

CASE STUDY

A Locally Led, Choice Based Aid Delivery Model in a Protracted Crisis

PREPARED BY BOXTRIBUTE · 2026

PARTNER

The Free Shop Lebanon

LOCATION

Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

SINCE

2021

MODALITY

Choice-based digital vouchers



A REFUGEE-LED TEAM OF SIX · 27,000+ BENEFICIARIES

01 / ABSTRACT

This case study highlights how a refugee-led organisation of six local staff was able to sustainably provide long-term support to over 27,000 beneficiaries in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley through adoption of a structured, choice-based digital voucher and aid delivery programme with the support of Boxtribute.

Operating in a volatile context, The Free Shop Lebanon (TFS) faced common barriers in implementing cash and voucher assistance (CVA). The study reviews how TFS was able to structure its programme and operations to bring faster and more transparent aid delivery through their partnership with Boxtribute.

The partnership resulted in improved protection mainstreaming, compliance with donor reporting requirements and **improved stock accuracy, reducing aid waste.**

Boxtribute is a nonprofit that develops a digital public good (DPG) platform that supports local NGOs in effectively managing their distributions.



02 / BACKGROUND AND OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

With a reduced international presence, pressure has shifted to local actors to fill the gap in a landscape that demands adaptable, compliant systems.

The Bekaa Valley in Lebanon continues to face a protracted humanitarian situation, exacerbated by the country's economic crisis, periodic insecurity and successive waves of displacement from surrounding countries. Under government policy, no formal refugee camps were established in Lebanon, so the mostly Syrian displaced population is dispersed across unstructured informal settlements.¹ This places significant strain on efforts to deliver aid. Economic vulnerability is near-universal: 90 per cent of Syrian refugee families require support to meet their basic needs,² and access to services is further constrained by legal status, with only around 20 per cent of displaced Syrians holding legal residency.³

KEY THEME 01

Localisation

How locally-led organisations can deliver fast, efficient, and data-driven humanitarian assistance at scale without compromising dignity and accountability. With a four person team, TFS was able to reach 4,080 beneficiaries in the first 3 months through its partnership with Boxtribute.

KEY THEME 02

Operational Ease

The operational factors that enabled a fully local, refugee-led field team to confidently manage long-term distributions in Bekaa Valley while providing real-time accountability to the UK trustee board. The team was responsible for warehouse management, digital voucher allocation, as well as on-site aid distributions.

03 / GENESIS AND EARLY CHALLENGES

The Free Shop Lebanon was established in 2021, as a dignified distribution sub-project for Salam LADC, an NGO staffed primarily by international volunteers. With the intention of continuing the project under community leadership after their departure, the project lead registered TFS as a UK nonprofit to support the team in Lebanon's hyperinflationary economy while ensuring accountability through compliance with UK Charity Commission standards. Finding a simple, operational system that TFS could build around was critical in allowing them to:

- 01 Support refugee leadership by providing the UK board an operational system to oversee remotely;

02 Support beneficiaries based on their needs and without pre-determined NFI sets;

03 Maintain operational control and fairness through voucher distribution, usage and reissuance;

04 Facilitate appointment scheduling to enable protection mainstreaming and equitable access;

05 Manage beneficiary registrations with data integrity, avoiding duplicate data and visits while securely handling sensitive data

06 Replace unwieldy manual stock tallies and retrospective packing lists with a simple digital system;

07 Enable forecasting and identification of recurring shortages, e.g. socks, underwear, to support cost effective stock planning and replenishment;

08 Provide real-time visibility and insights for refugee leadership, including reporting;

09 Operate reliably despite frequent power cuts and unstable internet connectivity.

1. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Lebanon: Annual Results Report 2024*. Beirut: UNHCR, 2025. <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/Lebanon%20ARR%202024.pdf>.view=2025/article/lebanon-1.

2. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Children's Fund, and World Food Programme. *VASyR 2022: Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon*. Beirut: UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP, 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/vasyr-2022-vulnerability-assessment-syrian-refugees-lebanon>.

3. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *Global Humanitarian Overview 2025: Lebanon*. Geneva: OCHA, 2024. <https://humanitarianaction.info/document/global-humanitarian-overview-2025/article/lebanon-1>.

04 / OPERATIONAL DESIGN

From project inception, Boxtribute served as the single source of truth for core operational data.

