

Minutes of Meeting Inter-Sector Coordination Group Meeting

Meeting Location	Hybrid: MS Teams & UNHCR 8 th Floor Conference Room	Meeting Date	7 Mar 2025
Chairperson(s)	Dr. Ola Boutros, LRP General Supervisor (MoSA) Stephanie Laba, Inter-Agency Coordination Officer (UNHCR) Elena Ferrari, Senior Inter-Agency Coordinator (UNDP) Rawad El Zir, Head of Coordination (OCHA)	Meeting Time	09:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m.
Minutes Prepared by	Jana Nasr, Senior Inter-Agency Coordination Assistant (UNHCR)	Meeting Duration	2.00 hrs.
Participants	Annex 1		
Agenda	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opening Remarks 2. General Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024 Results • Update on Lessons Learnt Exercise • Update on Preparedness Plan 3. 2025 Lebanon Response Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return • Population Figures, Budget Implications, & Return Budget • Open Discussion 4. Funding Cuts, Impact & Coordination Streamlining 5. Presentation by Assessment and Analysis Working Group 6. AoB 		

1. Opening Remarks

Dr. Ola Boutros, LRP General Supervisor (MoSA)
Stephanie Labs, Inter-Agency Coordination Officer (UNHCR)
Elena Ferrari, Senior Inter-Agency Coordinator (UNDP)
Rawad El Zir, Head of Coordination (OCHA)

In their opening remarks, the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) Co-Chairs welcomed the participants and presented the agenda.

Dr. Ola emphasized the importance of incorporating return activities within each sector's planning and proposed including a return plan as an appendix to the Lebanon Response Plan (LRP). Acknowledging the transitional phase between the Flash Appeal and the LRP, Ola requested sector leads to cooperate in ensuring a flexible response that adapts to the evolving context.

2. General Updates

2024 Results

Stephanie Laba, Inter-Agency Coordination Officer (UNHCR)

Stephanie Laba presented an overview of the 2024 LRP Results:

- Out of the \$3.15 billion 2024 LRP Appeal, \$1.63 was made available including \$1.33 billion received between 1 January and 31 December 2024, as well as \$301.54 million carry-over from 2023 and multi-year fund.
- Protection (71%), Education (67%), and Health (65%) are the highest funded sectors compared to the appeal.

- Nutrition (17%), Shelter (21%), and Site Management Coordination (26%) are the lowest funded sectors compared to the appeal.
- The LRP Funding Trend from 2020 to 2024 is available on slide 9 of the presentation [here](#).
- Nearly **2,386,971 million** vulnerable Lebanese, displaced Syrians and Palestinian refugees were reached with assistance and support through interventions under the LRP in 2024.
- Over **\$358.7 million** was injected into Lebanon's economy through cash-based interventions supporting vulnerable families. This accounts for over a third of the LRP total available funding of \$1.63 billion.
- Key sector results are listed on slides 11 and 12 [here](#) and examples of assistance provided to vulnerable Lebanese are listed on slides 13, 14, and 15.

2024 End-of-Year Resources

- LRP Funding Update – EoY 2024: [HERE](#)
- LRP Inter-Sector Dashboard – EoY 2024: [HERE](#)
- LRP Sector Dashboards – EoY 2024:
- LRP Support to Lebanese Dashboard – EoY 2024: [Arabic](#) and [English](#).
- LRP Overview and Scope – EoY 2024: [HERE](#)

Update on Lessons Learnt Exercise

Rawad El Zir, Head of Coordination (OCHA)

Rawad El Zir provided an update on the Lessons Learnt Exercise:

- Reports of the lessons learned exercise at sub-national level are currently being reviewed by the Sub-National Inter-Sector Co-Chairs and will later be shared with the sub-national ISCGs for further review.
- The national and sub-national reports will also be shared at the national level.
- Next steps include finalizing the joint report and sharing it with the sector coordination teams and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT).

Update on Preparedness Plan

Rawad El Zir, Head of Coordination (OCHA)

Rawad highlighted the way forward regarding the preparedness plan:

- The HCT recommends a field-driven, multi-hazard preparedness exercise (most likely scenario), considering various crises, including hostilities, refugee returns, and internal security incidents.
- A key priority is assessing humanitarian response capacity (e.g. stocks), prompting a request for partners to update their contingency stocks.
- Another critical issue is government engagement in coordination (the Resident Coordinator/ Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) is seeking clarification from the Prime Minister of Lebanon on this)
- Data collection and streamlining information across different preparedness exercises remains a key focus.
- Subnational ISCGs have begun reflecting on preparedness:
 - Bekaa held discussions alongside lessons learned and is developing a draft preparedness plan.
 - South dedicated a session to assess their readiness.
 - North prefers a sector-led approach at the national level rather than a field-driven exercise.

