Initial version April 2014; revised June 2017.

JORDAN REFUGEE RESPONSE
INTER-SECTOR WORKING GROUP

Standard Operating Procedures for Coordinated Needs Assessments

PURPOSE and SCOPE

Purpose

These SOPs are intended to guide agencies through the process of coordinating needs assessments within the Refugee component of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP).

These SOPs focus on supporting and promoting information-sharing between agencies and reducing of duplication of efforts, ensuring that appropriate Sector Working Groups provide technical input where relevant and results of the conducted assessments are uploaded at the Needs Assessment Registry: http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/assessments.php?page=1&view=grid&Country[]=107

Scope

Each assessment must be approved by the lead sector as identified by the Inter-Sector Coordination Focal Point. These SOPs apply to all data collection exercises involving refugees in host community or in camps in Jordan including:

- knowledge, attitudes and practice (KAP) surveys;
- needs assessments;
- contextual analysis or research by individuals, organisations or institutions;
- large project or programme evaluations.

These SOPs do not apply to data collection activities considered part of normal programming, including:

- gathering of output-level data;
- Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) activities;
- beneficiary selection activities for approved projects.

These SOPs do not cover obtaining government approval for assessments. Requesting authorisation from Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC), and line ministries, where appropriate, is a separate process. Approval by the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate (SRAD) is required in some geographical locations, such as in Zaatari camp and Azraq camp. For more details on Zaatari camp see Annex 3. For Azraq camp contact the camp management.

Research or assessment conducted by external academic researchers, including students, is addressed separately in Annex 4.

Questions can be addressed to the Inter-Sector Coordination Focal Point (FP).

Disagreement between Coordinator and Agency on rejection of assessment can be referred to the Inter-Sector Working Group. The review will not take longer than two weeks.

Assessments which remain unfunded and unimplemented for six months after the initial planned date will be removed from the Needs Assessment Registry.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

When planning, conducting or reporting needs assessments involving refugee communities in Jordan, agencies should be guided by the following principles:

Assessment design

- Assessments must include a review of secondary data and existing reports, where such data is available. Primary data collection should only be undertaken if information is not available already or is not available through key informant interviews with service providers, and where the primary data collection will fill a clearly identified information gap.
- Primary data collection activities should be coordinated wherever possible. This can either be through joint assessments where agencies collaborate to undertake the same data collection exercise, or harmonized assessments with agencies agreeing a minimum set of data to collect and a standard methodology to ensure that information is comparable.
- Data collection activities should be participatory wherever possible, including affected populations in the design, implementation and analysis of the data. The results should be shared with the affected population, and efforts made to advise informants of the results of the assessment. Data should be verified with assessment participants, and triangulated where possible.
- The sample size should be the minimum possible ensuring data sufficient to be representative of the target population; age and gender should be incorporated unless specifically not relevant.
- Assessments should have ethical justification for being conducted amongst refugee populations; research that can equally be carried out on populations not of concern should not be undertaken. Research should be of direct benefit to the target population.
- The 'Do No Harm' principle must be adhered to in all situations. The intended benefit to participants must be balanced against the risks involved. This includes: being mindful of the possible unintended consequences of participation; confidentiality issues; and time commitments by participants.
- Mitigation measures against any identified risks must be in place before primary data collection commences. This may include offering services or counselling, only possible with qualified and experienced members in the assessment team (*See Ethics Questionnaire, Annex 2*).
- Assessments that relate to SGBV must follow WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies *(See Annex 5). (http://www.who.int/gender/documents/OMS_Ethics&Safety10Aug07.pdf)*
- On a regular basis, sector and area based coordinators are expected to review what assessments are planned in their areas and encourage agencies to collaborate for joint data collection.
- All needs assessments should follow recognised data protection standards throughout the entire information lifecycle including, collection, storage, processing, sharing, archiving and destruction. For an example data protection policy see the UNHCR policy on the protection of personal data of persons of concern: *http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/55643c1d4.pdf.*