Beneficiary and warehouse management in one system, providing a structure for TFS to build their programming and operations around. The core system components implemented included:

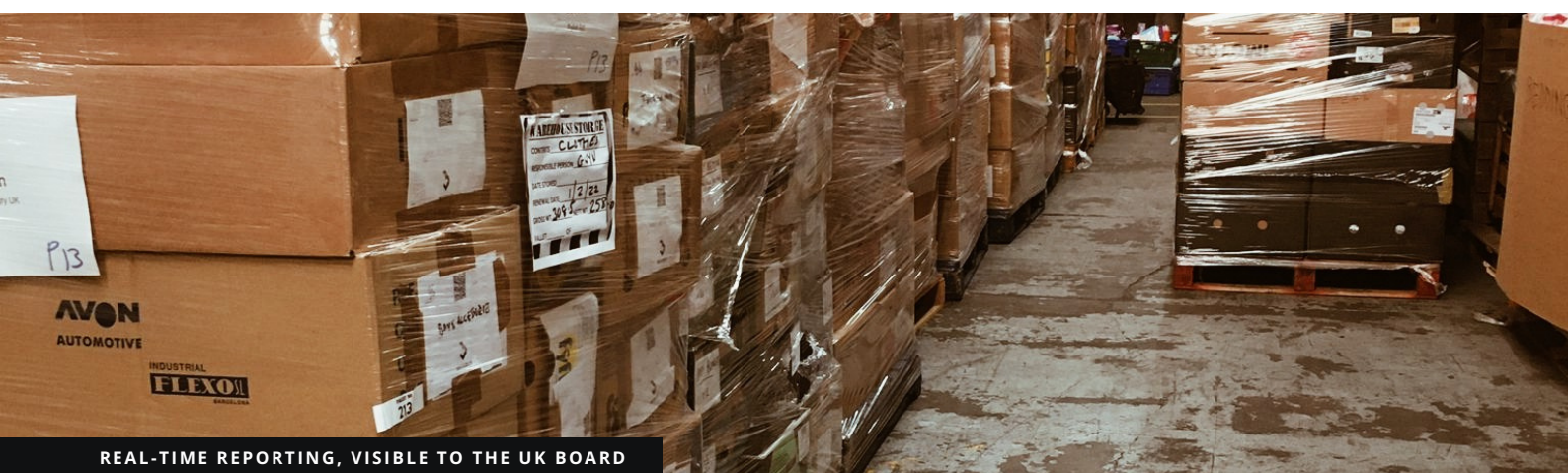
MODULE 01 Beneficiary management Registration, profiles with vulnerability tags, appointment scheduling, and voucher allocation.	MODULE 02 Distribution module Workflow for voucher allocation, management and checkout distribution.	MODULE 03 Warehouse module Structured item categorisation and QR-labelled stock tracking.
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THE OPERATIONAL WORKFLOW ADOPTED

01	02	03	04	05	06
Registration Door-to-door household intake, with vulnerabilities recorded through tags.	Appointment Families assigned time slots, managing site flow and crowding.	Check-in Virtual vouchers preallocated by household size and needs.	Choice Families select items of need within clear limits, not generic packs.	Checkout Items scanned and logged, deducting voucher allowances.	Data use Leadership monitors stock, detects anomalies and plans restocking.

TECHNICAL FEATURES AND WORKFLOW INTEGRATION

QR-based stock management Warehouse stock receives a QR-coded label, enabling precise stock management and scanning at checkout using cellphones.	Voucher mechanism A structured logic allocating vouchers based on vulnerabilities, family size and needs — ensuring fairness and dignity while enabling choice.
Structured data fields Simple, rapid data management through tags and comments, or more complex beneficiary fields such as phone, address, household composition and visit history.	Dashboards and reporting Distribution counts, item categories and household metrics, updated in real time — with board access to field data per donor requirements.



PRE-SORTING AND CROSS-BORDER LOGISTICS · UK TO LEBANON

Items were labelled, registered, and QR-coded in Boxtribute before dispatch, allowing stock to be visible in the system upon arrival. This simplified customs and logistics documentation and reduced data entry on arrival, saving days worth of time — local staff could focus on unloading and distribution rather than administrative logistics.

