

## Gender, Age and Accountability to Affected Population in Food security Food Security Sector – Whole of Syria

### 1.0 BACKGROUND

Five years into the conflict in Syria, the humanitarian and protection needs have reached a record high and continue to grow at a staggering rate. As per the Humanitarian Needs Overview (2016) 13.5 million people, including 6 million children, are now in need of some form of protection and humanitarian assistance inside Syria. An estimated 8.7 million people are in need in the Food Security Sector, and one in three people are now unable to meet their basic food needs. This number would have been higher but for the assistance provided by the Food Security Sector partners in 2015.

Women, men, boys and girls can have profoundly different experiences and face different risks in conflict situation. These experiences are shaped by and have a different effect on their capacity to access food, sustain livelihoods and ensure food security. Food Security Assessments conducted in 2015 suggests that households headed by females and people with disabilities are two of the most vulnerable groups with high food consumption gaps and negative coping mechanisms.

Furthermore, the Operational Peer Review (OPR) conducted in 2015 recommends that efforts are needed to further consolidate our approach to Accountability to Affected Population (AAP). One of the recommendations by OPR is to “develop an approach to collectively understand the most pressing issues faced by affected people and understand their needs, as expressed by them. The humanitarian community needs to work collectively to bring best practices on engagement with affected people together, and feedback has to be systematically transmitted to the inter-sector/cluster in the hubs and the WoS ISCCG.”

Within the Food Security Sector, certain steps have been taken in 2015 to ensure that gender, protection; age, disability and AAP are addressed in partners programme. For instance, following consultations with partners in Jordan, South Turkey and Damascus hubs, checklists were developed to ensure gender, protection, disability, and age considerations were addressed through safe distribution and feedback mechanisms. Furthermore, gender marker served as a tool to ensure gender is addressed in all the projects under the Humanitarian Response Plan, 2016.

In 2016, the Food Security Sector aims to build evidence on the good practices by partners in integrating gender and age in the project cycle of their food security programs. Furthermore, gender and age have linkages with Accountability to Affected Population, as well as protection mainstreaming; and so the sector also seeks to collect more evidence on these issues. Building on the evidence, and in consultation with partners, the sector also seeks to identify gaps and make a strategy on meeting those gaps through various measures including integrated programming and capacity building requirements.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall objective of the study is “to provide evidence that will help promote the development and implementation of gender and age equitable initiatives for food security that are culturally and regionally appropriate and responsive to the different needs of women, girls, boys and men; and contribute to more Accountability to Affected Population.”

The specific objectives of the study are to provide:

1. A consolidated overview of gender and age related findings through various Food Security Assessments; and also from assessments conducted by other stakeholders, such as UNFPA, GBV and child protection working groups to provide a list of key areas that need attention by partners.
2. An overview of initiatives and good practices by partners in the complex context of Syria to ensure gender and age are adequately integrated in the entire project cycle (assessments findings, designing, implementation and monitoring of food security programs).
3. Challenges and gaps around gender and age sensitive programming, as well as in AAP.
4. A set of practical recommendations to improve gender, age and AAP in partners’ project cycle including a delineation of responsibilities between sector/cluster coordination in hubs/WoS as well as partners. For example, integrated/joint programming in supporting GBV survivors in food assistance and livelihoods support.

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY AND LIMITS OF THE STUDY

The study consisted of document review from HQ, with a field mission from February 13 to March 3. Focus groups discussions and consultations in the field with key informants from UN agencies, INGOs, Syrian NGOs, Government officials were organized by the Food Security Sector Coordinators for the Whole of Syria response (Syria, Southern Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon). On-site meetings were held in Gaziantep (February 14-19, 2016), Damascus (February 20 -25, 2016), Beirut (February 26, 2016), and Amman (February 27 – March 3, 2016). It was not possible to travel to other localities in Syria due to time constraints however it was possible with the support of FAO and FSS Co-Coordination to organize Focus Group discussions in Damascus with local NGOs from Latakia, Tartous and Homs.

### 4.0 GENERAL FINDINGS

The following general findings are synthesized from information provided by key informants and from personal observations.

