

Minutes of the National Basic Assistance Working Group / Ad-Hoc Meeting

Meeting Location	Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) - 7 th floor	Meeting Date	27 Sept. 2017
Chair persons	Hadi Haddad (MoSA) Khalil Dagher (UNHCR) Natacha Sarkis (MoSA)	Meeting Time	14:00 – 16:00
Minutes by	Kareem Khalil (UNHCR)	Meeting Duration	2.00 Hrs.
Agencies present	ACF, ACTED, ECHO, IOM, Makhzoumi Foundation, Relief International, Relief Organization – DAF, SIF, Solidar Suisse, UNHCR, and WFP.		
Agenda of the meeting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of the Appeals Technical Proposal. Summary of the Feedback Received From Beneficiaries in Reaction to Inclusions And Discontinuation From Assistance (As of 22 September 2017). 		

1. Summary of the Appeals Technical Proposal:

Introduction by the National Basic Assistance Coordinator:

- Discussions and inputs resulting from this meeting to be communicated to the AUB researchers who could not be present in the meeting.

Key Presentation Points:

- In 2016/17, AUB supported the development of a targeting mechanism that captures and ranks vulnerable Syrian refugee households to determine eligibility for cash and food assistance.
- The success of this targeting mechanism depends on its ability to correctly identify - and mitigate leakage and under-coverage errors to the greatest degree possible - vulnerable and severely vulnerable refugee households.
- Based on 2016 VASYR data, an exclusion error of 7% has been identified, as opposed to 15% in the previous model.

The Operational Needs:

- Conditions determining the difference between highly and severely vulnerable refugees are often marginal in practice. Those under SMEB are prioritized for assistance.
- Poor households that fall through the cracks of the formula will be given a review opportunity through a robust system of appeals mechanisms, which was proposed through AUB – quantitative in nature.
- Recommendation from AUB: qualitative appeal mechanism will have limited capacity to correct any exclusion errors; current proposal suggests to further collect 3-4 variables to provide an additional layer for decision making.

The 2017 Proposed System:

- The 2017 proposed appeals process is inspired by the work done last year by the Basic Assistance actors. The enhancement is mainly on the technical scoring part.
- In order to ensure efficiency, adding a quantitative scoring mechanism mitigates the time and budget needed to reexamine these cases.
- The proposed system suggests the collection of additional socio-demographic information which will be used along with the information already available in proGres to generate a more refined vulnerability score.
- “Desk Formula+” : $\text{Score} = f[(\text{HH size, arrival date, district of arrival, other HH characteristics, HH Shares, HH Sums, HoH characteristics}) + (\text{district of origin, housing conditions, households assets})]$**
- Designed to complement the proGres desk formula by correcting exclusion / inclusion errors.
- Design assumptions have been tailored according to existing operational needs and constraints.

- The proposed tool is flexible to accommodate different operationalization modalities:
 - Technically speaking, **any household not receiving assistance is eligible to appeal** regardless of the vulnerability group / threshold.
 - Operationally speaking, **filters will have to be put in place as the capacity and resources are major constraints towards a relaxed appeal process.**
- A third safeguard component can be instituted by using categorical targeting criteria based on protection concerns for those who are disadvantaged (disabled, etc.).

Key Discussion Points:

- New added data will be collected through a small questionnaire proposed by AUB; the contents of which are similar indicators in VaSyr and the Household (HH) visit.
- Participants suggested to change the name of “Desk Formula+”; e.g.: Appeal Formula.
- Suggestion to create sub-option to Scenario 2 – Limited Resources.
- Formula proves ranking (severely, mild etc.) and sub-ranking within severely.
- When case is ranked eligible, no other cases are dropped.
- 4,000+ cases are eligible to appeal within a specified timeframe.
- Concern raised from partners towards not providing assistance to those who were scored severely and not provided with assistance who might not be considered in the appeal process.
- Related to actual profiles that are dropping out of the formula, two main categories: elderly alone with no support and childless young couples with no extended families or relatives. Why are these dropped? Either they are not poor or they are not sharing the general features of standard poor households.
- WFP raised two points to be further looked at: the fact that the DF+ involves additional HH visits and the scoring. Also, looking at the technicalities and what can be done with the information already obtained?
- Focus should be on the model and correction of the margin of error in a technical perspective.
- Suggestion from UNCHR for more simulation and factoring in time required for household visits -> this will play a role in the decision.
- Partners asked whether this proposed model could work without the need to conduct further households visits due to the cost implication.
- Given the feedback received from partners, very limited space for including cases in an appeal mechanism currently exist.
- Sector partners will have to evaluate the cost of running appeals and testing its feasibility from a business operations perspective.
- A follow up session will be held to further discuss operationalization option after receiving the technical feedback of AUB.

2. Summary of the Feedback Received From Beneficiaries in Reaction to Inclusions and Discontinuation From Assistance, as of 22 September 2017 (UNHCR):

Key Points:

- Following the last Basic Assistance Working Group (BAWG), partners had asked for further clarification and communications regarding the latest inclusion/discontinuation of assistance.
- Weekly updates have been circulated after the inclusion/discontinuation.
- Decrease in terms of communication with beneficiaries: less beneficiaries approaching reception centres, decreased engagement on social media, and number of phone calls in call centres remain the same.
- Basic Assistance focal points from field ready to receive feedback from sector partners.
- UNHCR to share with BA Coordinator and Inter-Agency team updates regarding inclusion and discontinuation.
- Breakdown on call centre records, social media monitoring, and feedback with outreach volunteers will also be shared.
- Q&A has been circulated to the BAWG, however no feedback has been received.

- Conflicting reports in the South reporting a minimal and increase in number of refugees approaching partners for inclusion/discontinuation.
- The need to strengthen linkage between NGOs in the South Governorate, especially regarding referral pathways.
- No partners are currently providing cash assistance in Nabatieh Governorate, partners also reported issues with food assistance in A'rsal.
- Are the Q&A in its present for adequate or need to be looked upon again? Suggestion from UNHCR to revise Q&A given recurring changes in context. Feedback on recurring questions is also important and partners are kindly requested to provide any feedback/comments.
- BA Coordinator asked partners to report thematic issues being raised by refugees on a weekly basis.
- UNHCR asked partners keep record of visits and calls and share them with UNHCR in order to keep statistics -> this could also assist to avoid duplication from refugees going to or calling different UNHCR centres.
- Any feedback to be sent to UNHCR and WFP BA Focal points in the field, contact info to be circulated the group.

For further information kindly contact Pablo Vizcaino vizcaino@unhcr.org

Next Steps:

- Feedback from discussion to be communicated to AUB.
- Suggestion to hold another ad-hoc meeting to keep partners abreast of updates.