National PWG Meeting Minutes

Theme: COVID-19 / Mid-Year Review

Time & Location: Friday, 10 July 2020 / WebEx

Chair: Lara Özügergin – Assistant Inter-Agency Coordination Officer (UNHCR)

Participants: AAR Japan, Alresala Foundation, ASAM, Doctors Worldwide, Dünya Evimiz, Expertise France, GIZ, GOAL, HRDF, HRO, Human Appeal, IBC, ICMC, IDA, IFRC, IOM, IGAM, JCCP, KADAV, KAOS GL, Maya Vakfı, MSYD, Mültecilerle Dayanışma Derneği, Positive Living Association, Rahma Worldwide, RET, SENED, TRC, UN Women, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WATAN, Yeryüzü Doktorları.

Meeting Agenda:

I. Introduction and Updates
II. Updates by UNHCR PDU: Onward Movements, Border Trends and Asylum Procedures
III. Discussion on Results of National PWG Survey
IV. Discussion on Sector M&E Progress
V. AoB

Agenda Item #1: Introduction and Updates

- A survey was recently undertaken by the protection sector on the use of the Inter-Agency Referral Form (IARF). The survey intended to understand how many sector partners use the IARF and in which provinces, to refer cases to other service providers. The outcomes of the survey will support the IA/Information Management (IM) teams' work on the IARF and its potential digitalization through Service Advisor. Survey results are shared through the meeting PowerPoint, however findings show that the form is used in a widespread manner not only between I/NGOs but also with public institutions, local authorities and Bar Associations. The IARF is currently being revised and will be shared once finalized. Per request of field PWG members, a practical guidance note on the use of the form is also being prepared.
- Activity Info refresher trainings will be organized by the IM team. Further information was shared via email.
- WATAN shared that their project implemented with GOAL in Ankara, funded by ECHO will end as of July. Scope of the project includes group PSS support, individual protection assistance and awareness raising/outreach. They are trying to find funds to extend their project and will inform protection partners accordingly.

Agenda Item #2: Updates by UNHCR PDU on Onward Movements, Border Trends and Asylum Procedures

UNHCR Policy Development Unit delivered a presentation on border updates, social/criminal incidents and asylum procedures. Details are shared through the PowerPoint, and highlights are outlined below:

Onward Movements and Border Trends

- Registration figures are slightly increasing every month in 2020.

- Compared to last year, the number of irregular migrants apprehended in 2020 are relatively lower. This may be caused by the ongoing COVID-19 situation, travel restrictions and strict measures imposed at the borders.
- A steady decrease in the number of persons intercepted and rescued at sea is also observed. Compared to 2019, arrivals to Greece during 2020 (as of 30 June) via sea has similarly decreased significantly.
- Since the developments in Pazarkule at the end of February/beginning of March, no organized movement to Western land borders have been observed. When compared to the same period of last year, there is a 78% decrease in apprehensions at the land border.
- UNHCR conducted a mission to Edirne and the region at the end of June to meet with local counterparts, partners and local society representatives to assess the trends. Difficult to make estimations or conclusions about trends. Nonetheless, partners observe that small-scale, ad hoc movements continue at the Western land border.
- As of April 2019, an increase in the number of African nationals (mostly from Congo, Somalia and Central African Republic) intercepted at seas is observed. This trend has continued in 2020. While interceptions of African nationals mostly take place in Izmir, Aydin and Mugla, a shift of routes towards the North in Canakkale is also observed.
- Trends around sea arrivals to Greece between January-April 2020 are very much in line with interceptions (and the nationalities intercepted). Majority who arrive to Greece are Afghans, Syrians, Congolese.
- Downward trends observed at Turkey-Syrian border in terms of number of apprehensions. Around 50% decrease is observed compared to the same period (January – June) in 2019.
- UNHCR Field Office Istanbul shared updates on the Western land border missions that are ongoing. Partners observe that there are still individuals at the border and no interventions are taking place by law enforcement for individuals attempting to irregularly cross borders. While it is hard to estimate numbers, partners observe around 200 persons daily. However, as some individuals attempt to cross more than one time, there may be duplication in daily numbers. This creates a challenging environment for the outreach teams on the ground in terms of vulnerable identification and provision of humanitarian aid. Above 20 pushback cases are identified by Edirne and İstanbul Bar Associations, currently being processed towards application to ECtHR.
- IOM mobile teams are in Izmir – Cesme and Dikili, Canakkale – Kucukkuyu and Edirne on a daily basis. Support to local authorities for humanitarian aid. Observations are similar to updates by UNHCR. Currently, pushback via seas are being observed. Once persons are apprehended and processed by the Turkish Coast Guard or Gendarmarie, they are taken to removal centers. While during March – June 14 day quarantine period was observed after apprehensions, now this is not the case. IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF continue to coordinate via bi-weekly meetings on observations and humanitarian aid interventions.

