



Minutes of the National Basic Assistance Working Group Meeting

Meeting Location	UNHCR S&K 9 th floor	Meeting Date	20 December 2017
Chair persons	Hadi Haddad (MOSA) Khalil Dagher (UNHCR) Mirdza Abele (WVI)	Meeting Time	14:00
Minutes by	Mirdza Abele	Meeting Duration	2.30 Hrs.
Attendees	UNICEF, UNHCR, Relief International, Solidar Swiss, ACTED, UNRWA, ACF, Oxfam, WV, Save the Children, DORCAS Lebanon, British Red Cross, Lebanese Red Cross, WFP.		

Agenda

1. Sector Updates:
 - a. Targeting Assistance
 - b. 2017/2018 Winter Assistance
 - c. Review Mechanism (Appeals)
 - d. Referral of Eligible Beneficiaries - MCAP
2. Thematic Group Discussion
3. AOB

1. Sector updates:

a. Targeting assistance

Reported activities in November 2017 from Activity Info and RAIS shows that:

- 58,188 vulnerable households received multi-purpose cash out of which :
 - ✓ 48,053 SYR HHs (7 partners: ACF, DRC, ICRC, LRC, RI, Solidar Suisse, UNHCR, WFP);
 - ✓ 9,671 PRS HHs (UNRWA);
 - ✓ 465 Leb HHs (LRC);
- 16,157 SYR HHs (education specific cash grants – UNICEF);
- USD 10,408,402 injected in the local economy in value of cash assistance provided;
- An increase of 5,000 cases was noted this month, reaching the yearly 2017 projected target for Q4.

b. 2017/2018 Winter Assistance

Reported activities in November 2017 from Activity Info and RAIS shows that:

- ✓ 108,000 HHs Syrian Refugees reached;
- Palestine refugees have also been reached. UNRWA to report on Activity Info;
- UNHCR have received additional funding and will be able to provide a) non MCAP beneficiary additional 2 months of assistance and b) MCAP beneficiaries a top up for the coming three months;
- PCPM is providing one-off (USD 200) winter assistance to approximately 100 Leb HHs in Akkar.

c. Review Mechanism (Appeals)

- Goal: Hybrid review mechanism to address both discontinuation and exclusion error;
- Target group: all discontinued HHs from MCAP / approx. 16,000 HHs;
- Tools: DF (update data fields and rerun the formula) / DF+ (collect further information and run the expanded formula);
- Way forward: wrap up meeting / discussion to be held in January to finalize the tool and discuss operationalization and documentation;
- AUB is finalizing the technical script – the scenario falls under the initial simulations done by AUB;
- It is a sector tool - UNHCR is planning to invest in a pilot early 2018.

d. Referral of Eligible Beneficiaries – MCAP

- Rationale: improve the coordinated referral of eligible cases for MCAP and avoid duplication

Process:

- Request (Partner): partners to submit requests directly to field offices (asking for cases that are living in certain areas; scores of certain cases; generic referral list);
- Lists living in certain areas: Pre-checking (BA Focal Point) and feedback within 3 working days; cases are flagged as “Referred for Assistance”;
- Lists pre-identified by (Partner): pre-checking (BA Focal Point) and feedback within 3 working days; cases are flagged as “Identified for Assistance”;
- For generic referrals: BA Focal Point to arrange according to the bottom up approach and feedback within 3 working days & cases are flagged as “Referred for Assistance”;

Flagging in RAIS:

- Partners should have valid Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) with UNHCR and therefore access to RAIS;
- “Identified for Assistance” cases should be flagged on RAIS within 5 working days;
- “Referred for Assistance” cases status is kept for one month & partners have to change the status to “Identified for Assistance” once they verify the HHs;
- “Identified for Assistance” should receive assistance within 2 months – if not cases will be released (no reachable / no show / resettled / case closed / etc.);
- In case of duplication, the agency who flagged the cases on RAIS first should be the agency to continue providing assistance – other agencies should drop and opt to replace with new cases;
- Flagging in RAIS as terminated (all actors): cases that are closed, excluded, removed and terminated should be flagged in RAIS; these could be resettled or removed due to no show / no withdrawal;
- Regular updating: RAIS is the main source of information for all partners for cross checking, identification, referrals, and reporting and should be updated on regular basis.
- The draft SOPs will be rolled out in January 2018 for testing and finalized accordingly. Technical refinement of RAIS functions to accommodate for different scenarios and case status reporting are taking place.