- The context in Syria is one characterized by the ongoing nature of the conflict that is fluid, complex, and volatile, where continuous change is the norm. As a consequence, of rapid changes in this context, the movements of IDPs can be multiple and sudden, with caseloads in the place of origin or of initial displacement also shifting significantly as a result. Many of the persons met felt that they are constantly going back to the drawing board.
- The remote management of the response on the ground limits the direct reach of humanitarian actors to beneficiaries and the ability to have a first-hand understanding of the needs of affected groups and of the situation on the ground.
- Syrian NGOs cover a large spectrum. Some of these are implementing partners of major INGOs and UN since 2/3 years and a constant support on capacity building is taking place. Others, recently formed and in many instances operating as traditional charities, with insufficient familiarity with and understanding of humanitarian principles, cross-cutting dimensions and accountability to affected populations (AAP). This can have implications for program delivery NGOs.
- Perspectives, options, and modalities change according to where a given hub is situated – the response is very context specific and requires different sets of modalities depending on where assistance is delivered.
- The gendered division of labour differs in different parts of the country, with women being more involved in agricultural activities in the Northern, Eastern and Southern part of the country, with men and women working together on larger parcels of land in Eastern Syria, while women in the Western and central part of the country tend to be more involved in administrative posts.
- According to various sources women headed households have increased as a result of the asylum seeking of men, the military service / enlisting of men by armed groups, or the impossibility for men to work the land who left to look for work elsewhere.
- In some parts of the country, socio-cultural norms are said to have changed to more conservative ones that are being enforced by armed groups, especially as relate to women's mobility, dress code, education, occupations, with increasing religious conservatism, in rural as well as in urban areas.
- Family book identification number is used as a unique identifying number for eligible beneficiaries, which helps minimize duplication. The booklets are issued by the government when a couple get married. In the event of a divorce a household verification process is planned; in the event the husband is absent more than 3 months, the wife becomes the de facto head of household.
- Local partners were of the view that there is a need to shift from food assistance wherever possible to livelihood interventions or a mix of both where necessary in order to reduce a growing culture of dependency and to "empower" women and men to generate their own income and to rehabilitate the agricultural lands who are not cultivated for economic reasons.

## 5.0 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

	GOOD PRACTICES	CHALLENGES & GAPS	RECOMMENDATIONS
SEX AND AGE DISAGGREGATED DATA (SADD) - COLLECTION & ANALYSIS	<p>The WFP led Food Security Assessment (October 2015) provides sex disaggregated data, including heads of households by sex, and a gender analysis that also looks at the severity of food insecurity by sex of heads of households:</p> <p><i>“By sex of the head of household, there is a higher rate of severe food insecurity and vulnerability among female headed households” ... “about 60% more female-headed households are food-insecure and vulnerable than male-headed households, with 8.7 million people in need of food assistance and a disturbing number teeter precariously on the brink of severe food insecurity”... “Female- and child-headed households, some of which are also IDPs, are the most vulnerable group”... “food insecurity is higher in rural than in urban areas...a significant number of men in rural areas – those that would otherwise be farming – have either left the country or engaged in the conflict, leaving their families behind.” In terms of nutrition “the most vulnerable groups are young children, women of child bearing age, the elderly, the chronically ill, and households living in besieged or hard to reach areas and in informal shelters.”</i></p> <p>The Preliminary Analysis of the Livelihood Focus Group Discussions of the Food Security Cluster</p>	<p>Significant variations in percentages of men/boys and women/girls, including sex of heads of households, exist both geographically and by areas of control. The averaging of data at the national level does not reflect these variations.</p> <p>The data in the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), including SADD, is said to be dated, going back to August when it was collected for the HNO. The validity of the data in the current context is also questioned given the fluidity of population movements.</p> <p>The 4Ws provide sex and age disaggregated data, however vulnerabilities are not necessarily reflected, although these form the criteria for the FSS response, in particular data related to the sex of the head of household (HH), a key determinant for assistance.</p> <p>Although SADD is collected along with other demographic data, a number of partners met in the Damascus, Jordan, and Beirut indicated that insufficient attention is given to analysing the data, including the vulnerability data disaggregated by sex and age that should be used to inform the design, implementation, and monitoring of interventions.. Of note limited</p>	<p>CLAs &amp; FSS / C to plan and deliver a workshop for cluster members and selected CLA staff (i.e. Program, VAM. M&amp;E, etc.) on gender mainstreaming with emphasis on gender and age sensitive analysis and what this means for program interventions. District level sex and age disaggregated data of the WFP led Food Security Assessment, the FSLA Preliminary Analysis of the Livelihood FGD, and other recent assessments from partners as applicable to be used for the gender analysis. A first workshop could be held in one of cross-border hubs, with a second within Syria.</p> <p>Explore the feasibility during the upcoming assessments of mapping the percentage of “de facto” women headed households to identify which ones are most vulnerable at the lowest administrative level, using the data collected to refine the targeting and design of food assistance and livelihoods interventions in the various regions of Syria (N.B. assistance was provided during the WoS Syria Study mission to the FAO team in Damascus to include questions that would support this exercise as well).</p>

