

ISWG Meeting Note

August 2024



Inter-Sector
Working Group
Jordan

ISWG Meeting Note and Action Points

Date / Time / Venue	Wednesday, 07 August 2024, 10:00 - 11:30, World Vision office
Attendees	Inter-Sector Senior Coordinator, IACU officer, Sectors Coordinators, Sectors Leads/Co-Leads of the Shelter, WASH, Food Security Basic Needs, Education, Health, Mental Health and psychosocial Sub WGs, Economic Empowerment, CP-Protection sub-sector, JIF, WFP and UN Women Gender expert.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND OUTCOMES

- The co-chairs of the Economic Empowerment sector will collaborate with UNHCR and other relevant stakeholders to continue discussions on the work permit and social security contribution issues, particularly focusing on the role the Economic Empowerment Working Group (EEWG) could play.
- JIF will engage with MOPIC to explore the integration of the localization marker into the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) and JORISS markers, similar to the existing gender and protection markers.
- All partners are urged to upload their data to the interagency reporting platforms, ActivityInfo and JFT, to ensure comprehensive and up-to-date information sharing.
- The Localization Task Team will conduct a mapping exercise to identify and document best practices in localization efforts within the response framework.
- IACU will monitor and assess progress on the recommendations from the ISWG Visioning Exercise held in May 2024, with a follow-up review scheduled six months after the workshop. The ISWG work plan will be updated accordingly based on guidance from JoSH.
- UNHCR will develop criteria and explore with JIF inviting partners to co-chair the ISWG alongside UNHCR

Agenda:

- Operational updates
 - o Updates from JoSH and other forums
 - o Leadership & Coordination workshop
 - o ISWG workplan
- Discussion on localization
- Refugees Hub presentation
- Sector updates.
- AoB

OPERATIONAL UPDATES

- The meeting began with introduction of the new JoSH chair, incoming UNHCR Representative Maria Stavropoulou, who arrived in Amman this month following service in the UNHCR office in Syria.
- The ISWG Chair provided key highlights from the last JoSH meeting on July 25, 2024:

- During the last JoSH meeting chaired by UNHCR representative Ms. Maria, which took place on July 25, 2024, the following points were discussed:

OPERATIONAL UPDATES:

- The chair addressed the protracted and unsustainable humanitarian situation in Syria, emphasizing the growing momentum around the return of Syrian refugees since the Brussels Conference. UNHCR's assessment remains that conditions in Syria are not yet conducive for large-scale returns; but that return is a right of all refugees and must be voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable. Since 2016, over 400,000 refugees have returned to Syria, including 56,000 from Jordan. In 2024 alone, more than 3,000 refugees have returned from Jordan. The chair also highlighted the primary concerns for refugees contemplating return, particularly safety, security, and living conditions, as revealed by the annual refugee intention survey. The chair stressed the sensitivity required when discussing returns with refugees to avoid any perception of coercion. UNHCR will continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders, including refugees, authorities, humanitarian partners, and donors. No new guidelines on returns have been introduced; any future changes will be communicated after thorough consultation.

UPDATE ON THE WORK PERMIT AND SOCIAL SECURITY CONTRIBUTIONS

- The co-chair of EEWG: The co-chairs of the EEWG provided an update on work permits and social security contributions. The UNHCR-World Bank-led Task Force, which includes members from ILO, EU, and the Embassies of the Netherlands, UK, and Norway, presented their research findings on the economic impact of upcoming cost changes to work permits and social security charges. The findings suggest that while the changes may not significantly affect government revenue, they would substantially impact individuals, particularly Syrian refugees, who may struggle with the increased costs. The Ambassadors of the Netherlands and Norway presented these findings to the Cabinet for consideration, but no response has been received, and the issue is believed to be with the Royal Court. A letter from the Ministry of Labour dated July 14, 2024, indicated that the continuation of the fee exemption is limited to Syrian workers in specific professions and factories, and the exemption for other Syrian workers was suspended as of July 1, 2024. Regardless of the Cabinet's or Royal Court's decision, there is consensus that the international community must plan for continuity and contingency measures. It was suggested that the EEWG could be the most relevant forum to continue this discussion.

