

Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) Syrian, African and Iraqi Refugee Response in Egypt Meeting minutes

Date: 19th May 2015

Time: 10:00 am-1:00 pm

Venue: UNHCR Cairo- Zamalek Office, Conference Room

Chair: Elizabeth Tan- **UNHCR Egypt Representative**

Participants:

(Magdy Francis), (Mariam Fouad)- **Caritas Egypt**; (Chris Eades) - **Stars**; (Kris Ozar) - **CRS**; (Mai Gaballah)- **Save the Children**; (Fr. Jemil Araya)- **Sacred Heart Church**; (Nancy Baron) -**PSTIC**; (Amr El Shora)- **AMU**; (Julien Garsany) **UNDOC**; (Joachim Dewille) – **MSF**; (Abdel Gawad), (Nouran Gamal)- **ACSFT**; Hans Vikoler – (**WFP**) (Hani Fares), (Kaidar Ayoub), (Sajal Gupta), (Ragnhild Ek.), (Mohamed Shawky), (Amr Osman)- **UNHCR**

Agenda:

1. Towards a strategy addressing mixed migration in Egypt;
2. Presentation on EU Trust Fund;
3. Updates on 3RP;
4. Updates on Food Security (WFP);
5. AOB.

Summary of the Minutes:

1- Towards a strategy addressing mixed migration in Egypt:

Elizabeth Tan, UNHCR Egypt Representative introduced a proposed draft IAWG strategy to address protection needs on those affected by mixed migrations.

- The strategy is based on consultations with agencies and partners that are members of the Inter-agency Working Group in Egypt, and informed by the on-going challenges and activities undertaken in the country to address the phenomenon of mixed migration.
- The strategy should ensure all asylum seekers have access to UNHCR, minimum standards in detention and protection is imperative as well as rescue at sea.
- The strategy should ensure refugees are empowered to make informed decisions and this should be part of the criteria used for programmes. Addressing this element, the Communications with Beneficiaries Working Group will aim to ensure a two-way process

of communications and simultaneously gathering information to understand how best to address present issues. Addressing the issue of trafficking and the legal perspective is important.

- Advocacy requires a unified set of principles across the different agencies to harness joint efforts to achieve strategy.

Discussion

- Elizabeth highlighted the link between programme interventions and the root causes which need to be understood. Humanitarian programmes need to be funded if we are able to address onward movements of registered UNHCR in Egypt. Partners discussed the factors influencing decision for refugees to remain in Egypt in terms of opportunities and quality of life versus risking the journey to a welfare state.
- Several partners highlighted the importance of understanding *why* people are leaving Egypt. They attributed it to the change in humanitarian assistance not just for Syrians but also Africans, with less available in education assistance and health support. This is not an area that can be changed quickly. Other reason behind leaving Egypt is feeling of disconnect from support and UNHCR. Many vulnerable people cannot get into the UNHCR system and are unable to receive needed assistance. There is something we can do about, to improve this access to UNHCR staff and the efficiency of the phone lines. There was a general consensus from partners to either return to the token system, providing access to staff direct or improve the phone line system available.

Frustration over the white paper system and the back and forth between obtaining it and general belief that Refugee Status Determination is slow with RSD appointments given in 2018/19. As a result, RST is not considered a real possibility for asylum seekers in Egypt. Children and Unaccompanied Minors (UAM) are being neglected by present system. Parents are recognized and given yellow card, while their undocumented children and UAM are often leaving with nothing or white papers, with little chance of social or educational support they need by present system. Many children are left with no protection.

- Another partner highlighted that many UAM have not been receiving sufficient support from UNHCR and feel they have little to lose as basic financial assistance is no longer provided. Many are now dropping out of the NGO programme in order to work, to save money to get on boats.
- Another partner believes that the cuts in assistance are affecting large families. Access to renew UNHCR cards is taking too long; the system needs to be changed. During this time many get frustrated and long appointment waiting times cause many to look at ways to escape. Even with warnings to not flee, many continue to travel to Europe.

