

Ad-hoc FSLC Session on Food Assistance Harmonization and Deduplication



Minutes | 11 April 2024

DATE: 11 April 2024 (15:00-17:00)

LOCATION: In-person and online via Zoom

AGENDA:

1. Food assistance and response harmonization
2. Response deduplication

Over 30 participants attended an Ad-hoc FSLC Session on Food Assistance Harmonization and Deduplication by following organizations: Action Against Hunger, Cash Working Group, Caritas Ukraine, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Global Empowerment Mission (GEM), Goodwill, IMMAP, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH), Relief Coordination Center (RCC), Samaritan's Purse, Solidarity International, Team4UA, The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), World Food Programme (WFP), World Vision Ukraine. Thanks to all the partners who attended the meeting.

Food Assistance and Response Harmonization

WFP unit for Research, Assessment and Monitoring (RAM) and FSL cluster presented analysis focused on Food security/economic capacity data collected from a Multi-Sector Needs Assessment conducted in 2023 by REACH. Moreover, the methodology for estimating household consumption value and estimating households' economic capacity with the Economic Capacity to Meet Essential Needs (ECMEN) indicator was explained. It tracks and aggregates consumption value through expenditures on food, non-food items of regular and infrequent purchase. The gap between household economic capacity and normative cost of essential needs was highlighted. Also, the "food basket equivalency", the alternative method of setting the transfer value was introduced,

Calculation of Food Cash Transfer Value

The methodology for calculating cash for food transfer value was elaborated, including the selection of households with the lowest economic capacity. A comparison was made between food expenditures of selected households and the food component (UAH 2,324) of the Minimum Expenditure Basket (UAH 6,138) established in 2023 by Cash Working Group (CWG), to estimate the food gap. It was noted that the estimated food gap confirmed the identified transfer value of UAH 1,500, as determined through the ECMEN indicator. Along with that, this value is consistent with 60% of daily kcal needs which is currently covered with WFP's in-kind food assistance.

Discussion was also focused on the creation of a task force comprising international NGO, national NGO, and UN agency to define item and quantities of in kind food basket. FSLC will share a call of interest with its partners to join the task force. Moreover, a list of common food basket components was proposed for harmonization across organizations providing food aid.

CWG emphasized the importance of coherence and consistency in the cash response, expressing concerns about the potential confusion and inefficiencies arising from different transfer values for similar responses. The group advocates for waiting for guidance from the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and the results of the cash review exercise before proceeding with further sectoralization, highlighting the need for a unified approach.

In return, FSL Cluster underscores the urgency of addressing harmonising FSL sectorial response, particularly based on assessments indicating food as a key needs priority. Cluster emphasized that supporting food security partners to sectoral approaches should help improving the effectiveness of the response. This would address the immediate food needs reflects the urgency of responding to the most pressing concerns of affected populations.

Other participants highlighted the importance of data-driven decision-making and the need for clear coordination among agencies to avoid duplication and inefficiencies. Finally, it was discussed that there are

Ad-hoc FSLC Session on Food Assistance Harmonization and Deduplication



Minutes | 11 April 2024

limitations of funding linked to organization's mandates, with some organizations only able to receive funding for specific sectors like food security.

Response Deduplication

Representative from Building Blocks presented the tool and the potential way forward. There are problems that multiple organizations assist the same beneficiaries, and there is a risk of over-or under-targeting of assistance and duplication of assistance. The Building Blocks system was designed to help solve those problems. Building Blocks is a beneficiary-centric blockchain-based humanitarian network designed for inter-organizational collaboration, coordination, and preventive deduplication to optimize and harmonize assistance by providing 360* view of which agency reaching which beneficiaries and with what assistance. Since May 2022, the network has coordinated 90% of humanitarian and MultiPurpose Cash (MPC) response for 60 organizations, supporting 4.3 million affected households. The network also prevented USD 170 mln of unintended assistance overlap. The system is designed for inter-organizational deduplication of assistance and operates based on categories and duplication options agreed-upon by the relevant cluster(s).

A variety of deduplication options are available to organizations loading their intended assistance into the Building Blocks system including:

- 1) **Incremental Duplication:** for organizations loading their intended assistance into the system, if another organization has already provided the same category of assistance to the same household or individual for the same time period, the system prevents the second organization from duplicating the assistance. This method ensures that each category of assistance is only provided once to each beneficiary within a specified timeframe.
- 2) **Shifting Assistance Forward in Time:** in cases where organizations overlap in their assistance timing, the system can suggest moving the timing of one organization's assistance forward (by a maximum of 1 month) to avoid duplication. For example, if one organization provides assistance for the month of April and another organization also plans to provide assistance for April, the system can prompt the second to shift their assistance to May.
- 3) **Top-Up Assistance:** this option allows organizations to provide additional assistance to beneficiaries who have already received support from another organization but the second organization considers they may require further aid. For instance, if one organization provides a lower value of assistance to a household, another organization can offer a top-up to their intended assistance amount, to ensure the household's needs are fully met. This approach enables organizations to complement each other's efforts and address gaps in assistance coverage.
- 4) **Removing Unsuccessful Assistance:** if an organization loads intended assistance into the system but encounters issues that prevent the actual delivery of assistance to beneficiaries, they have the option to remove the unsuccessful assistance from the system. This action automatically informs other organizations who were deduplicated from assisting this household in this period, to step in and provide support to ensure that affected households do not go without assistance, if capacity allows.

These duplication options are customizable and adaptable based on the specific needs and agreements of the participating organizations within the sector and inter-sector. By implementing these options effectively, organizations can optimize their assistance delivery processes, minimize duplication, and maximize the impact of their resources on the communities they serve.

One partner raised a concern about the compulsory nature of the mechanism. Partner was explained that duplication is not mandated by the cluster, but organizations are encouraged to input information into the system for future reference and deduplication by other organizations.

Another partner was seeking clarification on whether food vouchers are subject to duplication and was informed that the decision depends on the community and the type of program, with a focus on harmonization to prevent tension between organizations and beneficiaries. The Building Blocks system can deduplicate anything of value, i.e. across cash, vouchers and in-kind modalities, as agreed by the sector.

Ad-hoc FSLC Session on Food Assistance Harmonization and Deduplication



Minutes | 11 April 2024

Cash working group shared an agreement regarding a one-month overlap for MPCA for households affected by emergencies. The representative discussed the possibility of adding a separate category for emergencies to better manage duplication.

The meeting was concluded with the agreement that FSLC Coordinators will be presenting recommendations on duplication options for FSL activities in due course.