



**Minutes of NATIONAL INTER-AGENCY MEETING**

**11 March 2022, 11:00-12:00**

Remotely on Zoom

<b>Chairperson(s)</b>	Ola Boutros – LCRP General Supervisor, MoSA Elina Silen – Senior Inter-Agency Coordinator, UNDP Camilla Jelbart – Senior Inter-Agency Coordinator, UNHCR
<b>Minutes prepared by</b>	Hiba Ramadan – Senior Inter-Agency Assistant, UNHCR
<b>Agenda of the Meeting</b>	1) Highlights from LCRP end-of-year results reporting (2021) 2) UNHCR Participatory Assessment (Refugees) 3) Nutrition update, including findings from national nutrition survey

**Proceedings**

**1. Opening – Ola Boutros, LCRP General Supervisor, Ministry of Social Affairs**

- The LCRP General Supervisor opened the meeting and thanked partners for their participation.
- Shift to monthly Inter-Agency meetings at the national level – held on the second Friday of every month at 11am - and from next month to start profiling updates from the sub-national Inter-Agency teams in this space.

**2. Highlights from LCRP end-of-year results reporting (2021) - (as presented by Camilla Jelbart, Senior Inter-Agency Coordination Officer, UNHCR)**

- 2021 was lowest funded year with 43% of the appeal funded (not including carry-over). 2,450,222 individuals reached.
- Worth flagging that 2020 was the highest funded year, aligns with Beirut Blast and COVID-19, which saw additional contributions.
- Key highlights for each sector can be found in the Inter-Agency PPT for March,

*Discussion:*

*One partner flagged that there was no desired or clear intervention by organizations during the storm, knowing that great damages occurred (deaths due to cold, tents falling on the heads of their residents, etc.). Partners relied on donations, which were very shy, and they were mostly used to secure heating oil for the affected families or camps. The partner requested for a contingency plan to be highly prepared before these natural accidents occur.*

*LCRP General Supervisor (MoSA) indicated that there is an emergency plan to respond to the winter storms between the Ministry of Social Affairs, the concerned United Nations organizations and civil society organizations... The tents were reinforced, diesel and salt were distributed, and the municipalities received a response to 1650 tents that were damaged and death incidents were not reported. If any partner has further serious information on this regard, they should share it with the LCRP team for referral and intervention.*

*Social Stability sector lead (MoIM) inquired about the cash for rent assistance, as could Syrians refugees subject to evictions (from apartments) be granted cash to be able to rent other places? These cases must be referred to whom?*



*Senior Inter-Agency Coordination Officer* indicated that the sectors are strengthening a cross-sectoral approach to supporting people at risk of evictions / who have experienced evictions, including protection and shelter partners. An upcoming presentation/discussion on this will be organized.

*One partner asked* about the certificates from Ministry of Education and High Education (MEHE) for children that are following non-formal education to join public schools? What about Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP)? What is the future of these children? How can they be at public schools at the end of non-formal education program?

*Education sector coordinator* agrees that this has been very challenging. ALP has no funding currently and another challenge is capturing those who do transfer. With MEHE, the sector is looking at additional pathways to ensure more transition to formal education. This is a priority for the Education sector.

*Several partners requested* more data on disability inclusion - to address barriers to be able to do more in this space; for instance, to explore creative solutions for improved communication with refugees, women and children in particular, in non-camp settings, as well as enhanced mechanisms to reach out to people with disabilities. How they are targeted with the different services, and what are the updates on this specific population?

*Protection sector coordinator* indicated that the sector is looking at access to services, specific challenges and needs using disaggregation of data under the LCRP per indicators. For the Protection sector for instance, the achievements under LCRP are used along with VASyR data, specific assessment including the Participatory Assessments and ad-hoc assessment as the one on the added value and limitations of the use of remote modalities to provide protection services to Persons of Concern. Accessibility remains a challenge for persons with disabilities despite increased awareness and commitment of partners, and the development of innovative options, due to the constant deterioration of the situation. For instance, the provision of information, relevant services and support by phone/on-line was found to be very useful for refugees with mobility constraint, based on lessons learned from the Protection sector's adaptation to the COVID-19 response. However, the electricity and internet crises are creating new challenges to provide this remote support. There is a need to keep working on this across sectors to ensure inclusion of persons with special needs in a constantly evolving context.

