

# Dalili and the World Food Programme

## Smartphone-based data curation to put affordable, nutritious food on the plates of the world's most vulnerable

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### Key messages

- > Dalili – ‘my guide’ in Arabic – is a smartphone app that allows anyone in Lebanon to compare the prices of 250 staple foods in local shops using the phone’s GPS function.
- > Users can also compile shopping lists, as well as leave anonymous feedback to help shop owners improve their stores.
- > The solution has been developed by the World Food Programme (WFP), together with its Innovation Accelerator in Munich and Retail team at the Country Office in Beirut.
- > For WFP, which provides 700,000 Syrians and 50,000 Lebanese with cash to buy food each month, Dalili means that affordable, nutritious food is even more accessible.

### Bargain-hunting from the comfort of home

In the quiet village of Qabb Elias, in eastern Lebanon, Muna sits on her porch swiping through the World Food Programme (WFP)-sup-

ported smartphone application, Dalili, with her young daughter Lamar. Just a day away from her monthly WFP cash assistance top-up, Muna prepares a grocery list – a ritual familiar to her, from her life back in Syria – but now using Dalili. Bargain-hunting from the comfort of her home, Muna relies on the app to help her save money as she shops for nutritious food for her family.

“One time, I found 4,000 Lebanese pounds [US\$2.66] savings on milk,” says Muna. “That’s enough to buy four bags of pasta and to make four dinners for my family.”

On the other side of the economic coin, Omar is the owner of the thriving Al-Hayek shop in Qabb Elias, across the street from an informal Syrian refugee settlement where many WFP beneficiaries live. But things weren’t always so good.

“The store was a mess before we began working with WFP,” says Omar. “I didn’t take advantage of the space and there was little variety in products.” With help from WFP’s retail team, specializing in one-on-one shop consultations on layout and product assortment, Omar was able to transform Al-Hayek into a thriving family business. And thanks to better organized aisles, more diverse products and a greater emphasis on Syrian brands, business is booming. Now, Omar uses Dalili as free advertising for monthly promotions. A recent special of two free packs of pasta with every purchase of a can of tomato paste brought a large number of customers through his doors.

Finally, there is Miriam – a grandmother whose favorite time of day is when the sun is setting and three generations of her family are gathered under a single roof for a meal she chose and prepared. During the holy month of Ramadan, these moments are even more special to Miriam, whose heart warms as her sons arrive for the daily fast-breaking of *iftar* (the evening meal with which Muslims end their daily Ramadan fast at sunset). “It feels good to walk to the shop to provide for my family,” she says. As a long-time customer of Al-Hayek, Miriam has seen her own life improve in parallel with the quality of the shop. Now, she has better access to food that makes her feel in control and at home – food that brings people, and families, together.





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Browsing through Dalili helps Muna make smart choices on how to spend her World Food Programme assistance

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## “It feels good to walk to the shop to provide for my family”

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### Dalili – ‘my guide’

Every human depends on food for survival.

The requirement for daily nutrition is a common trope among the world’s myriad cultures. Access to adequate, nutritious food to live a healthy life is one of the pillars of food security, upon which humanitarian organizations are often founded. For socioeconomically vulnerable families, that pillar is often not strong enough to support a healthy, nutrient-rich diet and lifestyle.

Lebanon, which borders Syria to the west and the Mediterranean Sea to the east, hosts around 1.5 million Syrian refugees, many of whom are food-insecure. There are also entire swathes of local populations who are often unsure of how they will pay for their next meal. One innovative solution for making families’ limited dollars – or Lebanese pounds – go a little further has been developed by WFP, together with its Innovation Accelerator in Munich and Retail team at the Country Office in Beirut.

Dalili – ‘my guide’ in Arabic – is a smartphone app that, with a few taps, allows anyone in Lebanon to compare the prices of 250 commonly consumed foods in local shops using the phone’s GPS function. Users can also compile shopping lists, as well as leave anonymous feedback to help shop owners improve their stores (Figure 1).