2–3 days → 1 hour

INVENTORY INTAKE TIME

Self-reported findings based on estimated times before and after partnering with Boxtribute

05 / RESULTS Qualitative outputs

~27,200

**REGISTERED
BENEFICIARY BASE**

15,300+

**ITEMS DISTRIBUTED IN THE
FIRST FOUR MONTHS**

100%

**TRACEABLE VOUCHER
TRANSACTIONS**

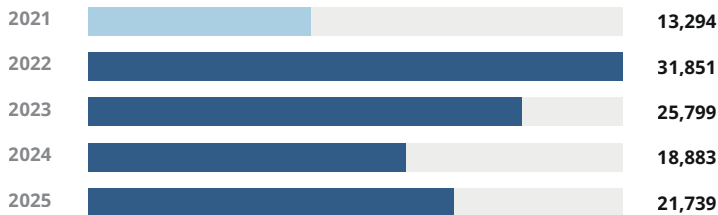
5 days

**FULL ONBOARDING AND
SET UP · 1 STAFF TRAINED
THE TEAM**

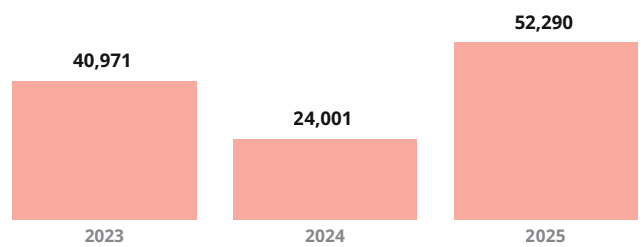
Entirely managed by a team of 4, now 6 refugees.

QUANTITATIVE OUTPUTS

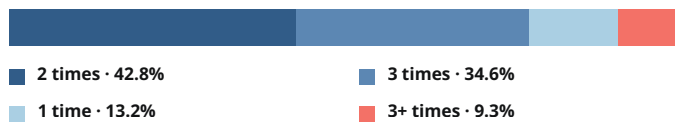
Beneficiaries reached annually (unique)



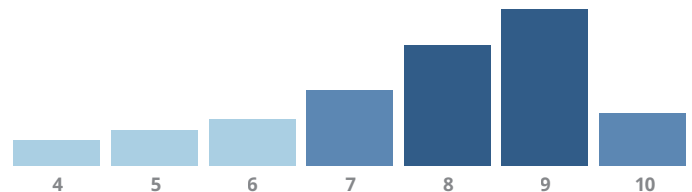
Distributed items



Visits to the Free Shop



Beneficiary feedback on 'Overall Experience'



Improved operations

Standardised workflows and reduced manual administrative work enabled a small core team of four, then six, to maintain operations. QR-based tracking increased visibility into stock availability and recurrent gaps, improving forecasting and replenishment.

Reporting and administration

Automated transaction records and distribution reports reduced the burden of manual reconciliation, letting staff redirect capacity toward beneficiary support, community engagement and coordination.

Protection mainstreaming

Appointment-based scheduling reduced congestion and waiting times and allowed equitable access, including independent access for women. Beneficiaries were vocal in their appreciation for the choice-based options.

Compliance

Real time data enabled strong reporting and accountability controls. In a case of suspected fraud, TFS were able to access records of stock and access to support their investigation, mitigating fraud within a compliant system.



CHOICE, NOT GENERIC PACKS

06 / SYSTEM CONSTRAINTS AND FIELD ADAPTATIONS

Connectivity and power

Intermittent connectivity, inconsistent power supply, and limited access to reliable digital devices restricted system use and required offline data collection with subsequent upload once connectivity was restored.

Language in the interface

Language constraints initially contributed to occasional misclassification during beneficiary intake and item categorisation. Local volunteers mitigated these issues through contextual interpretation, post-entry verification and familiarity.

Mobile data entry

During peak registration, lower-quality devices and small screens reduced feasibility for detailed case data capture in real time.

Where the system did not fully support field requirements, the team adopted a hybrid workflow: intake data captured through paper forms, WhatsApp exchanges, or printed templates, then transcribed into Google Sheets for structured review and bulk import. Google Forms were used in some instances to standardise intake before integration. **These adaptations informed iterative system enhancements, including refinements to data fields, and led to Boxtribute piloting Google Sheet upload features with TFS.**

07 / OPERATIONAL LEARNING

Operational learning from The Free Shop Lebanon showed that utilising Boxtribute digital systems and recommended workflows created highly effective and efficient operational capacity for TFS. TFS could easily integrate its processes and operations, including defining eligibility criteria, allocation mechanisms, and structured intake workflows, based on Boxtribute's suggestions. This accelerated distributions while strengthening fairness, protection, and consistency.

