



Minutes of the National Basic Assistance Working Group Meeting - 26 May 2017 - Beirut, Lebanon

Meeting Location	UNHCR, Lea, 1 st floor	Meeting Time	11:00 a.m.
Chairperson	Khalil Dagher (UNHCR) Mirdza Abele (LCC)	Meeting Duration	2 hours
Minutes Prepared by	Oula Ibrahim – Senior Coordination Assistant		
Represented Agencies	HI, ICRC, DFID, ECHO, UNICEF, LCC, WVI, LHIF, OXFAM, ACF, ANERA, MoSA, SI, RI, CARITAS, SIF, UNHCR		
Agenda of the Meeting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sector Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Targeting Assistance ○ VaSyR 2017 2. Update on LCC Caseload 3. S/MEB Revision: Preliminary Findings 4. ICRC Cash Assistance Programme 5. AOB <p>The PPT presentations are attached to the MoMs.</p>		

1.	Sector updates
	<p>1.1- Targeting Assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As of end of April, based on reporting cycles on Activity info and RAIS, 57,958 vulnerable HHs received multi-purpose cash. Of which, 47,544 SYR HHs, 9,500 PRS receiving \$100 from UNRWA, 914 vulnerable LEB HHs targeted through NPTP (last month of assistance). ● 21,508 SYR HHs receiving the unconditional education specific cash assistance from UNICEF. Of which, 60% overlap with MPC beneficiaries. ● Overall the total USD amount injected in the local economy in form of Cash Assistance amounted USD 11,273,155 excluding winter assistance. ● Q1 dashboard was finalized and published online: http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=13462 ● By end of March 2017, 170,440 vulnerable SYR HHs have been targeted by MPC and cash for winter. ● ¾ of Syrian refugees in Lebanon received seasonal or multi-purpose cash between Jan and March 2017 (against calendar year not the whole cycle). ● ¼ of Syrian refugee households are receiving monthly multi-purpose cash. ● A lot overlap can be noticed in the graph, most of those who have received already MPC received \$75 top up in terms of winter assistance. While for those who did not benefit from the regular MPC assistance program received the full amount which is \$147. ● In terms of profile of families, the average family size was 5.3. 20% of families, their average size was ranging between 4 and 7. ● In terms of geographical distribution, the biggest share was for Beqaa (27%) + Baalback (10%), and the lowest was for Beirut with only 2% of beneficiaries. ● UNHCR concluded an outcome monitoring /PDM on winter. Results were shared in the last Working group. Report is being finalized and will be shared shortly. ● UNICEF: PDM is not finalized yet, working on alignment of methodologies, and adding questions related more to processes. ● Requests received on “Operationalizing harmonized PDMs”. The process is captured on RAIS. NRC outreached for regular multi-purpose cash programme, as well as ACF and SIF. ● Most of cash actors are using the harmonized PDM that was tuned for winter programming.

1.2- VaSyR 2017

- Efforts have been done this year to make VaSyR questionnaire 2017 better than previous years. Relevant questions on Residency, Birth Registration and Livelihoods, Debt were added.
- All sector working groups have been engaged in the design and formulation of questionnaire.
- VaSyR 2017 covered all Lebanese territory. Aarsal, Marjaayoun, were also targeted this year.
- In total 4950 HHs were visited (23.900 individuals). 100% of targeted sample was reached.
- Around 50% of initially sampled cases had to be replaced (reasons: phone issues, relocation from initial selected cluster, travel...). Families who have moved out of Lebanon, were flagged and referred to registration centers for follow up and verification. List of those family is extracted and shared with field offices.
- Data was collected by 7 partners (LRC, Caritas, Makhzoumi, PU-AMI, Sheild, World Vision, and DRC).
- Data collection was done by 75 teams, throughout 13 days.
- Operational challenges:
 - In specific locations mainly in the south (Marjaayoun, Bint Jbeil, Hasbaya), partners were not able to use tablets and completed the visits using paper based surveys;
 - Interview was taking around 1 hour 30 min;
 - High number of unreachable cases and canceled appointments;
 - Teams in Beqaa and South had to work over weekends;
- Next steps:
 - Data cleaning (2nd of June);
 - Data crunching, weighting and validation (2nd of week of June)- by WFP;
 - Official release of Preliminary results and main findings (Mid July);
 - Presentations of findings for Sector working groups (October) to inform the LCRP planning;
 - Publication and print-out (November);
 - Analysis plan will be inclusive and participative and will be done by UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP separately in coordination with Sector working groups and sector specialists. Process will be led by WFP;
 - Comprehensive revision of Analysis plan will be on the 3rd and 4th weeks of June;
 - a consultant will be hired to undertake the analysis of the data;