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## “Dalili means that affordable, nutritious food is even more accessible”

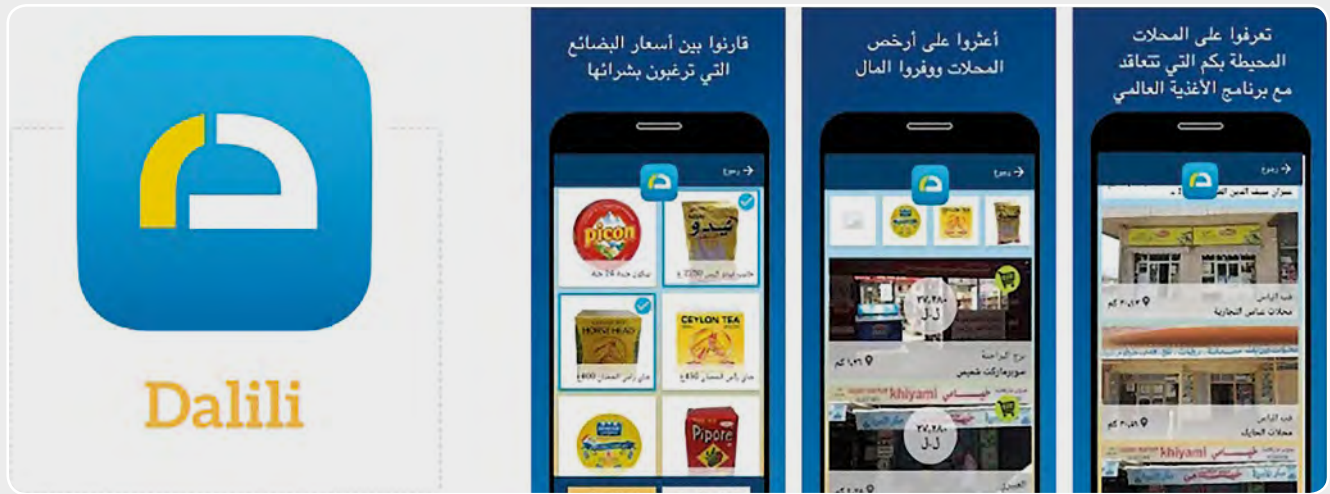
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For refugees who have traditionally obtained food via a standard but basic basket in distribution lines, receiving assistance via cash-based systems means the freedom to purchase the items necessary to create meals that connect families to cultural identities, and teach children the flavors of home. But perhaps more critically for WFP, which provides 700,000 Syrians and 50,000 Lebanese with cash to buy food each month, Dalili means that affordable, nutritious food is even more accessible.

### Helping price-savvy shoppers

Dalili launched in 2017 with the aim of helping price-savvy shoppers. But WFP has also leveraged its technological know-how to

**FIGURE 1:** Screenshot: Google Play App Store



Dalili was designed by the World Food Programme in collaboration with its Innovation Accelerator, to help the people it serves to find the most affordable and nutritious food available

collect data from those shoppers and send it back to shopkeepers. Now, WFP’s expert retail team, spread throughout Lebanon, is giving 450 contracted shops tutorials on how to improve their stores, by offering deals to customers and tailoring their produce to their clients’ demands. Those shopkeepers even have their own app that supports Dalili, called Matjari. Using this app, they can amend prices, scan their competitors’ deals and keep abreast of their customers’ shopping habits.

As one Syrian shopper explained, “Before Dalili, shop owners used to tell us ‘This is how it is.’ But now we know that they pay attention to our feedback, and make sure prices are displayed

and items are correctly packaged.” Another person raved, “This is what we’ve been yearning for: power in our hands. Capacity to choose where to get the best prices and tell WFP how we’ve been served by the traders.”

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**Finding nutritious food, living healthy lives**

While Dalili has already proven its value in Lebanon, growing to over 20,000 users in 2018, now is the time to bring its impact to even more people. WFP is also rolling out Dalili in Jordan and piloting it in the Kakuma refugee camps in Kenya. The team’s innovators are currently adding personalized information, such as promotion opportunities specially adapted to specific users, and including the capacity for a user to see their account balance and most recent transactions, in order to optimize the benefits provided to those who rely on it the most. The long-term ambition is to provide, through this application, all the information required by WFP cash recipients to use their assistance to find nutritious and affordable food and continue to live healthy lives.

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Omar has benefited from WFP support in improving the layout and assortment of his shop