Assessment implementation

- Participants should give 'informed consent', understanding why they are asked to share information and how that information will be used. This includes the degree to which information will remain confidential and how it will be shared with third parties. For participants under 18, informed consent should additionally be sought from parents or legal guardians.
- The assessment should seek the views of women, girls, boys and men of all age groups, in ways that are both ethical and culturally-sensitive, and likely to collect valid information about their respective needs (including specific needs, such as those relating to disability, injury or ageing), unless the assessment is focussing on a particular sub-group.
- Assessors should refer individuals to appropriate support mechanisms should difficult issues be discussed or raised, such as protection concerns, including sexual or gender-based violence.
- Organisations should not provide incentives to households participating in assessments, as this risks bias.

PROCESS

All needs assessments should follow the below process[1].

The parties are:

- Agency conducting assessment ("Agency")
- Inter-Sector Coordination Focal Point for the Needs Assessment Registry ("FP"[2])
- Sector or Area- based Coordinator ("Coordinator")[3]
- Data Protection Focal Point responsible for RAIS and ProGres data ("DPFP"[4]).

The steps and responsibilities of each party are detailed below[5]:

- **Agency** familiarizes with Needs Assessment Registry ("Registry") *http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/assessments.php?page=1&view=grid&Country[]=107*
- **Agency** contacts FP requesting login access to the Registry
- Upon receiving access to the Registry, **Agency** uploads the proposed assessment information onto the Registry and informs FP about it; completes and sends the Ethics Questionnaire (*see Annex 2*) and, preferably, the Assessment Questionnaire to the FP
- **FP** sends Ethics Questionnaire and Assessment Questionnaire to the Coordinator of the lead sector[6] indicated in the proposal, requesting approval and/or feedback
  Timeframe – two working days
- **Coordinator** and the sector review the assessment[7]
- **Coordinator** sends feedback (approved; needs revision; rejected) to FP
  Timeframe for revision and feedback to the Agency – two weeks or the nearest sector meeting (but not longer than one month)
- **FP** communicates decision of the Coordinator to the Agency
- If approved, **Agency** starts implementation of the assessment
- **Coordinator** may recommend revision of the proposal. The revised proposal is re-submitted through FP as above
- The **Agency** requesting data from UNHCR (RAIS, ProGres) is directed by FP or by Coordinator to DPFP. Guided by special regulations and criteria, the latter decides if the requested data can be provided.
- **FP** regularly communicates with Agency on progress and changes status in the Registry (planned; data collection started; data collection finished; published)
- **Agency** uploads final report / result of the assessment onto the Registry. If the results contain sensitive information which cannot be made public, Agency indicates this and advises who should be contacted in case of further queries
- **Coordinators** regularly inform their specific sectors on the planned and conducted assessments
- **Coordinators** and **FP** raise awareness and regularly promote usage of SOPs and uploading of assessments in the Registry

[1] *Flowchart of the process see in Annex 1*

[2] guseva@unhcr.org

[3] *Sectors: Basic Needs, Protection, Shelter, WASH, Livelihoods, Education, Health, Food Security. Area based: camps (Zaatari, Azraq) and urban (Mafraq, Irbid, South and Amman)*