FSLA (2016), conducted by FAO, RFSAN, and the RM Team, provides differentiated findings based on women focus group discussions (15) and men focus group discussion (15). In the summary findings of particular interest for the design of FSL interventions, it states that *“Conflict has not only reduced income-generating opportunities **but also severely impacted the traditional family unit and has resulted in the loss of traditional male breadwinners. Female HH / Widows were consistently reported to be the most insecure group across all discussions in all zones, as they face security and economic constraints to enter the labour market along with additional constraints in earning sufficient income to support the household. Vulnerable groups such as female HH and children as well as older persons and persons with disabilities, were also identified as facing significant constraints to accessing markets, physically and economically, particularly considering the shift from smaller traditional markets to more remote and insecure markets”***... *“It was also mentioned that **women have less access to humanitarian assistance unless projects specifically targets them. Women in several FGD’s mentioned that in order to access assistance they need to know the relief staff or to be in a favourable position with those providing assistance. Further to this, IDP female HH were considered one of the most under-reached groups for assistance”**.*

disaggregated data is available on vulnerabilities such as persons with disabilities. Many new Syrian organizations are recent, have limited technical expertise and experience with humanitarian response and people-centred /AAP dimensions. Several partners, national and international, indicated an interest in gaining greater capacity to conduct gender and age sensitive analysis, as well as analysis of vulnerability dimensions, to increase the effectiveness (e.g. reaching the most vulnerable group) of interventions to meet food security needs of different groups affected by the crisis. The WFP CO in Damascus asked if the Gender Advisor could return for more than a week to provide additional support to deliver a gender workshop for programme staff; to strengthen their capacity to conduct gender analysis of data collected. Remote training is difficult especially on issues such as gender, protection, PSEA, AAP – there is a need to be able to bring people from Syria (staff and partners) to Jordan for instance for training workshops. Many partners mentioned the need for more dedicated technical staff on people-centred and AAP dimensions. A number of international partners indicated there is limited understanding of gender dynamics at the community level.

CLAs to explore feasibility of providing temporary technical specialists dedicated to the WoS to strengthen capacity and build a cohort of individuals to mainstream gender, age, protection, AAP in the FSS / C WoS response.

FSS / C WoS to consider including in the 4Ws template data on key vulnerabilities, sex of heads of households.

The above findings are consistent with the information provided by key informants and with data analysis included in other recent assessments conducted in Southern Syria, where for instance *“65% of the economically active population in agriculture in Syria is estimated to be female, but women only make up 22% of the economically active population as a whole”*. In another assessment female HH in North-East Syria were found to have lower food consumption scores than male headed households and female HH reported lower income than male HH on average.

The following quotes from the report also provide some indication of priorities for program design and implementation:

*“Rural women in Syria are among the country’s most disadvantaged people and suffer the most from poverty and its physical and social manifestations. They play important – but often invisible – roles in raising livestock, growing crops and processing food.”*

*“Many households have lost their traditional head of household, usually a man (...) the absence of skilled employment for many rural women, along with a large number of households in which the male head has either migrated in search of work or has joined and armed force, renders women-headed households particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and other risks.”*

A number of international partners are of the view that there are options available now to gather more data on gender and protection dimensions. This could be facilitated by those INGOs with a presence inside Syria. This would also provide more granular data and a better understanding of gender dynamics at the community level.

