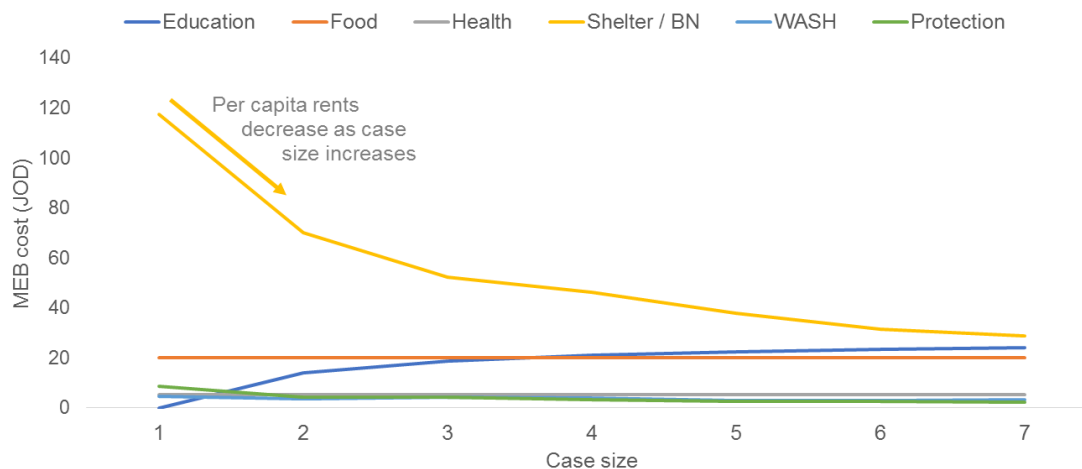
- There are several ways to review the MEB. On a per capita basis for a case size of one, with the cost of education also included (normally education costs are included for case sizes two and above), and a per capita basis for a case size of seven, to demonstrate economies of scale:
 - For a case size of one the per capita MEB decreased by 13 JOD, or -3.3% (different to the MEB table above because of the inclusion of education)
 - For a case size of seven the per capita MEB decreased by -3.2 JOD, or -1.9%

Figure 1: Percentage change in MEB from 2016 to 2017



Rent is the greatest cause for per capita decreases based on family size

- Depending on the size of a case there is a per capita variance of 73 JOD, from 159 JOD for a case size of one to 83 JOD for a case size of seven or above. The variance is mostly due to rental costs. For example if a single person lived in a flat with a monthly rent of 100 JOD the per capita rent is 100 JOD. If two people shared the apartment, the per capita rent is half at 50 JOD.

Figure 2: Changes in per capita costs relative to case size

Positive and negative changes in sectoral values more or less balance

- Figure 3 shows the positive and negative changes in per capita costs for each of the items in the MEB for a case size of one including Education.

Figure 3: Changes in cost from 2016 to 2017

Sector MEB items		Price change (JOD)
Education	Access to Education (Transport)	+2
	Uniforms	-5.92
	Supplementary school supply	+2
	Daily allowance	
EDUCATION TOTAL		-1.92
Food	Bulgur	-0.2
	Cheese Spread	-0.39
	Cucumbers	+0.04
	Eggs	-0.34
	Lentils	+0.19
	Pasta (macaroni)	+0.03
	Rice	+0.64
	Salt	+0.03
	Sugar	+0.05
	Vegetable oil	-0.41
	Whole chicken	-0.12
FOOD TOTAL		-0.48
Health	Primary, secondary OPD and dental care	+0.3
	Hospitalisations	+0.27
	Catastrophic expenditure	
	Delivery	+0.06
	Baby Kit	+0.01
HEALTH TOTAL		+0.63
Shelter / BN	Rent	-5
	Utilities	+3.2
	Basic HH items	+0.77
	SHELTER B/N TOTAL	
WASH	Water (network, tanker, dislodging, bottled etc.)	-1.01
	Hygiene items	-1.15
	WASH TOTAL	
Protection	Transportation	
	Communication	-1.4
PROTECTION TOTAL		-1.4