- There are some reasons we cannot overcome, personal beliefs and the decision has already been made. Many have no job or livelihood difficulties.
- There was an intensive discussion about the value of awareness raising. Some agencies continue with traditional awareness raising about the dangers of irregular migration. Other believe highlighting the danger is not useful as there is a 95% success rate and 5% fail rate and all are aware of the danger of death. Furthermore, idea of sending children has become more common, in hope that eventually the whole family will be reunified in a European state rather than live a difficult life in Egypt.

Another partner highlighted that raising awareness has limited impact and we should utilize resources differently. We need to increase advocacy efforts with Government of Egypt. There is a need for programs targeting youth, giving assistance to help they build a good quality of life here with access to education, health and protection, increasing hope and stopping their extreme actions. We need increased legal assistance if the proposed criminalization law go ahead, partners with legal resources should come forward.

Some partners believe we should have a good idea of geography of human trafficking across Egypt. There are even issues of authorities confusing the location of detainees by moving them to various detention centers; this also needs to be addressed. The myth of trafficking needs to be broken and we need to find an effective way to communicate this.

Furthermore, we can do something about smugglers; we need to work with the authorities to advocate for increased specialized resources directed towards this.

- *Elizabeth Tan, UNHCR Egypt Representative* stated that we need to seize the opportunity of interaction with the many people transiting through Egypt, we should look at what tools are available for us to move forward on this. Need to combine partner's legal and research capacities and outreach capacity.
- It was agreed that IAWG members will provide feedback on the draft strategy and UNHCR will circulate a draft action plan.
- It was agreed that follow-up on the strategy and action plan should be done through Protection Working Group (PWG). Partners requested that UNHCR assign a specific focal point to lead the process in the PWG.

2- Presentation on EU Trust Fund:

Ragnhild Ek, UNHCR Senior External Relations Officer briefed IAWG members on the EU Trust Fund 'Madad Fund': Please see the presentation attached. *Elizabeth Tan, UNHCR Egypt Representative* stressed the need for partners to apply to the fund as it will increase our collective capacity to respond to the needs of refugees.

3- Update on 3RP:

Sajal Gupta, UNHCR senior operation manager briefed IAWG members on 3RP progress report. The objective of a 3RP progress report is to inform donors and other stakeholders as to the consequences of underfunding, reflect examples of achieved cost-efficiencies and present what has been regionally achieved thus far. It also provides an added value to provide regional advocacy messages, including the opportunity to articulate sensitive region-wide messages. The progress report is not intended as a mid-year review, which would have the implication of revising financial requirements, nor is it a prioritization exercise.

4- Update on Food Security (WFP):

Hans Vikoler, WFP Emergency coordinator gave presentation on Food Security in Egypt (attached). Many partners believe that the food cuts will be a major push factors for sending children to the EU.

5- AOB:

There are approximately 500,000 Libyans in Egypt, of which half are located in Cairo and the other half in Alexandria. They have clear issues of traumatized children, socio-economic needs and issues of group affiliation which is causing conflict. Many have depleting financial funds which they have been relying on for survival and are unaware of the services offered by UNHCR. Many are falling below the poverty line as a result of reduced savings, with health, educational and special needs being neglected. As a result some Libyans are subjected to bribery to attain residency, early marriages and prostitution. There is a potential increase in the influx via air transit, with many being taken care via social solidarity networks. However there are many vulnerable groups struggling to survive across Cairo and the country.

Summary of Action points:

Action	Lead Organisation/ Person	Deadline
Funding opportunity and funding mechanism in protection to be shared with partners (PPT on EU Trust Fund 'Madad Fund')	UNHCR (Amr, Maria to PWG)	ASAP
IAWG Action plan along with the draft strategy on mixed migration to be shared with partners for inputs/comments	UNHCR (Amr)	ASAP

Agenda items for next meeting:

1. Presentation on changes on UNHCR RSD system;
2. Brief on UNHCR Coordination Toolkits as a training resource for capacity building;
3. MSF Briefing on programs.

Other:

Next IAWG meeting will convene on:

Date: Sunday, 21st June 2015

Time: 10:00 am

Venue: UNHCR office in Zamalek.