2. Thematic Group Discussion

Participants of the working group meeting were divided into four groups to discuss key thematic areas identified. The exercise’s objective was to stocktake on what is working and what areas need further improvement and joint efforts. Discussions covered a mix of operational and strategic areas. The below represent a summary of the main points raised and reported.

Operational Theme 1: Regular and seasonal assistance (MCAP & Winter Programmes)

- The scale of assistance is increasing;
- Donor interest and support is sustained for MCAP;
- Complementarity with other sectors is expanding (shelter, education etc) especially when it comes to targeting the same beneficiaries;
- Winter assistance is still not standardized; planning for winter assistance should start earlier;

Operational Theme 2: Targeting

- efficient (implementation and time efficiency), low cost, cross organisational (all agencies are using it), harmonized;
- Clarification needed on the exclusion criteria (who is falling through the cracks), information is lacking at HH level (qualitative data), a confusing approach for beneficiaries (lack of understanding when it comes to inclusion/exclusion);
- More protection aspects and qualitative modalities / synergies should be further streamlined in the targeting system adopted.

- Recommendations: collect case studies on the cases which appear to be falling through the cracks and gain a better understanding on the situation.

Operational Theme 3: Programme monitoring and impact monitoring/evaluation (MCAP)

- harmonized tools and guidance notes exist;
- Dissemination of findings and triangulation of data is not fully met at the sector level by all actors;
- Accurate clean baseline data is not always available; the caseload is dynamic feeding into baseline data reliability issues;
- For impact evaluation: there is an information gap on MCAP evaluations and impact achieved; sector partners are planning evaluations;
- One area of focus should be looking at the situation of the HHs who are severely vulnerable but not receiving assistance.

Operational Theme 4: Communications with beneficiaries

- Variety of tools have been developed at inter-agency level (hotlines, website, communications tree etc). A lot of data can be collected allowing accountability and referral to take place. wide scope of communication with people (up to 8,000 calls per day received) – good accessibility, however it is not harmonized and systematised yet (too many hotlines and SMS);
- Similar SMS are sent by different agencies to the same beneficiary – which leads to confusion and anxiety at the field level;
- Mobile phones of people keep changing;
- Recommendation is to coordinate better at a central level when it comes to sending SMS to beneficiaries – especially regarding timelines;
- Invest more in outreach services (physical outreach/word of mouth) via HH visits;

Strategic Theme 1: The Basic Assistance business model: assistance packages and the benchmarks (S/MEB)

- SMEB is a good tool/benchmark for package determination, but it should be reviewed;
- There is still the debate of more money to less beneficiaries or vice versa;
- Look at cross sectoral complementarity (protection, education, health etc)

Strategic Theme 2: Transition: unpacking social protection and minimum safety net

- Package of services to reduce the vulnerability of HH and help them cope with different shocks (cash + other services);
- Impact evaluation of cash is essential in order to measure how cash is contributing to a wider goal of social protection;
- Protection mainstreaming needs to increase;
- Connections need to be made to other sectors (health, protection) – the how is not very clear (but could include more information provision);
- Have a better understanding of the profile of the beneficiaries which will allow a better needs based response.

Strategic Theme 3: Exit strategies: linkages with Livelihoods and the other conceptual graduation approaches

- In order to transition beneficiaries out of MCAP, public institutions should be able to accommodate needs based responses (including access to basic services);
- Giving beneficiaries a sufficient amount of notice before any transition is essential;
- Providing beneficiaries with skills trainings in order to smooth the transition out/link to Livelihoods;
- There should be an exit strategy of the whole response with specific sector specific plans.

Strategic Theme 4: Sustainability and complementarity of programmes

- Integrate BA with other programmes that are working towards a mid to long term outcomes for beneficiaries

Parking Lot

- Appeals Mechanism;
- Transition of operations to local NGOs and public institutions.