Embedding the platform within agreed procedures reduced duplication, improved data reliability, and enabled real-time oversight. The digital backbone also preserved institutional memory and supported staff transitions, reducing reliance on informal practices. Designing digital and operational systems together generated efficiencies that improved both speed and control in a volatile context.

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During the initial six-week set up and trial of our store, Boxtribute provided us with an online web-app which has become in many ways a core of our functionality. After the initial six-week set up and trial period of 'The Free Shop Lebanon', I handed operations over to our team of four local staff who now run the store day-to-day. Having the Boxtribute system gave us a really smooth handover as the team can easily follow the structure laid out in the app. Additionally, I can see our operations in the app from afar and assist when needed.

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ALICE CORRIGAN · PROJECT LEAD WITH SALAM LDC AND TFS FOUNDER



STOCK VISIBLE IN THE SYSTEM BEFORE IT REACHES THE VALLEY

08 / KEY TAKEAWAYS

Localisation from Intention to Ownership

The Free Shop was established by an international project lead with the intention of handing it over to local leadership; Boxtribute made that possible. Eligibility criteria, allocation logic, appointment scheduling, and vulnerability tagging were all held in the system rather than informally, so when four local staff took over daily operations after a six-week setup, they inherited the protection standards along with the workflows.

Capacity Without Headcount

The current team of six refugees run the entire operation: registration, warehousing, voucher allocation, choice-based distribution, and reporting for a registered beneficiary base of approximately 27,200, distributing 52,290 items in 2025 alone. An operation of this size would not ordinarily be expected of a team this small.

A Blueprint for Fragile Settings

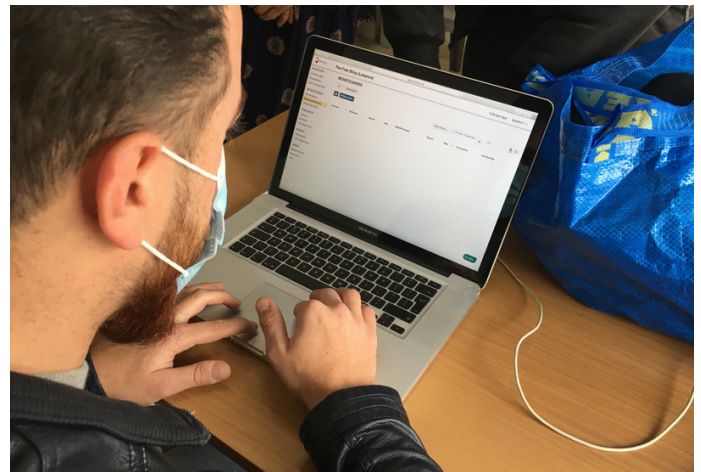
The model transfers because it asks very little of the organisation adopting it. Onboarding was completed within five days, one staff member trained the rest, and the workflows continue to function through power cuts and unstable connectivity. The team has kept the shop open continuously for four years, including in 2024 with strikes landing within twenty minutes of the site, and again through the attacks of 2026.

“

Initially having access to the web-app helped us really think about what we were doing. How were we going to register people? How would we store sensitive data securely? How could we keep track of who has visited the shop and know how much stock we would require? Boxtribute gave us a framework to help answer these questions.

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ALICE CORRIGAN · PROJECT LEAD WITH SALAM LDC AND TFS FOUNDER



MINIMAL INFRASTRUCTURE, FULL TRACEABILITY

CONCLUSION

The Free Shop Lebanon demonstrates how a locally led organisation can sustain structured, dignified and accountable NFI assistance over the long term when digital and physical systems are purposefully designed together. By aligning warehouse practices, distribution flows and protection safeguards with adaptable digital workflows, six refugee staff manage the full operational cycle in a highly fragile setting, providing continuous, choice-based distributions to a beneficiary population of over 27,000. Voucher redemptions and stock movements are recorded as they occur, giving the UK trustee board real-time visibility and oversight. **The capacity established here was built locally and handed over intentionally, and the same can be accomplished again wherever local actors are resourced to lead.**