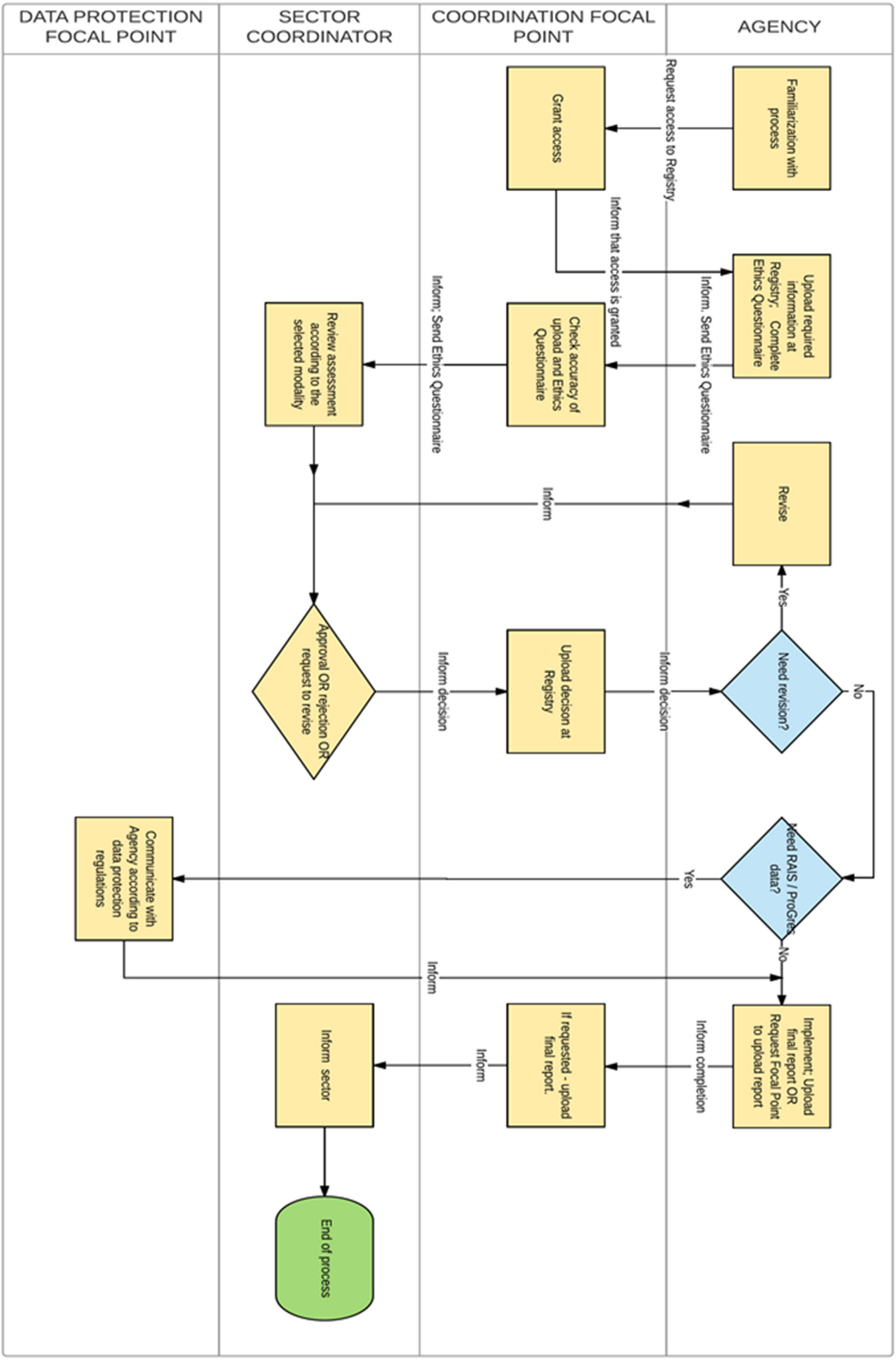
[4] joramdat@unhcr.org

5 Agencies must go through the outlined process. In exceptional circumstances, however, such as during periods of emergency operations, the process can be fast-tracked.

6 Lead sector is identified by the FP, based on the information on the planned assessment and, possibly, in consultation with Agency

[7] *It is according to the sector to agree how review is managed (possible options: a task force, coordinator's decision, discussion at the sector meeting, etc.).Leading the discussion and communicating of the decision remains responsibility of Coordinator*

Annex 1 – Flowchart of the process



Annex 2 – Ethics Questionnaire

When planning, conducting and reporting a needs assessment with any part of the refugee or host communities in Jordan, agencies should be guided by the principles contained on Pages 2-3 above. To this end, the checklist below should be completed and shared with Sector Working Group chairs in order to assist in their review of assessment proposals.