Discussion:

- Linking VaSyR with M&E framework: according to LCRP, every sector has a set of indicators, VaSyR is a main informant study. Sectors will work to link correlated information.
- Other information not used in the analysis plan of VaSyR 2017 will be of a great help in multi- sectoral response.
- Sectors are using the data of VaSyR on regular basis since 2015 for different purposes. Still, confidentiality is a priority and information should always be safeguarded.
- In the Analysis plan, there is sector related specific information, along with a part revealing correlation with other sectors.

1.3- Updates on Desk Formula

- Receiving draft model from AUB first 2 weeks of June.
- 2 weeks for testing (operationalization).
- Possibility to share preliminary findings by the next working group.
- Major changes in regard to distribution of population (vulnerability groups) is not expected for this year, as this is tailored according to VaSyR data set and the model is still the same yet updated with more recent data.
- The way of looking to unpack economic vulnerability is enhanced this year, based on the experience of a 1 year of implementation, mainly when it comes to the variables, identification, and entry point towards economic vulnerability.
- Technically, level of accuracy of this year is still the same as per AUB researchers (same inclusion/exclusion error percentage).
- More than 15 demographic / protection related indicators have been added (elderly, chronic illness, etc.).

	<p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk Formula runs on the entire database of people of concern identified by UNHCR (registered & recorded). - Upon finalization of the draft model, preliminary findings will be shared for comments and feedback.
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2.	<p>Update on LCC Caseload</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCC is assisting 14,304 Vulnerable Syrian refugee HHs with multi-purpose cash assistance. • LCC is currently distributed nationally, majority of beneficiaries are in Beqaa (58%). • Average HH size is between 5.6 and 6.9 depending on the geographic area. • In terms of vulnerability, about 98% of LCC's April caseload score severely vulnerable based on 2016 Desk Formula. • LCC continue to assist a small number of cases not scoring severely vulnerable based on a qualitative inclusion approach presented to BA. And there is still 2% of cases (280) that do not have a desk formula score due to missing data (were assisted waiting the new desk formula score). • More than 98% of LCC caseload received winter cash assistance, more than 83% are receiving WFP food assistance, and more than 10% receive education focused cash from UNICEF. • LCC current fund ends by end of May 2017, UNHCR has confirmed to cover the caseload for 2 additional months till the end of July. • Key messaging and Q&A drafted and updated to respond to beneficiaries' questions. <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The 3 problematic variables that are not available for the total registered population are district of origin, arrival date and education level of head of HH. On the missing district of origin and education level of head of HH, couple of thousands are still missing, while for arrival date, information was completed for the total population. - Cases without DF scores and visited before were advised to be retained in assistance if they scored severely / highly as this is considered the only vulnerability score available. - Inactivated cases that NGOs are still supporting and confirm that they are present in the country should be referred and flagged to UNHCR. HHs should be advised to approach registration centers of UNHCR for verification. - A recommendation to keep the discussion on inactivation and verification issues alive, and flag the topic as a priority for the Basic Assistance working group. - ECHO requested a meeting with UNHCR and WFP to discuss sector divergence and convergence, and targeting models.