### **3. UNHCR Participatory Assessment (PA) for Refugees - (as presented by Carol El-Sayed, Protection Officer (Community-Based), UNHCR)**

#### **Actors involved:**

22 actors, including UNHCR in 2022

16 actors including UNHCR in 2021

- Only in the North, 2 sessions were conducted online: more specifically with two groups of married men.
- In 2020-2021 PA, 46% was online and 54% in person.



### **Total of 66 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted**

- 20 FGDs in Mount Lebanon (30%)
- 19 FGDs in North (28.7%)
- 17 FGDs in Bekaa (25.7%)
- 10 FGDs in South (15%)

The profiles were selected based on the need to understand better the challenges and barriers facing these groups.

56% of persons consulted were women and girls.

95% of persons consulted were Syrians and 5% were of other nationalities including Iraqi, Lebanese, Sudanese, Ethiopian.

### **Priority issues to refugees:**

- **Access to education:** Education was a priority mostly to boys and girls aged between 13-17 years old as well as married men and women and female heads of household. Concerns were mostly linked to refugees' inability to pay for education related fees including transportation, stationary items as well as Wi-Fi, electronic devices, and electricity for remote learning. Other concerns also included discrimination and bullying at schools, lack of spaces, inconvenience related to afternoon schooling, among others. This topic was prioritized by 79% of total groups consulted.
- **Healthcare:** 71% out of total groups consulted noted that access to health care was a priority to them. It was mostly reported by older women, persons with disability, and married women living in large families. Financial burdens hindering refugees to access health care services was among the top challenges. In mid-November, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) announced a further lifting of subsidies on key medications. The lifting of subsidies has affected infant milk formula and medications used to treat chronic illnesses such as hypertension and heart-disease. Not only refugees were not able to cover their medical expenses, but also were not able to find the needed medications in primary healthcare centers or pharmacies.
- **Paying the rent:** Refugees considered paying rental fees as one of their top priorities especially those who reported their inability to cover the related fees. Close to 62% of total groups consulted considered this topic as a priority to them. This issue was mostly raised by married women, girls and boys, male and female youth and older men and women. Most of refugees linked their inability to pay the rent to the following: First, the deteriorating economic situation whereby they noted an increase in the rental fees or asked to pay the fees in USD currency. Second, the limited job opportunities, especially among persons with disability who were unable to work and secure an income to cover the rental fees. Third, the limited income of the family whereby refugees reported that the current income barely covers their basic needs such as food and water. Finally, this issue was also linked to other protection concerns raised by groups including being at risk of eviction and arising tensions with landlords, among others.
- **Food:** 59% of total groups consulted considered securing their basic needs; mainly food, as a priority. It was mostly prevalent among female heads of household and married men groups. This issue was also linked to the current economic situation whereby refugees were finding difficulty to secure food. Most concerns were related to the



increased prices of all items, especially meat. This also led to malnutrition and cases of skipping meals among refugee families. Along the same lines, some refugees also raised concerns related to exploitation in markets, not receiving enough assistance or any at all.

