



Comprehensive Summary Report

Conducted by SPHERE Building Tomorrow (SBT)

1. Project Introduction

In the wake of Lebanon's compounded humanitarian crisis, the Community Kitchen Initiative emerged as a localized, life-saving response to ensure that food-insecure populations had access to hot, nutritious, and culturally appropriate meals. Operational since March 2025 till present, this intervention served as a vital daily service across Nabatieh, South Lebanon, Mount Lebanon, and Baalbek-Hermel. Led by SPHERE Building Tomorrow (SBT), the project leveraged community-based kitchens and volunteer networks to deliver food assistance while promoting livelihoods and strengthening local food systems.

2. Problem Statement

Lebanon remains entrenched in a multi-dimensional crisis characterized by economic collapse, currency devaluation, soaring inflation, weakened governance, and regional conflict. The 2023–2024 war triggered large-scale displacement and severely affected already marginalized communities, particularly in border regions and rural areas. As a result:

- Food prices surged beyond affordability.
- Livelihoods collapsed due to job loss and disrupted markets.
- Public safety nets eroded, and communities became increasingly dependent on humanitarian aid.

This left over 80% of the population facing food insecurity, especially returnees, IDPs, and host communities living conflict-affected villages.

3. Project Objectives

a. Ensure Continuous Access to Nutritious and Culturally Appropriate Meals

- Provide hot, balanced, and culturally relevant meals to vulnerable populations—including returnees, IDPs, and impoverished host communities—across conflict-affected and food-insecure regions.

b. Safeguard Livelihoods through Community Kitchen Engagement

- Generate short-term income for vulnerable individuals, especially women and youth, by employing them in food preparation, kitchen operations, and logistics.
- Preserve the functionality of kitchens through a cash-for-work model, ensuring local economic resilience and dignity of labor.

c. Support Community Kitchens as Platforms for Recovery and Local Food Systems

- Reactivate and operate community kitchens in rural and affected areas as locally managed food security hubs.
- Promote circular economies by sourcing ingredients from local farmers, cooperatives, and small-scale producers, reinforcing market linkages and minimizing reliance on external suppliers.

d. Reinforce Local Ownership, Dignity, and Humanitarian Accountability

- Uphold humanitarian principles of dignity, participation, and transparency by involving municipalities and community leaders in planning, implementation, and monitoring.
- Design inclusive services that respect cultural norms and prioritize equitable access for the most affected.



e. Maintain Strategic Coordination with Local Authorities and Partners

- Strengthen collaboration with municipal unions, governors, and local networks to facilitate needs assessments, target village selection, and adaptive distribution routing.
- Establish readiness to scale services based on evolving needs and funding availability.

4. Project Milestones and Achievements

a. March 2025: Full-Scale Operations

- Over 733,835 hot meals delivered across four kitchens in Ansar (Nabatieh), Hasbaya-Marjeyoun, Baalbek, and Lower Chouf.
- Provided 22,000 hot meals/day during Ramadan consisting of a hot meal, salad, soup, and dates.
- Created over 70 livelihood opportunities for local cooks, assistants, and logistics personnel.
- Activated circular economy linkages with local suppliers and cooperatives.

b. April 2025: Abrupt Funding Disruptions

- Faced two major funding reallocations by WCK (toward Myanmar and Gaza responses).
- Service delivery reduced to two kitchens (Ansar and Tyre) with only 3,000 meals/day.
- Despite this, 24 essential jobs preserved, and menu adjusted to maintain cultural acceptance.

c. May 2025: Sustained Reduced Operations

- A total of 93,000 hot meals distributed from the two remaining kitchens (2,000 in Ansar, 1,000 in Tyre).
- One protein-rich meal/week reintroduced via in-kind donations (meat, chicken, vegetables) provided by World Vision International.
- Municipal drivers supported logistics, reducing costs and enabling continued access to remote villages.

Total cumulative meals distributed since project inception surpassed **1,024,000**.

5. Detailed Challenges and Mitigation Measures

a. Funding Constraints

Challenge:

The most critical challenge was the sudden and sharp reduction in external funding in early and mid-April. This had an immediate cascading effect:

- Daily meal production fell from 22,000 to 3,000 meals.
- Kitchens in Baalbek, Chouf, and Hasbaya-Marjeyoun ceased operation.
- Livelihoods were jeopardized, and continuity of service was threatened.

Mitigation Measures:

- **Rapid resource reallocation:** Limited funds were channeled to Ansar and Tyre kitchens to maintain core operations.
- **Cost-optimization:** Transportation routes were consolidated, menus simplified, and bulk procurement leveraged for staple ingredients (e.g., bulgur, lentils, beans).
- **Donor engagement and transparency:** SBT maintained open communication with WCK and local stakeholders, justifying the importance of sustaining even scaled-down services.



b. Meal Quality and Nutritional Deficits

Challenge:

The original menu aimed to provide protein-rich, balanced meals four times per week. Following budget cuts, this was no longer feasible, which:

- Affected dietary diversity.
- Risked beneficiary dissatisfaction and potential rejection of food.
- Threatened cultural appropriateness and dignity.

Mitigation Measures:

- **Nutritional substitution:** Meals were redesigned using locally acceptable, cost-effective ingredients such as legumes, chickpeas, lentils, and vegetables.
- **Strategic in-kind support:** SBT sought partners' support like World Vision International to provide protein and vegetables donations, enabling the kitchens to deliver at least one protein-based meal/week.
- **Community dialogue:** Feedback mechanisms were activated to communicate changes transparently and manage expectations, preserving trust and continued acceptance.

c. Safety and Access Risks

Challenge:

The volatile security environment endangered staff, restricted delivery routes, and posed threats to kitchen operations.

Mitigation Measures:

- **Real-time risk monitoring:** SBT MEAL and field teams conducted daily security updates and route assessments.
- **Community-based solutions:** Trusted local volunteers and municipal staff facilitated safe last-mile distribution in high-risk zones.
- **Flexible delivery scheduling:** Deliveries were rescheduled or rerouted based on knowledge gathered from field-level stakeholders.

6. Recommendations and Future Suggestions

As Lebanon continues to face layered crises, and in addition to the existing community kitchens and distributed hot meals, SBT conducted a needs assessment with close collaboration with local stakeholders that shows a high number of needs for food security and the availability for increased number of community kitchen activation. The assessment results are represented in *Annex 1* attached with this report.

7. Visibility