3. 2025 Lebanon Response Plan

Return

Amalina Majid, Repatriation Officer (UNHCR)

Amalina Majid presented findings from the January 2025 Refugee Perceptions and Intentions Survey (RPIS):

- The survey represents the 1.5 million Syrian refugees known to UNHCR in Lebanon and was conducted using a representative sampling method.
- 24 per cent of respondents indicated they intend to return within 12 months.
- 90 per cent of those intending to return plan to do so with their entire families or extended families.
- 96 per cent have some form of documentation proving their Syrian nationality, though this does not necessarily mean valid or legal documentation.
- 89 per cent intent to return to their place of origin, 6 per cent to other place and 4 per cent undecided.
- Areas of Origin for Returnees:
 - 31 per cent from Homs.
 - 15 per cent from Idlib.
 - 14 per cent from Aleppo.
- Notably, a higher percentage of returnees are from Homs, while Aleppo numbers are lower than expected.
- 55 per cent of respondents declared no intention to return within 12 months, the main reasons being:
 - 69 per cent concerns over available housing/property.
 - 54 per cent economic challenges/livelihood opportunities.
 - 45 per cent safety and security concerns.
 - 40 per cent concerns over available services.
- Among the 63 per cent of displaced Syrians in Lebanon who own a house in Syria, up to 86 per cent of them report their house is either fully or partially destroyed or uninhabitable.
- 60% of respondents considered temporary visits important for decision-making. 22% of those interested in go-and-see visits are from Homs, 19% from Aleppo, and 14% from Idlib.
- 7% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon reported they or a family member visited Syria after 8 December, with 75% came back to Lebanon after their visit.
- The [UNHCR Operational Framework for Voluntary Return of Syrian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons](#) estimates up to 1.5 million Syrians may return from neighboring countries by end of 2025 (best-case scenario).
- Strategic Objectives guiding the framework:
 - Ensure return planning and implementation are anchored on international protection standards and principles.
 - Ensure Syrian refugees and IDPs are able to take a free and well-informed decision on whether to return and are actively engaged in the design of return processes in a participatory manner.
 - Facilitate voluntary return, including transportation and material assistance among others.
 - Support the reintegration of refugee and IDP returnees inside Syria, taking into account conflict sensitivity and the needs of all populations in places of return, in collaboration with broader national UN NGO AND IFI reintegration development programmes.

- Up to 400,000 assisted) Syrians estimated to return from Lebanon by year's end (based on a best-case scenario).
- The Lebanon framework is anchored in protection principles:
 - Well-informed decision-making: Community engagement, CwC, Go-and-See visits.
 - Voluntary return: CwC, participatory engagement, refugee intentions (RPIS), voluntariness assessments, protection monitoring.
 - Safe and dignified return: Community engagement, organized transport through official crossing points, special arrangements for PSN, border monitoring.
 - Sustainable return and reintegration: Access to civil and academic documentation, skills training, return cash grant, reintegration and development programs; and protection monitoring inside Syria, inclusive partnerships.
- 3 Programs for Creating Pathways for Voluntary Return:
 1. **GSO-facilitated "Go-and-See" Visits**
Structured GNS visit for one adult member of a Syrian refugee household, known to UNHCR, for a 1-month period to Syria, including readmission into Lebanon with a one-month, non-renewable, residency. (Expected to launch next week).
 2. **GSO-facilitated Voluntary Return**
Refugees known to UNHCR who voluntarily choose to return can approach GSO to register intention for return, be provided information, services and UNHCR return cash grant, following a voluntariness assessment, and IOM organized transport to Syria.
 3. **UNHCR-supported self-organized Voluntary Return**
Refugees known to UNHCR who voluntarily choose to return can approach UNHCR, be provided information, services and UNHCR return cash grant, following a voluntariness assessment, and self-organize their return to Syria.
- Return activities include the following (for more information see slides 33 and 34 [here](#)):
 - Community engagement and communication on return options.
 - Border monitoring and protection monitoring.
 - Legal support for documentation and property claims.
 - Advocacy with the government on administrative barriers (e.g., overstay fees).
 - Cross-border coordination with Syria to ensure sustainable reintegration.
- Guided by UNHCR's Operational Framework for Voluntary Return (under overall 3RP/LRP structure), the Inter-Agency Return Plan includes:
 - Durable Solutions Working Group (UNHCR-led).
 - Technical Working Group of the DSWG for inter-agency return planning and implementation.
 - Socialization with ISCG and relevant sectors.
 - Mapping of activities and review of LRP budget.
 - Socialization with Government of Lebanon.