- **Safety and security:** 50% of the total groups consulted reported that safety and security concerns as one of their main priorities. The groups who mostly reported this concern were youth aged 18-25 years old, female heads of household, married women, girls aged 13-17 years old, and persons with disabilities. Refugees noted that they are in continuous fear of getting evicted and are feeling not stable even inside their homes. Nevertheless, refugees elaborated on several cases where they felt unsafe moving around due to discrimination, harassment, and racism placing on them many safety risks. Theft cases were also a concern to refugees, especially those residing in the North, as they are reported to be increasing recently. Some groups also mentioned fear of getting detained.
- **Job opportunities:** 36% out of total groups consulted considered finding job opportunities as a main priority. This was mostly reported by groups of female and male youth aged 18 to 25 and boy and girls 13-17 years old, persons with disabilities, among others. Refugees noted their dire need for income to secure their most basic needs; however, they complained of the limited job opportunities. In some cases, refugees are being exploited by employers and accepting to work with very minimal wages.
- **Adequate housing:** 33% out of total groups consulted considered having an adequate housing as a priority to them. Refugees noted that they are obliged to live in shelters with bad conditions due to the elevated prices of rent. The later was mostly affected by the unfavorable dollar rates compared to the Lebanese Lira and exploitation of landlords. Thus, families are residing in houses with no proper hygienic bathrooms and unprotected shelters requiring rehabilitation, especially before winter. In some cases, families are sharing the same shelter with other people to save on rentals.
- **Cash:** 26% out of total groups consulted considered cash as one of their main priority, especially among female youth 18-25 years old in North, Mount Lebanon (ML), and South. Refugees elaborated on the high living costs coupled by insufficient cash assistance leading to their inability to secure their most basic needs including medications and health services. For instance, married men in the North mentioned that provision of cash assistance can solve most of refugees' problems. On the contrary, female youth (18-25) years old in ML acknowledged that tensions may arise with the host community as the latter perceive that Syrians are receiving aid in USD.
- **Legal residency:** Having a valid legal residency was a priority to 12 groups (i.e., 18% of total groups consulted) divided as follows across locations and profiles: three groups of older men in South, Beirut & Mount Lebanon (BML), and Bekaa, three of male youth (18-25) in South, BML, and North, two groups of married women in South and North, two groups of persons with disabilities in BML and North, one group of married men in North, and one group of girls (18-25) in the North. Mostly, legal residency was a priority to refugees residing in the North. Refugees acknowledged that having a legal residency is a requirement to be able to work and move around freely without being at risk of getting arrested. However, they noted some challenges related to obtaining/renewing their



residency including financial challenges to cover the fees and transportation, difficulties finding sponsor, among others.

- **Civil documentation:** Only 8% of total groups consulted noted that civil documentation is a concern to them. This was a concern mostly to refugees in the North as it was reported by 2 groups of married men in Bekaa and North, 1 group of girls (18-25) in North, and persons with disabilities in the North. Those groups mentioned that they are facing difficulties in registering their children or adding a child to the file.
- **Other priorities:** Other priorities raised included request for resettlement, need for winter assistance (fuel and tent rehabilitation), water and sanitation, and mental health (noted by older women in ML only).

#### **Other issues:**

- Winter support (fuel, tent rehabilitation)
- Mental health (only raised by older women in ML)
- Resettlement
- Water and sanitation

#### **4. Nutrition update, including findings from national nutrition survey – (Amirhossein Yarparvar, Nutrition Specialist I Sector Coordinator, UNICEF)**

- 9 partners worked together to run the SMART survey in 8 governorates and 2 sub-samples in Palestinian Camp and Informal settlements. 3558 children and 9214 WRA were surveyed to estimate the prevalence of all forms of malnutrition and their major drivers among children and women as evidence for policy and programming.

- **Lebanon Vs. Global Nutrition Targets:**

<https://data.unicef.org/resources/who-unicef-discussion-paper-nutrition-targets/>

In the present paper, the proposed extension of the targets to 2030 for stunting is based on the projection of the required progress rate between 2012 and 2025 extended five more years. For anemia and low birth weight, a re-analysis of trends called for keeping the same target as proposed for 2025. For exclusive breastfeeding, increased ambition beyond the rate of progress between 2012 and 2025 was proposed and for wasting and overweight, the goal of elimination to a level of no concern (prevalence less than 3%) is considered feasible.

- **All systems must be better equipped and more accountable** to deliver nutritious **diets**, essential nutrition **services** and positive nutrition **practices UNICEF Global Nutrition Strategy 2020-2030**
- **Vision, Goal, Outcome Objective and Strategic Areas**
- **Resources and Capacities Needed**
  - Position Nutrition as a priority in the national development agenda
  - Resources mobilization (20-25 Million USD for the Nutrition Sector Response) and provision of needed supplies



**Traditional donors, IFIs, Business for Results**

- National nutrition strategy is operationalized, legislative work
- Integrated Package of services delivered at Community level

**ECD lens**

- **SBCC** and use of Digital Technology (hotline etc.)
- Partnerships for delivering the harmonized response (**PDs**)
- Sector Strategy is updated under the response plans (ERP, LCRP)
- Advocacy with other public & Private partners for Universal reach
- Strengthened Sector Coordination (**CCPM**)
- Capacity building for sector partners and nutrition workforce
- Systematic Evidence generation, metrics and knowledge management

**Secondary analysis of data, and deeper dive to diets equity and gender**

**National Micronutrient Assessment**

**Nutrition Information Management**

- Strengthening the preparedness for, recovery and transition