Action Point:

- ***The co-chairs of the Economic Empowerment sector will follow up with UNHCR and other relevant actors to continue discussions on the work permit issue and clarify the role of the EEWG.***

VAF PRESENTATION:

- UNHCR and WFP colleagues presented the key findings of the 2024 Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF), which highlighted an overall worsening situation for refugees in terms of food security, shelter, and income. The survey also showed an increase in poverty, particularly in camps. The presentation emphasized the importance of using this data to plan interventions and advocate for funding with relevant actors. Detailed information can be found in the 2024 VAF socio-economic survey, accessible through the following link: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/working-group/54?sv=4&geo=36>

IACU LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION WORKSHOP:

- The workshop is scheduled for September 1, 2024, and will be delivered in Arabic. All field coordinators have been invited. This is the same workshop that was delivered in English a few months ago.

ISWG Co-CHAIRING:

ISWG is exploring the possibility of opening the co-chairing opportunity with JIF. Criteria for identifying the right co-chair will be developed.

ISWG VISIONING & TRANSITIONING EXERCISE:

- In May 2024, a full day 'Visioning & Transitioning' exercise was conducted for ISWG members to enhance development partnerships in Jordan. The workshop addressed critical challenges such as the protracted refugee situation, decreasing humanitarian funding, and shifting donor priorities due to new regional emergencies. Discussions focused on transitioning from immediate humanitarian responses to sustainable, long-term development strategies for refugees. IACU has shared the workshop recommendations with ISWG members, and follow-up actions will be taken to assess progress after six months. The ISWG work plan will be reviewed accordingly after receiving guidance from JoSH. The presentation materials from the ISWG visioning exercise can be found at the following link: [Document - ISWG prioritization and visioning exercise \[JoSH\] \(unhcr.org\)](#)

3RP INDICATORS:

- IACU briefed the audience on the 3RP indicators review exercise, which revealed that many indicators have zero reporting or activities. The IACU team will reach out bilaterally to sector chairs to re-evaluate and revise the indicators for 2025 reporting purposes.

JORISS UPDATE:

- UNDP mentioned that MOPIC is in the process of launching a tender to select a firm to develop the JORISS system. The process is significantly delayed but should be completed in 2025.

LOCALIZATION:

- JIF provided an update on localization efforts, which aim to empower local national organizations to establish equitable partnerships and play a more significant role in response efforts. A framework was developed to collect information across all levels of the response, including local actors, donors, international NGOs, national NGOs, and the UN. Based on consultations with partners, the Localization Task Team developed five main indicators for partners to report against. The frequency of reporting will be determined by the ISWG. Ms. Layal from IACU-UNHCR presented the indicators to the audience, followed by an open discussion. Layal will share the indicators with ISWG members for feedback and comment. The head of the IACU suggested that the Localization Task Team discuss with MOPIC the possibility of integrating localization markers into the JRP/JORISS, similar to the gender and protection markers. Alyse from JIF proposed conducting a mapping exercise for localization best practices.

REFUGEES HUB PRESENTATION:

- IACU-ODM introduced the UNHCR Refugees Hub, JFT Activity Info, and data operational platforms, encouraging participants to familiarize themselves with these tools. All relevant links have already been shared by the head of IACU with all ISWG members.

SECTORS' OPERATIONAL UPDATES:

Due to time constraints, only the Education Co-chair provided an update:

EDUCATION:

- The Co-chair reported that the annual waivers exempting Syrian and non-Syrian refugees from providing documentation required for enrollment and from paying school registration and book fees have not yet been circulated by the Ministry of Education. The 2024-2025 school year starts on August 18, 2024. Without these waivers, refugees may face enrollment challenges due to lack of documentation or inability to pay fees. Families facing such challenges should be referred to the UNICEF helpline at 065509677. ***(Follow-up: The Co-chair informed us after the meeting that the waiver for donation fees was published by the Ministry of Education on August 8, 2024.)****

AOB:

- The next ISWG monthly meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, September 4, 2024**, with the location to be determined.