Given variations in socio-cultural norms in different areas of the country, whether these existed prior to the crisis or were recently adopted or enforced, in the absence of women enumerators, the needs of women are not identified.

Some INGOs reportedly resist hiring women enumerators using mobility of women, safety and protection as the basis for not doing so; the perception of others however is that reason is more related to the increased cost of including women (i.e. equity measures) on staff

International actors expressed the concern that they do not have sufficient understanding of gender dynamics in the context of Syria.

According to the Rural Women's Empowerment Directorate (Syrian Ministry of Agriculture), the number of women headed households have increased as a result of the migration of men, the military service / enlisting of men by armed groups, and the impossibility for men to work the land who went searching for work elsewhere

According to Syrian partners met, 80% of IDPs in Southern Syria are women and Children and 40 to 50% of households are headed by women, with similar information provided by Syrian partners from Latakia, Tartous, and Homs

A number of partners indicated that enumerators in needs assessments consist of women and men though the balance between them is still to be reached. The involvement of women enumerators is seen as essential to gather household level data, as are women facilitators for women specific focus group discussions.

The WoS Food Security recommendations for targeting include:

1. Internally Displaced People

- All New vulnerable IDPs from cyclical or sudden onsets are targeted on a short-term basis (2 weeks to 3 months).
- Once assisted on a short-term basis, assessments to analyze their needs will determine whether to extend food assistance as per vulnerability criteria (please see below table 1).
- Those IDPs who meet the harmonized vulnerability criteria (please see below table 1) should be targeted for longer term food assistance.

2. Resident/ host population

- For resident/host/non IDP populations, a harmonized vulnerability analysis – that takes into account both household and socio-economic criteria - is recommended to determine those most in need of food assistance.
- These criteria are linked with the outcomes of Food Security Assessments that provided a profile of the most vulnerable groups.
- Gender, age, disabilities and protection are mainstreamed in this process of vulnerability analysis for targeting/selection.

It also gives importance to gender and age as a vulnerability criteria, as well as other dimensions, combined with socio-economic criteria linked to source of income and shelter, as follows:

- Household members
- (age distribution HH size, HH size category, Dependency Ratio)
- Status of household head (Female, Male, Child, Elderly, Disabled)

FSS / C to consider the feasibility of analysing the data received by WFP from their partners on vulnerability criteria (contained in WFP Field Level Agreement) aggregated at the sub-district level, as a starting point for analysis and to document the status of most vulnerable groups and whether their needs are being addressed and what gaps remain. The output of the analysis could be included in the WoS Bulletin.

The FSS / C is encouraged to add a standing agenda item on people-centred dimensions (gender, age, protection, GBV) and AAP.

The FSS /C is encouraged to develop with international and national partners strategies on communicating with communities to more broadly disseminate relevant information related to food security interventions to affected populations.

- Persons and households that have been displaced and have little or income for food
- Households supporting at least one older person or individual with impaired mobility
- Households which have not received aid from another actor in the past two months

In the Lebanon and South Turkey Hubs, vulnerability criteria mentioned by INGOs represented at the meeting included:

- women headed households
- pregnant and lactating women
- elderly heads of household
- children headed households
- households with persons with disabilities

In Damascus interest was expressed to conduct a joint inter-sectoral protection assessment and to develop a joint set of vulnerability criteria that would apply to all clusters, which could support a more holistic response to the crisis in Syria, with the possibility of setting-up a cross-sectoral focus group to discuss data and common indicators.

Family book identification number is used as a unique identifying number of beneficiaries, which helps minimize duplication. The booklets are issued by the government when a couple get married. In the event of a divorce a household verification process is planned; in the event the husband is absent more than 3 months, the wife becomes the de facto head of household

UN Women provided guidelines in 2015 on the Gender Marker, which were used to revise project proposals submitted for the Humanitarian Pooled Funds; training on the Gender Marker was provided to UN, INGO and local NGO staff.

The GenCap Adviser had set-up a network of gender focal points within UN agencies, who were trained and help review the HRP project sheets using the gender marker.

The GenCap Advisor organized a workshop in South Turkey on PSEA, which was attended by 42 organizations, 30 of which are Syrian, with no UN presence.