Asylum Procedures

- Since March 17th asylum procedures were suspended. Suspension was in place until June 1st. During the suspension, persons with special needs and with medical issues were prioritized.

Number of individuals processed was not too high, managed and controlled intake into PDMM was introduced. A system was established between UNHCR – DGMM to share lists of individuals with specific needs to accelerate prioritized registration.

- Appointment system for TP beneficiaries used for data updates, counseling and other functions was also suspended. Voluntary repatriation processing and issues of travel permits were also not processed during this period.
- Registration, RSD interviews, voluntary repatriation processing, issuance of travel permits are back to pre-COVID processing as of June 1st. However, PDMMs still try to manage crowds through introduction of quotas in some provinces.
- Slight delays were observed, mainly in bigger provinces, in relation to voluntary repatration processing. Started as of 7-8 June.
- For issuance of travel permits, persons can apply either through eDevlet or via approaching PDMM offices.
- Prior to COVID-19, UNHCR and DGMM started collaborating on an online appointment system for IP applicants. As of June 25th, the appointment system is active and accessible. The system can be used to book appointments to update personal data, address and contact information; to obtain marriage authorization certificates; apply for travel permit processing and clerical work, such as adding dependents to files, separating files etc. Persons can also book appointments through the system to renew ID cards.
- As of June 1st, an increase in the number of RSD decisions notified to persons is observed. More information is now available on rejection and withdrawal decisions, however there is less information about recognition decisions. DGMM shared that in 2019 approximately 10,000 decisions were made (50% recognition, 50% rejection); nationality breakdown is available. It is very important that persons have access to legal aid and remedies, especially considering amendments to the Law on Foreigners and International Protection.
- UNHCR's project with Union of Turkish Bar Associates continues in 21 provinces, in order to support legal aid applications submitted to Bar Associations. The applications are assessed for IP applicants and status holders, as well as TP beneficiaries that are assessed by the Bar Associations' Legal Aid Committees in respective provinces. So far, the majority of applications received this year are civil law cases, including applications for divorce. While there are targets set for the UTBA project, there is no quota determined for each Bar Association or province.

Agenda Item #3: Discussion on Results of National PWG Survey

- Protection sector mid-year survey was carried out to identify challenges, areas for improvement and strengths of protection coordination at the national level. Through the survey, members' suggestions towards thematic areas to focus on for the rest of the year were identified. The PowerPoint presentation outlining survey findings are shared via email.
- One of the suggestions put forward by members via the survey was to improve inclusiveness of meetings through facilitation of bi-lingual discussions (English and Turkish). However, members prefer to use Webex as the digital platform to facilitate discussions, which does not have the simultaneous translation feature.

- **Action Point:** Organizations which have concerns to participate in Zoom meetings to inform the Protection Coordinator. If no concerns are shared, Protection Coordinator will discuss internally to inquire whether budget can be allocated for simultaneous translation in meetings, that will take place on Zoom.

- Advocacy was identified as one of the areas for improvement. IA/IM are currently working on a tool that aims to capture challenges at the local level in relation to key protection themes (such as continuous registration, border incidents, access to services etc.) in a systematic and structured manner. The main objective of the tool is to inform advocacy efforts based on information collected from the field. Once the first draft is finalized, IA/IM will be consulting with UNHCR and PWG partners, subsequent to which it will be rolled-out within the sector.
- Members suggest focusing on thematic assessments; protection mainstreaming (including child protection and SGBV); access to registration/documentation; access to asylum; and access to legal aid until the end of 2020. Next meeting will focus on protection mainstreaming.

Agenda Item #4: Discussion on Sector M&E Progress

- Protection IM presented an overview on mid-year M&E progress of the sector. Details are outlined in a PowerPoint shared via email.
- Reporting related challenges are minimized. Partners have high awareness on how to report through Activity Info.
- M&E specific consultations will take place through the annual 3RP planning process as well.
- Gender non-conforming reporting is being used accurately compared to previous year.
- Reporting on 'other vulnerabilities' against the indicator 'individuals with specific needs identified and assessed' still very high, despite consultation with sector members in the previous years to break down the category of 'other'. This will be discussed in the M&E consultations as part of the 3RP planning process.
- Sector IM to share link to a questionnaire on sector indicator progress, which will inform the sector mid-year review to be presented in the upcoming STF.
  - **Action Point:** Sector IM to share the link to a questionnaire on sector indicator progress, members to fill out by Tuesday, July 14th COB.

AoB

- Unified approach to obtaining individuals' consent under COVID-19 circumstances required. Discussions to take place with the Legal Counselors Group and UNHCR for their guidance.

Action Points

- Organizations which have concerns to participate in Zoom meetings to inform the Protection Coordinator. If no concerns are shared, Protection Coordinator will discuss internally to inquire whether budget can be allocated for simultaneous translation in meetings, that will take place on Zoom.
- Sector IM to share the link to a questionnaire on sector indicator progress, members to fill out by Tuesday, July 14th COB.