

NFI Sector Working Group - Terms of Reference

Objective

The objective of the NFI Sector Working Group (WG) is to coordinate the Non-Food Item (NFI) relief response, define policy and standards implemented by all agencies active in the overall humanitarian effort for the Syrian refugee crisis in all parts of Lebanon.

Definition

NFI comprise household items such as clothing, bedding (mattresses and blankets), cooking equipment (stoves and kitchen sets of pots, pans, bowls, cutlery), and consumables such as fuel (for cooking or heating), soap, detergent, washing powder, sanitary items, diapers and toilet paper. Shelter materials such as plastic tarpaulins or sheeting are also NFI, but their distribution is coordinated by the Shelter Sector WG. Likewise, the Hygiene Kit and Baby Kit content is defined and their distribution is coordinated by the WASH Sector WG. Any NFI can be transferred in-kind or in the form of cash or vouchers, but cash and vouchers are not NFI as such, they are a modality for transferring assistance to beneficiaries. There is a specific Cash WG working on developing a cash transfer system to replace some of the food and other in-kind assistance currently provided, including NFI to some categories of beneficiary.

Beneficiaries

NFI could be provided to all the categories of potential beneficiary, comprising registered refugees, unregistered refugees, Palestine Refugees from Syria (PRS), Lebanese returnees, and vulnerable host community families. Recently arrived asylum-seekers, 'newcomers', is not a category but a state in which all the above categories (except host families) are considered upon arrival in Lebanon. After the first month they would be classified as one of the above categories, and supported accordingly.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the WG in pursuit of the above objective are as follows:

1. Advocate that every potential beneficiary facing a similar set of challenges in Lebanon should receive the same humanitarian support, irrespective of their location and the agency they happen to be supported by. Devise realistic ways of achieving this and advise agencies accordingly.
2. Standardize the NFI assistance, both to the existing refugee population and to newcomers, and whether for winterization or other programmatic interventions, in terms policy, strategy and their practical application (e.g. defining the contents of NFI kits, the specifications of items and other technical standards).

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3. Prepare guidelines, standard operating procedures (SOP) and conduct training to promote conformity with the agreed general approach, vulnerability/needs assessment methodology, targeting criteria, and modality for transfer to beneficiaries (i.e. in-kind or through cash, vouchers or ATM cards).
4. Report activities according to a standard reporting format through the field offices, map them for better coordination (i.e. Who - What - Where - When) and provide a common platform for communicating and sharing information.
5. Coordinate assistance provided to Newcomers on the basis of need, ensuring 100% coverage of the country, irrespective of their final beneficiary classification.
6. Support the equivalent NFI/Distribution WGs in each area (Akkar, Bekaa, North, South, Beirut & Mt Lebanon), through the development of strategy, guidelines, procedures, and common tools for information management (e.g. reports, maps).
7. Coordinate resource mobilization, primarily through the Syria Regional Response Plan (RRP) process, but also through any other relevant mechanism.
8. Improve the flow of information to beneficiaries, through supporting development of clear messaging and enhanced means of mass communication.
9. Given the significant element of logistics involved in the provision of NFI, especially when the modality is in-kind distributions, maintain a close link to the Lebanon Logistics Forum, an informal group set up for the purpose of sharing information on common logistic problems and their possible solutions.
10. Support inter-agency processes of critical importance to this and other sectors, such as contingency planning to prepare for and respond to an acceleration or substantial expansion of current refugee emergency, and winterization.
11. Define performance indicators, monitor and evaluate agencies' NFI programmes and try to ensure that lessons are not only recognised but actually learned, through designing them into future interventions.
12. When appropriate and according to the developing situation, plan and put in place whatever strategy is necessary to transition to other coordination arrangements (e.g. the cluster system), and/or an exit strategy.

Principles

The WG will strive to act in accordance with the following principles:

13. Promote inclusiveness and cooperation between all partners, including UN, NGOs, national and local government, and civil society.
14. Make a special effort to extend a hand to local partners and to build on local capacity whenever and wherever possible.
15. Use participatory and community-based approaches to inform planning.
16. Be accountable to beneficiaries, government, donors, and other sector partners.

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17. Be adaptable to the changing needs of the situation and the changing capacities in the sector, and ensure that activities remain relevant.
18. Consider cross-cutting issues, such as environment, gender, age, protection, disaster risk reduction, resilience and early recovery.
19. Coordinate with other sectors, especially Food Security and Shelter.

Procedures

The WG has agreed to function using the following procedures:

20. UNHCR as lead agency for the emergency will provide a sector coordinator to chair the WG. An NGO (currently DRC) will provide the deputy chair. Membership is open to any agency involved in the provision of NFI, or cash/vouchers for NFI.
21. The Government of Lebanon (Ministry of Social Affairs) has a standing invitation to participate and take a leading role in the meetings of the sector WG.
22. The WG will have a minimum of one monthly meeting at national level, currently scheduled for the second Monday of each month, at 0930 in UNHCR, Jnah. The agenda of the WG will be set by consensus of the members.
23. Sub-WGs of temporary or more permanent nature will be set up and disbanded as needed, for instance the standing Sub-WG on Newcomer Assistance.
24. The national WG will maintain an overview of the parallel work conducted through the equivalent NFI/Distribution WGs in each area.