Population Figures, Budget Implications, & Return Budget

Stephanie Laba, Inter-Agency Coordination Officer (UNHCR)

Stephanie highlighted the population figures, budget implications, and return budget:

- The total number of Syrians in Lebanon known to UNHCR has changed from 1.5 million to 1.4 million.
- The new figure accounts for Syrians who:
 - Left under duress in late 2024.
 - Returned after the ceasefire.
 - Went back to Syria.
 - Arrived as part of a new influx in late 2024.
- Planning figure for return in 2025: 400,000 individuals: 100,000 out of the total are expected to return by mid-year.
- As committed during the planning of the LRP for 2024 amid a changing context, we will revise the numbers by Q1 2025 as the situation unfolds. This was further discussed with the HC/RC and the lead agencies on Wednesday.
- Next Steps for Sectors:
 - Recalculate Sector Targets, Budget, and Appeal accordingly.
 - Deduct 100,000 individuals from the total displaced Syrians count.
 - Reduce 100,000 from their targets due to the expected return by mid-year
- Sectors can adjust calculations based on their criteria and align targeting with the Partner Appeal to minimize discrepancies.
- Note: These figures are for planning purposes and may fluctuate. They represent the most likely scenario for guiding planning. A more accurate population package will be available for the 2026 planning process.
- Key Components of Return Costing:
 - Amount Repurposed from the LRP: Already accounted for in the LRP appeal.
 - Top-up Cost: Covers transportation, cash for return, and other material support. \$87.3 million.
- The return plan is being developed by the DSWG TWG. This will give a clear idea on activities and budget.
- Sectors are requested to calculate the portion of their budgets that can be repurposed for return activities (approximately). Target: Up to 400,000

Action Point:

1. Revise the Sector Appeal considering the updated number of displaced Syrians and the expected returns. Update: This remains a priority in line with our commitment in late 2024 to update figures by Q1 2025.

As the denominator for Syrians in Lebanon has changed from 1.5 million to 1.4 million, and with an additional 100,000 expected to return by mid-2024, sectors are kindly requested to adjust the total number of Syrians and targets in their logical frameworks and recalculate their budgets accordingly. The method of calculation may vary by sector, and we leave this at your discretion. If no major changes occur throughout the year, this will be the only required update. However, sectors are welcome to propose further revisions if significant developments arise. Please include your inputs [HERE](#). **Deadline: Monday, March 10, 2025, COB.**

Open Discussion

The floor was open for discussion among the ISCG members addressing budget reduction methodologies, possibility of aligning sector appeal with partners' appeal, considering

sectors who will be involved in return activities, and more. The discussion covered the following points:

- Sectors expressed that they need clarity on how to reflect the reduction in target numbers in their budgets and activities.
 - Should it be based on a proportional reduction in PiN per location?
 - Should specific groups (e.g., Syrians in a particular area) be removed from calculations?
 - The key question is not just how much can be reduced but how it affects the activities and commitments outlined in the LRP.
- Some sectors expect a direct reduction in targets and budgets, while others may not be significantly impacted.
- Some sectors suggested that they automatically adjust their budget based on the PiN reduction in specific locations.
- It was agreed that reductions must happen, but there were concerns raised over whether this reduction is meant to be done in phases (100,000 step-by-step or a larger reduction at once).
- Some sectors believe they already know how to calculate reductions but need clarity on the approach to population movement (who to exclude and from where).
- There was a consensus that more bilateral discussions are needed before presenting sector positions to the HCT.
- A key concern across sectors is the limited flexibility to repurpose funds or reprioritize activities for return or other emergencies. Given that sector strategies are already highly prioritized and incorporate multiple levels of targeting, there is minimal room for further adjustments. Moreover, with the declining funding landscape, sectors are increasingly concerned about their ability to take on additional responsibilities in this regard.

Action Point:

2. **Inter-Sector Co-Chairs to hold bilateral discussions with sectors on budget reduction next week ahead of the HCT meeting.**

4. Funding Cuts, Impact & Coordination Streamlining

Rawad El Zir, Head of Coordination (OCHA)

Rawad discussed the impact analysis of the funding crisis and how it affects coordination, prioritization, and response planning:

- The Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) requested for an impact analysis on funding cuts, starting with U.S. funding reductions and considering other donor reductions. The analysis aims to assess:
 - What should be deprioritized?
 - What coordination and response mechanisms will be reduced/discontinued?
 - What will be done to mitigate risks?
 - Additional considerations regarding current strategies?
- The request was initially based on countries operating under a humanitarian response plan but since the LRP follows a joint humanitarian-stabilization framework, the analysis needs to reflect Lebanon's specific coordination mechanisms and limitations.
- The document will be adjusted accordingly before being shared with heads of agencies for feedback and eventually sent to the ERC.
- The ERC will use the feedback provided to brief the Inter-Agency Steering Committee (IASC) on how the humanitarian system is rising to the challenge of strategically retreating, regrouping and renewing humanitarian action.