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3.	<p>S/MEB Revision: Preliminary Findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The S/MEB is a humanitarian tool for programming developed in 2014 to reflect the needs of a Syrian refugee household of five for a month. • It is also set thresholds for targeting and to set the amount or transfer values for multi-purpose cash. In other words, it determines the value of assistance for cash programming. • Expenditure basket is used for different purposes around the world, for instance monitoring of prices, consumption pattern of a given population and estimated expenditures and needs of population of concern. • In 2016, a revision process was launched. • The revision is based on a mixed methodology approach, consisting of conducting interviews and collecting quantitative data from 33 FGD, consulted with the community across Lebanon, asking the community on what the S/MEB contain and how much they spend on each of the items inside the S/MEB in addition to secondary data review. • It captures goods and services only accessed through the market, any services requiring money to be
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	<p>purchased, cannot be included. The basket is only for Lebanon not for any other region, as some of the amounts are weighted because it is really complicated to operationalize different baskets across regions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review was developed by an advisory committee formed of: UNICEF, WFP LCC, MoSA, NPTP, NRC, Oxfam, DRC, UNHCR, BAWG chair. • Input on different components came from respective sector coordinators. • A snapshot of what is the difference between the S/MEB and 2016 and 2014 shows an increase of 51% in the total amount of MEB that accounts for 292\$ compared to 2014 and 26% increase in the SMEB that accounts for 115\$. • Operationalizing the new values of the S/MEB has the following implications: • Political: the expenditure baskets were equated back in 2014 to the national extreme poverty line. So far, the suggested new values exceed the officially adopted poverty line. • Programmatic: the implication of increasing the transfer value from 175\$ to 240\$ to cover the expenditure gap is considerable (in case the same approach shall be considered compared to 2014). • Planning & targeting: impact of increase of the S/MEB new thresholds • Funding: having 88% of refugees being severely and highly vulnerable need much bigger budget from needs-based perspective at sectors' planning level since the new thresholds will push more families below the poverty line compared to 70% living below the MEB. • Due to cross-sectoral implications, sectors need to engage and decide on how the updated S/MEB will be used, what potential scenarios are anticipated, and what implications it will have on their programming. <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECHO has recommended to put the revision of the S/MEB in the broader perspective of reviewing the sector based approach in the response.
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4.	<p>ICRC Cash Assistance Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICRC explained their cash transfer programme pilot being implemented. • It aims to provide help to vulnerable Syrian refugees in Lebanon, PRS and also Lebanese returnees referred by departments within ICRC. • Targeting cases not receiving cash from UNHCR or other cash actors. • ICRC departments refer eligible cases, the case gets interviewed, then comes the scoring phase, approval, monitoring of the family's situation each 6 months and then linkage with other programmes (ex. Livelihood) or extension of cash assistance. • A list of criteria shared internally with departments so that they can know what cases they have to refer. • Families are first screened on RAIS, to check if they have already been included in other cash programmes. • Vulnerability assessment of the family is being done on regular basis, as it can change quickly based on the existing vulnerability. • Vulnerability assessment tool is also done on devices, in a form of household visit to assess the living conditions of the family members. • Similar to UNHCR's approaches in terms of assessment and scoring. Protection vulnerability is taken into consideration and weighs the overall score of the family. • Approval is given based on scoring. Flexibility is considered for highly vulnerable cases (will be assisted with 250\$). • Areas planned for further intervention are those where presence of ICRC is an added value ex: Arsal, Wadi Khaled. • Current Caseload of 800 families for 2017. • PDM report is still not ready as the program still hasn't reached 6 months of implementation. • The time between identification and assistance is less than 2 weeks. • Cash amount \$175 for severely vulnerable, \$250 for highly severely vulnerable HHs. • This program aims at helping families falling in the cracks of other cash programmes.
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