WFP LAUNCHES E-CARDS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON WITH MASTERCARD’S SUPPORT

Context:

- There are more than 1.97 million registered Syrian refugees, according to UNHCR data from 30 September 2013. Of these, there are:
  - More than 773,000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon
  - More than 525,000 Syrian refugees in Jordan
- UNHCR estimates that the number of Syrian refugees is projected to rise to 3.45 million by the end of 2013, with refugees in Lebanon and Jordan rising to 1 million in each country.
- WFP needs US$30 million every week to support its operations for Syrians inside and outside their country.

Key facts on WFP programme and MasterCard support for Syrian refugees in Lebanon:

- Under their global partnership, MasterCard is providing technical expertise that enables WFP to bring electronic payment technology to its Syria refugee response.
- WFP, with MasterCard’s technical support, is launching an innovative electronic voucher system, prepaid cards, to help hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees to meet their food needs in Lebanon and Jordan.
- So far in 2013, through the voucher programmes, WFP has injected roughly US$192 million into the local economies of Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt.
- WFP is beginning the roll-out of the electronic prepaid cards, or e-vouchers, in Lebanon.
- The initial rollout began as a pilot project in September, when 2,000 Syrian households (around 10,000 people) received e-cards in the southern Lebanese town of Nabatiyeh.
- The e-cards programme will be gradually rolled out to other parts of Lebanon in the coming weeks, as WFP begins transitioning away from paper food vouchers to these electronic cards.
- Under the new e-cards solution for Syrian refugees, participating families in Lebanon receive a card that will be loaded each month with US$27 for every family member.
- The prepaid cards can be redeemed against a list of items at participating local stores, allowing them to buy the food that fits their needs, including fresh produce, which is not normally included in food rations.
- Nearly 300 stores around the country will be participating in the e-cards programme. The money will be automatically wired to the cards, so refugees don’t have to wait in line to receive their entitlements.
- This prepaid card solution, supported by MasterCard, is a new and innovative way to provide assistance during an emergency, and marks an evolution from the paper vouchers that WFP has been distributing to Syrian refugees.

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1 http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php
Looking forward:

- With MasterCard’s support, by the year’s end, WFP will be helping to feed around 800,000 refugees in Lebanon by using pre-paid cards at participating shops across the country.
- With MasterCard’s technical support through the partnership, WFP will also be introducing the e-cards programme in Jordan later in October, to reach an initial 300,000 people by the end of 2013. The programme roll-out will continue in 2014 to eventually reach all eligible Syrian refugees in the country.
- As the fighting in Syria continues, WFP aims to reach almost 2.5 million refugees in need of food in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey by the end of the year. E-vouchers will play an increasingly important role in WFP’s operations.