Table 3: The Minimum Expenditure Basket

Jordan: October 2017

MONTHLY MEB (in JOD) - ABSOLUTE POVERTY LINE

Sector	Items	Item in Survival	Family Size							Data Type	Data Source	2017 Action
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
Education	Access to Education (Transport)	N	-	15.00	30.00	45.00	60.00	75.00	90.00	Calculation by Sector	Information collected through counseling and community meetings	Updated
	Uniforms	N	-	1.08	2.17	3.25	4.33	5.42	6.50	Calculation by Sector	Information collected through counseling and community meetings	Updated
	Supplementary school supply	N	-	6.00	12.00	18.00	24.00	30.00	36.00	Calculation by Sector	Information collected through counseling and community meetings	Updated
	Daily allowance	N	-	6.00	12.00	18.00	24.00	30.00	36.00	Calculation by Sector	Information collected through counseling and community meetings	Updated
	Total		0.00	28.08	56.17	84.25	112.33	140.42	168.50			
Food	Bulgur	Y	5.34	10.68	16.02	21.36	26.70	32.04	37.38	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, attitional WFP shops	Updated
	Cheese Spread	Y	0.96	1.92	2.88	3.84	4.80	5.76	6.72	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, attitional WFP shops	Updated
	Cucumbers	Y	0.44	0.88	1.31	1.75	2.19	2.63	3.07	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, attitional WFP shops	Updated
	Eggs	Y	0.67	1.33	2.00	2.67	3.33	4.00	4.67	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, attitional WFP shops	Updated
	Lentils	Y	1.57	3.15	4.72	6.29	7.87	9.44	11.01	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, attitional WFP shops	Updated
	Pasta (macaroni)	Y	1.70	3.40	5.10	6.80	8.50	10.20	11.90	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, attitional WFP shops	Updated
	Rice	Y	5.54	11.07	16.61	22.14	27.68	33.21	38.75	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, attitional WFP shops	Updated
	Salt	Y	0.05	0.10	0.15	0.20	0.25	0.30	0.35	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, attitional WFP shops	Updated
	Sugar	Y	0.73	1.47	2.20	2.93	3.66	4.40	5.13	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, attitional WFP shops	Updated
	Vegetable oil	Y	1.08	2.16	3.23	4.31	5.39	6.47	7.55	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, attitional WFP shops	Updated
	Whole chicken	Y	1.94	3.87	5.81	7.74	9.68	11.61	13.55	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, attitional WFP shops	Updated
	Total		20.01	40.02	60.03	80.03	100.04	120.05	140.06			
Health	Primary, secondary OPD and dental care	N	2.82	5.64	8.46	11.28	14.10	16.92	19.74	Calculation by Sector	As documented in Health MEB 2017 Guidance Note	Updated
	Hospitalisations	N	0.67	1.34	2.01	2.68	3.35	4.02	4.69	Calculation by Sector	As documented in Health MEB 2017 Guidance Note	Updated
	Catastrophic expenditure	N	1.25	2.50	3.75	5.00	6.25	7.50	8.75	Calculation by Sector	As documented in Health MEB 2017 Guidance Note	Updated
	Delivery	N	0.45	0.89	1.34	1.79	2.23	2.68	3.13	Calculation by Sector	As documented in Health MEB 2017 Guidance Note	Updated
	Baby Kit	N	0.06	0.11	0.17	0.22	0.28	0.33	0.39	Calculation by Sector	As documented in Health MEB 2017 Guidance Note	Updated
	Total		5.24	10.48	15.73	20.97	26.21	31.45	36.69			
Shelter / BN	Rent	Y	103.00	118.00	129.00	150.00	153.00	150.00	157.00	VAF data (All HVs)	Source all assessed VAF data. Reported rent by governorate and FS	Updated
	Utilities	N	10.20	16.50	19.89	24.60	27.07	28.15	31.37	VAF baseline data	2017 VAF Baseline data reported expenditure by family size	Updated
	Basic HH items	N	4.17	5.96	7.62	10.59	9.58	10.90	12.46	VAF baseline data	2017 VAF Baseline data reported expenditure by family size	Updated
	Total		117.36	140.46	156.51	185.20	189.64	189.05	200.84			
WASH	Water (network, tanker, dislodging, bottled etc.)	Y	2.19	4.05	8.45	10.63	9.68	10.94	14.15	VAF baseline data	2017 VAF Baseline data reported expenditure by family size	Updated
	Hygiene items	N	2.25	3.36	4.56	5.17	5.17	5.80	7.97	VAF baseline data	2017 VAF Baseline data reported expenditure by family size	Updated
	Total		4.44	7.41	13.01	15.80	14.86	16.73	22.12			
Protection	Transportation	N	12.30	15.48	17.53	19.15	21.83	25.39	32.61	VAF baseline data	2017 VAF Baseline data reported expenditure by family size	No change advised
	Communication	N	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.10	UNICEF PDM Findings	Assessments conducted in June, August and November 2015	Updated
	Total		14.40	17.58	19.63	21.25	23.93	27.49	34.71			
Total			161	244	321	407	467	525	603			
per capita			161	122	107	102	93	88	86			

Table 4: The Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket
Jordan: October 2017
MONTHLY SURVIVAL MEB (in JOD) - ABJECT POVERTY LINE