- **What information is sought from the assessment?**

- **What relationship does the information sought bear to programming for the refugee or host communities? What impact, if any, will it have on programming?**

- **How far does existing secondary data inform the programmatic design/improvement described above?**

- **What are the risks involved in conducting the assessment? How are these risks mitigated?**

Phase	**Risks (i.e. to quality of data)**	**Mitigating measures**
Secondary data collection	-unrepresentative sample -non-disaggregated data (W,G,B,M) -scope of existing secondary data too narrow -methodology of existing reports was flawed -major or significant informants were not consulted -data not verified	
Phase	**Risks**	**Mitigating measures**
Primary data collection	-consent may not be free and informed (especially if working with children) -participants are not fully able to refuse to participate (especially if participants are approached through service providers) -information may not be treated confidentially -assessment team does not have expertise to deal with protection or other issues arising -assessment team does not have information on referral pathways/SOPs -similar questions have already been posed and so participants' answers may be influenced	

- **How** are age**, gender and diversity incorporated into the proposed sample?**

Annex 3 –Assessments in Zaatari Camp[8]

The Basic Needs and Livelihoods Working Group (BNLWG) at Zaatari Camp is an inter-sectorial forum that coordinates assessments and facilitates information-sharing between agencies on completed assessments and results, including by the regular use of the Needs Assessment Registry.

For all assessments that include interactions with the refugee community in Zaatari (interviews or group discussions), organizations and academic institutions are required to adhere to the present Assessment SOPs. This Annex describes the steps that are needed in order to receive BNLWG approval for carrying out assessments in Zaatari Refugee camp. It covers:

1. Required documents
2. Presentation at the BNLWG
3. Review of the assessment documentation
4. Needs Assessment Registry

Required Documents

The following documents have to be shared in English (some documents are needed in Arabic as well) with the BNLWG co-chairs at least five working days before a BNLWG meeting in order to include the assessment request as an agenda point in the upcoming meeting:

1. One page summary of results for a secondary data review that justifies primary data collection (in English only). The BNLWG encourages visiting the Syrian Refugees Inter-Agency Web Portal, and more specifically the Needs Assessment Registry to access relevant information at*http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107*

2. ***Assessment Terms of Reference (English and Arabic versions are needed), including:***
- topic and objective for the research
- sampling methodology
- questionnaires to be used
- intended research location and duration
- how the information will be used

3. ***Duly completed our online form with contact details of the assessment focal point****, which can be accessed* here

4. ***IDs for anyone entering the camp to present the assessment at the BNLWG, and the car license for any car entering the camp***

- For academic research specifically, the following additional documents must be shared with the BNLWG:

5. ***Reference letter from the research institute/university for the purpose of verification***

6. ***Approval from the ethics committee of the institute/university for the research***

7. ***Description of the support required from the humanitarian agencies*** working in the location where the assessment would be conducted

8. ***Description of the relevance of the collected data for humanitarian agencies*** in Zaatari (not only for the researchers/university students)

9. ***Confirmation that the research will be used exclusively for academic / research purposes*** (e.g. not for writing articles in the newspaper, etc.)

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[8] *The last update of Annex 3 is on 21 December 2016*

For health-related assessments, authorization from the Ministry of Health is required before submitting the assessment request to the BNLWG. However, after receiving the approval from the Ministry of Health, the assessment request still has to be submitted to the BNLWG in line with the abovementioned steps. For further details on health-related specific procedures, please contact Iyad Shtayiat, UNHCR Assistant Public Health Officer, at shtayiat@unhcr.org

Presentation, Review and Endorsement

Provided the above documents are shared at least 5 days prior to the meeting, the assessment request must then be presented to the BNLWG. A representative of the organization/ academic institution will be requested to prepare a short presentation and attend a BNLWG meeting in Zaatari camp in order to present the assessment request to the members. UNHCR will facilitate the entry permit request to the camp. As mentioned in the "Required Documents" section, the following documents have to be shared with the BNLWG at least five days before the meeting:

- IDs copies of all the concerned individuals, including the driver
- Copy of the car license

Following the presentation to the BNLWG, members will be given 5 working days to review the assessment tools and information provided, and suggest changes/adjustments if needed. Based on the nature of the assessment and the researcher's willingness to adapt to suggested changes, the BNLWG retains the right to reject the assessment request. If any feedback is provided, the organization/academic institution is expected to address all the working group inputs accordingly in order for the assessment request to be endorsed. If no feedback is received by the BNLWG members, the assessment request will be considered endorsed. Following endorsement by the BNLWG, UNHCR Camp Management will submit an official letter to SRAD on the assessment request, and will notify the concerned organization/academic institution once data collection can start.