Stephanie Laba, Inter-Agency Coordination Officer (UNHCR)

Stephanie provided updates on streamlining coordination:

- The Site Management & Coordination (SMC) sector has been merged as a technical task force under the Shelter sector.
- The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) has been deactivated.
- The Logistics Cluster is assessing whether or not to deactivate after the Flash Appeal ends in March 2025.
- The process of drafting and reviewing sector dashboards will be simplified:
 - **Q1 & Q3:** Simplified 'At a Glance' one-pager.
 - **Mid-Year (Q2):** Full Dashboard (excluding case study).
 - **End-of-Year (Q4):** Full Dashboard (including case study to show case the work of NGOs).
- A refresher training on expectation and updated templates will be shared with sector coordinators & IMs.
- The LRP Partners Meeting, which was previously held monthly, will now be held quarterly while maintaining regular communication with partners through other channels.
- Partners and sectors are encouraged to **share ideas** on how coordination can be further improved with the ISCG Co-Chairs at lebbeja@unhcr.org.

Rawad El Zir, Head of Coordination (OCHA)

Rawad explained how prioritization was merged with funding gaps:

- The following was agreed upon:
 - All sectors are already conducting internal prioritization to adapt to the funding situation.
 - There is a shift from needs-based planning to priority-based planning, as mentioned earlier in this meeting and prioritized across sectors is ongoing.
- Next Steps include:
 - Provide a gaps analysis and risk mitigation.
 - Ensure cross-sectoral coordination where needed as well as referral among partners.
 - Develop advocacy messages outlining:
 - Major gaps in the sector: activities and funding shortages.
 - Negative consequences if these gaps are not funded.
 - Key advocacy messages for the next quarter.
- A detailed exercise and guidance will be shared with the sector coordinators after the results of the Q1 financial tracking are published.
- The end round of the global survey is expected to be launched next week.

5. Presentation by Assessment and Analysis Working Group (AAWG)

Jamil El Khoury, Research Officer (UNICEF)

Jamil El Khoury presented on the AAWG:

- The AAWG aims to facilitate multi-sectoral assessments, ensure standardization and inclusivity, and strengthen data sharing and responsibility.
- Current priorities include coordination and integration of survey-based assessments and addressing multi-sectoral data gaps and prioritizing data collection.
- Benefits of responsible data for affected populations include:
 - Protecting data privacy and reducing risks of breaches.
 - Optimizing resources for more accurate and reliable data.

- Reducing assessment fatigue for both surveyed populations and stakeholders.
- Streamlining data and avoiding duplication to allocate resources effectively.
- Enhancing decision-making by consolidating credible sources.
- Types of Assessments in Lebanon:
 - Type 1: Large-scale, periodic, outcome-focused assessments
 - Aim: Identify general population needs and monitor trends over time.
 - Examples: VASyR, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), LENA, LVA Panel.
 - Type 2: Immediate gaps and vulnerabilities assessments
 - Can be emergency-related or sector-specific.
 - Examples: IRNA, Rapid Humanitarian Situation Monitoring, Rapid Damage Assessment, Joint Education Needs Assessment, Protection Monitoring Surveys.
- Assessments conducted/published in 2023-2024:
 - 151 assessments recorded
 - Top 5 agencies conducting the assessments: WFP, UNHCR, UNFPA, World Vision, UN-Habitat.
 - 43 per cent of assessments were done by more than 1 agency.
 - 75 per cent of assessments are nationwide.
 - The majority of assessments cover all population groups.
 - Majority focus on food security, livelihoods, health, and protection.
 - Agencies are encouraged to update LASER to reflect ongoing/planned assessments.
- Planned Assessments for 2025:
 - Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VASyR) – Annual multi-sectoral assessment of Syrian refugees (UNHCR/WFP).
 - Lebanese Essential Needs Assessment (LENA) – Focus on Lebanese, Palestinian, and migrant populations.
 - Lebanese Vulnerability Assessment Panel (LVAP) – Covers all population groups, focused on poverty and inequality.
- The aim is to have one unified nationwide assessment for 2026, reducing costs and ensuring equity, harmonization, ethics, and efficiency.
- Next Steps include:
 - Maintaining engagement between data users and data producers → Regular AAWG Updates.
 - Sending out the *Sector's Data Assessment Survey* → Fill by Tuesday March 11th.
 - Refining Type 1 assessments / VASyR 2025 → Review list of indicators.
 - Presenting the situation and proposing recommendations → Discuss at the HCT Thursday March 13th.
 - Continuing to monitor the assessment situation → Share updates from LASER.

6. AoB

Update on Planning and Preparedness

Elena Ferrari, Senior Inter-Agency Coordinator (UNDP)

Elena Ferrari informed the participants that the coordination mailing list will be updated in line with the on-going coordination streamlining and that the ISCG mailing list will also be updated in line with the ISCG membership and ToRs.

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