Sector	Items	Item in Survival MEB? (Y/N)	Family Size							Data Type	Data Source
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Food	Bulgur	Y	5.34	10.68	16.02	21.36	26.70	32.04	37.38	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, additional WFP shops
	Cheese Spread	Y	0.96	1.92	2.88	3.84	4.80	5.76	6.72	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, additional WFP shops
	Cucumbers	Y	0.44	0.88	1.31	1.75	2.19	2.63	3.07	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, additional WFP shops
	Eggs	Y	0.67	1.33	2.00	2.67	3.33	4.00	4.67	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, additional WFP shops
	Lentils	Y	1.57	3.15	4.72	6.29	7.87	9.44	11.01	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, additional WFP shops
	Pasta (macaroni)	Y	1.70	3.40	5.10	6.80	8.50	10.20	11.90	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, additional WFP shops
	Rice	Y	5.54	11.07	16.61	22.14	27.68	33.21	38.75	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, additional WFP shops
	Salt	Y	0.05	0.10	0.15	0.20	0.25	0.30	0.35	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, additional WFP shops
	Sugar	Y	0.73	1.47	2.20	2.93	3.66	4.40	5.13	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, additional WFP shops
	Vegetable oil	Y	1.08	2.16	3.23	4.31	5.39	6.47	7.55	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, additional WFP shops
	Whole chicken	Y	1.94	3.87	5.81	7.74	9.68	11.61	13.55	Sector Standard	Dept. Statistics, 200+ retailers, additional WFP shops
	Total		20.01	40.02	60.03	80.03	100.04	120.05	140.06		
Shelter / BN	Rent	Y	103.00	118.00	129.00	150.00	153.00	150.00	157.00	VAF data (All HVs)	Source all assessed VAF data. Reported rent by governorate and FS
	Total		103.00	118.00	129.00	150.00	153.00	150.00	157.00		
WASH	Water and Sanitation	Y	2.19	4.05	8.45	10.63	9.68	10.94	14.15	VAF baseline data	2017 VAF Baseline data reported expenditure by family size
	Total		2.19	4.05	8.45	10.63	9.68	10.94	14.15		
	Total		125	162	197	241	263	281	311		
	per capita		125	81	66	60	53	47	44		

Using the MEB

- The MEB has been used since July 2015 in two ways: to determine levels of assistance and to provide price lines for modelling within projects such as the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF).
 - a) Levels of Assistance
 - Using the line items in the MEB, as well as the case sizes, sectors are able to determine assistance packages. For example, cash-for-rent activities in the shelter group can now revisit the sizing scale based on row 4 of the MEB related to rent. Similarly, cash-for-water activities can now be costed based on row 27 of the MEB. This is a straight forward exercise for conditional cash grants.
 - Importantly, it is now possible to develop an assistance scale by household size or even per capita rather than applying a flat-rate or a categorical package. Moreover, it will be possible to track this reliably at sector-level and to integrate this further via coordination tools such as the Refugee Assistance Information System (RAIS).
 - b) Vulnerability Assessment
 - The MEB will also yield the poverty lines, which will be validated by the VAF Advisory Board. There are at least two possible ways of defining the poverty line based on the current MEB:
 - The per capita value of the family size of 5 is used, which is the standard category for the appeals, for all calculations at sector level when it comes to appeals and call for proposals. This means that absolute and abject poverty lines would be 68 JOD and 28 JOD respectively. OR,
 - The VAF Advisory Board supported by the VAF technical group will have to conclude the technically most appropriate version.

Recommendations

1) To the Sectors: Application of the MEB

Sectors – particularly those who consider monetizing assistance in part or in full – should use the MEB as a way to formulate sizing recommendations for their sector. This means they should engage in a process that sets the level of assistance to meet a sector standard against the MEB. In particular cases, for example Basic Needs and Shelter, it is recommended that some of these consultations are done in close coordination with the Basic Needs working group, as it is this working group that coordinates unconditional (i.e. multi-purpose) cash grants in the refugee response in Jordan. This should be done either through coordination among sector co-chairs or – in particularly complex situations – through setting up a joint technical task force.

2) To the VAF Advisory Board:

The VAF Advisory Board under the facilitation of the VAF technical team will have to revisit and endorse the poverty lines emerging from the MEB (see section 3.2), as they should replace the existing poverty lines which are not calculated based on refugee needs at present.

3) To the Sectors:

It is recommended that all sector standards are revisited and costed in the coming six months. Their use and applicability need to be validated against current market assessment standards.

4) To the Inter-Sector Working Group:

The ISWG should revisit the MEB at least every twelve months or whenever significant shocks occur that shift the types of cost of the items used in this MEB.