Once all of the above is complete (documents, presentation, review, endorsement, SRAD permits), then data collection can start within the camp. The length of the process depends on the feedback provided by the BNLWG and the ability of organizations/academic researchers to adapt assessment tools accordingly and in a timely manner in order for the assessment to be endorsed. Moreover, it depends on the length of the SRAD approval process. There is no specific timing for the endorsement process as it varies on a case by case basis, but the BNLWG advises organizations/academic institutions to plan for at least a month from the date the presentation is done to the BNLWG.

Once data collection is approved, UNHCR will facilitate access to the camp for enumerators engaged in the assessment if needed. In order to request entry permit to the camp, the following documents have to be shared with the BNLWG at least five days prior to starting data collection:

- IDs copies of all the concerned individuals, including the driver
- Copy of the car license

Needs Assessment Registry

BNLWG co-chairs will share the endorsed assessment tools with UNHCR Information Management Officer in Zaatari on a monthly basis so that all relevant information can be regularly uploaded onto the Needs Assessment Registry. Organizations/academic institutions conducting assessments in Zaatari commit to share assessment results and raw data with the BNLWG co-chairs once data collection is completed and the information analyzed. The BNLWG co-chairs will contact assessment focal points in the organization/academic institution to follow-up on data sharing requirements. Organizations and institutions that do not follow up, share results, or fail to comply with the assessment SOPs in general will not be considered for future assessments in Zaatari camp.

BNLWG co-chair' contacts

UNHCR: Livia das Neves; email: *dasneves@unhcr.org; Tel: 0796083917*
NRC: Dima Issam Alarda; email: dima.issam.alarda@nrc.no*; Tel:* 0795824032

Annex 4 – External academic research

External academic researchers, including university students, may seek assistance of various kinds from agencies in the Sector Working Groups. To do so, they are requested to follow the procedures below:

1. Provide the following information/documents to the FP:
    a. Reference letter from a research institute/university for the purpose of verification
    b. Research topic and objective, intended research location/duration, and how information will be used
    c. Approval from the ethics committee of the institute/university for the research
    d. Specific support is sought from humanitarian agencies
    e. Relevance of research to humanitarian agencies
    f. Confirmation that the research will be used exclusively for academic / research purposes (i.e. not for press articles, etc.)

2. External academic researchers are requested to review reports available at the Needs Assessment Registry: http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107, to avoid duplication.

3. FP informs Sector Coordinator(s) (or Zaatari BNLWG, Azraq camp management) of request for assistance.

External academic researchers are requested to share the findings of the research with the relevant coordination group

Note: External academic researchers are responsible for obtaining government approval for researches in Jordan. The above Sector-approval procedure is a separate process and does not constitute government authorization.

Annex 5 - WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies

Extracted from *(http://www.who.int/gender/documents/OMS_Ethics&Safety10Aug07.pdf)*

1. The benefits to respondents or communities of documenting sexual violence must be greater than the risks to respondents and communities.

2. Information gathering and documentation must be done in a manner that presents the least risk to respondents, is methodologically sound, and builds on current experience and good practice.

3. Basic care and support for survivors/victims must be available locally before commencing any activity that may involve individuals disclosing information about their experiences of sexual violence.

4. The safety and security of all those involved in information gathering about sexual violence is of paramount concern and in emergency settings in particular should be continuously monitored.

5. The confidentiality of individuals who provide information about sexual violence must be protected at all times.

6. Anyone providing information about sexual violence must give informed consent before participating in the data gathering activity.

7. All members of the data collection team must be carefully selected and receive relevant and sufficient specialized training and ongoing support.

8. Additional safeguards must be put into place if children (i.e. those under 18 years) are to be the subject of information gathering.