

- DATE:** 22 February 2024 (15:00-16:30)
- LOCATION:** In-person and online via Zoom
- CHAIR:** **Sergii Gusak**, Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster (FSLC)
- AGENDA:**
1. Introduction of partners
 2. Food Assistance Overview in 2023
 3. FSLC Newsletter November-December
 4. Area-specific Review of Food Assistance Response from Field Operations
 5. Partners presentation by CF "Javelin"
 6. Discussion on FAWG priorities in 2024
 7. Any Other Business

Around 70 participants attended the Food Assistance Working Group (FAWG) meeting by following organizations: 100% Life Network Odesa, Action Against Hunger, Caritas Donetsk, Caritas Ukraine, Caritas SPES, Chernihivska Oblast State Administration, CF "CenterDiya", CF "Javelin", CF "Mavi Hilal Ukraine", CF "SavePeaceInUa", CF "Peaceful Heaven of Kharkiv, CF "Shchedryk", CO "CF Pavla Vyshnykova", CO «Rise of Ukraine», Estonian Refugee Council (ERC), Global Empowerment Mission (GEM), Goodwill, Heart of South, IMMAP, NGO "Altera +", NGO "Association of Mothers and Wives of Defenders of Ukraine", NGO "Blagorob", NGO "Different Woman" NGO "Food for Kharkiv Residents", Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), NGO "Women Consortium of Ukraine", People in Need (PIN), Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH), Relief Coordination Center (RCC), Rokada, Rise of Ukraine, Samaritan's Purse, Save the Children International, the Polish Humanitarian Action, World Food Programme (WFP), ZOA. Thanks to all the partners who attended the meeting.

Aim: to look at the food assistance (FA) overview during 2023, note partners' needs and suggestions. Moreover, to present FSLC latest Newsletter and get an update on food assistance response by the subnational cluster coordinators. Finally, to have a discussion on FAWG priorities in 2024.

Food assistance overview in December 2023: during December 2023, 32 Cluster's partners have supported over 3.6 million people with the food assistance. Distribution was focused across east (Kharkivska, Donetsk, Zaporizka, Khersonska, and Dnipropetrovska) and south (Khersonska) of the country. Over 2.6 million people received food assistance through General Food Distribution (GFD) boxes, 388,402 rapid response ration, 305,340 hot meals, and 272,702 value vouchers. Notably, the latter has significantly grown from one to eight per cent as more partners transitioning from in-kind food assistance to the sectorial cash.

In 2023, there were two peaks in food assistance distribution: one in June, in response to the Kakhovka Dam collapse, and another in December, as part of the winter response scale-up. The number of reporting partners increased steadily throughout the year, starting at 25 in January and reaching a peak of 41 in September. In total, there were 66 reporting partners active on ActivityInfo. Across the year, 25.8 million food boxes were distributed, covering 1,116 hromadas. 74,2 per cent of dispatched GFD were across five oblasts: Kharkivska (5,169,965), Donetsk (4,451,816), Zaporizka (3,454,099), Khersonska (3,415,728) and Dnipropetrovska (2,657,112).

FSLC Newsletter November-December

FSLC bimonthly newsletter was presented and could be accessed via the [link](#).

Area-specific Review of Food Assistance Response from Field Operations

FSLC subnational coordinator in Zaporizka has shared an update for the **Eastern Hub**: the situation remains volatile due to the shifting frontline, prompting adjustments to response plans. There are many vulnerable households in Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia cities due to the job loss. According to the FSLC subnational coordinator in Zaporizka, those cities are largely ignored by humanitarian actors, while villages often receive a blanket distribution. As result, there were cases when beneficiaries residing in villages resend humanitarian in-kind food assistance to their relatives in Kharkiv.

It is being observed that the voucher assistance is increasing, Partners often give the beneficiaries the opportunities to choose the modality (in-kind vs VV). While in-kind food assistance covers all population along the frontline settlements (no regrets approach), VVs are focused on limited vulnerable categories. It has been noticed that older population largely prefer in-kind food parcels as they may struggle to redeem VVs. Procedure on food request: response to specific food requests involves verification and clarification before forwarding to the Eastern Hub coordinator. Subsequently, efforts are made to identify suitable partners capable of fulfilling the requested assistance. Cluster created a dedicated response chat which allows to coordinate food requests. Interested partners could join the group by submitting the request to viktoriiia_davydova@rcc-ua.org. Last week, cluster successfully processed four food requests. To improve coordination and reduce deduplication, cluster has been collaborating with varied partners. There were no cases when partners faced restrictions to reach people across the frontline.

Cluster subnational coordinator in Kharkivska confirmed that bigger cities are indeed left behind by humanitarian assistance. Cluster's partners recently received many food requests, including Kharkiv city. According to the subnational coordinator in Kharkivska, the best modality for in Kharkiv would be sectorial cash, while frontline settlements still rely on in-kind assistance as a preferred one.

FSLC subnational coordinator in Khersonska has shared an update for the **Southern Hub**: main focus is at the frontline areas. In Khersonska Hromada in January 2024, more than 60,000 beneficiaries were supported by food by WFP, SP, GEM, WCK, GCS, SaveUA and Mercy Corps. Access: FSLC partners reported no major challenges. The access permits to the problematic locations are being facilitated by local authorities.

Cluster subnational coordinator in Kyivska has shared the situation update in **the Northern Hub**. During January-February 2024 the cluster has been working to respond to food requests from border rayons and from collective centers. In Sumy (4 Raions) assistance is being provided by 17 partners. 12 settlements in Chernihivska suffered from the flooding, which has complicated (flooded roads) the delivery of in-kind food and NFI items. Therefore, humanitarian assistance was delivered by URCS and emergency services. In Kyivska food aid remains of a high need in the communities affected by the occupation in 2022. There are 7 local organizations providing hot meals and food parcels in these communities. However, the needs exceed the capacity of local partners. The main categories are elderly people with disabilities, large families, and IDPs. In Kyiv and the region, emergency meals are provided after shelling (CH, WCK, B-50), food packages are provided to elderly people with disabilities and large families, and a large, permanent field kitchen is operating in Troyeschyna, feeding up to 5,000 people a month. WFP provides institutionalized meals in Kyiv for vulnerable populations.

Partners presentation by CF "Javelin" Mykolaiv based Charitable Foundation "Javelin" presented about its operations and experiences.

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Discussion on priorities for 2024

1. General idea – the humanitarian sector (even globally) has problems with fundraising. This leads to cuts in programs in all of countries, the sector will be going down due to the budget reductions. Therefore, the expected task is to become more effective through deduplicating both in-kind and cash food assistance and adopt response to needs evolution.
2. FSLC will share a questionnaire to its partners to understand their suggestions for the priorities in 2024.