The GenCap Advisor in Jordan works on the responses for both refugees and cross-border; a concept note has been put forward to the cross-border task force to set-up a gender network for the cross-border operations similar to the one developed for the refugee response; sector leads have been asked to name their focal points.

Good opportunity to involve all FSS partners as role involves collecting and analysing data with a gender lens for planning and monitoring. If extended a larger portion of the GenCap Adviser's time will be dedicated to the WoS Response to strengthen capacity for gender analysis and lead ToTs in order to cascade learning to the lowest community level possible.

The Gender marker is used by clusters as a checklist, with no verification of information and no follow-through, with limited attention to coding accuracy. Even though the GenCap Adviser provides feedback there is no follow-up to confirm that it was taken into account

Specialized technical staff interviewed also raised questions about the accountability of lead agencies and cluster coordinators for gender equality / mainstreaming; five years into the crisis gender dimensions were not being addressed. For instance the Gender Marker was introduced in the Gaziantep Hub only in 2015 with the arrival of a GenCap Advisor.

CLAs & FSS / C are encouraged to explore with the in-country GenCap Advisers in Gaziantep and in Jordan additional Training of trainers workshops for gender focal points designated by partners, including FAO, WFP, INGOs, NGOs, on the Gender Marker. This would also allow gender focal points appointed by local partners to cascade the training that is context specific to local organisations and broaden capacity at the local level and harder to reach areas.

FSS / Cs to ensure there is time for an effective review of HRP and Humanitarian Pooled Fund project proposals by gender focal points trained in the use of the Gender Marker. It is also important that partners report back to the sector on how they were able to integrate gender/AAP into their projects and share such information with the sector

	<p>The FSLC in Gaziantep and FSS in other hubs have a cluster review committee that involves usually a gender focal point trained by the GenCap Advisor to review projects (HPF) using the Gender Marker.</p>		
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">ENTRANCY OF PROTECTION AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)</p>	<p>The Food Security Cluster / Sector developed a protection checklist in coordination with the ProCap Advisor, UNFPA, and international partners; an end of year survey was conducted to determine how partners were using the checklist in Jordan</p> <p>A recently established coordination effort of the Protection cluster, GBV and CP sub-clusters, with GenCap advisor, in Jordan on the WoS response, is exploring opportunities to develop joint minimum standards / measures to enhance their applicability and ensure that minimum standards and associated approaches are contextualized and implemented.</p> <p>Basic training on GBV mitigation, prevention, and response is planned in Jordan for the WoS response that would look at “do no harm” principle when addressing survivor needs, setting-up discrete (not openly/broadly publicized) referral pathways, working with midwives as first responders.</p> <p>Awareness raising is being done with partners on how to organize safe distribution with dignity; one of actions taken is to set-up separate distribution lines for women and for men.</p>	<p>The end of year survey revealed that even though the FS protection checklist is not being used systematically by partners they are still taking steps to address protection issues.</p> <p>In a recent assessment a link between GBV and FS distribution points were identified as the most unsafe places for women; fear of sexual violence and harassment was often raised during the GBV assessment, as were issues with long queues, long waiting times, and women’s exclusion from distribution lists.</p> <p>A concern was raised by partners around the challenge of sensitizing local partners and authorities about the meaning of protection and how to build capacity of local council members and partners who cannot get out of Syria</p> <p>Negative coping mechanisms include early and forced marriages for girls and boys.</p> <p>Concerns were also expressed about sexual harassment in communal housing, especially in connection to the shared sanitary facilities for instance in schools converted into shelter.</p>	<p>More comprehensive evidence-based data is needed to analyse issues related to early marriages even for those localities where the practice was prevalent prior to the crisis; norms are now changing in other ways (previously girls could complete their schooling and go on to higher education and have careers, this now appears to be changing with girls withdrawn from school once married), but cannot be generalized. This suggestion may be something for the GBV sub-cluster to explore.</p> <p>The Regional GBV Adviser to explore the option of establishing a GBV inter-sector WG as a way to support sectoral clusters and cluster members with the mainstreaming of GBV guidelines and adapting the GBV sectoral guidelines to the specific context of the response. This may involve developing some practical tools that are more operational.</p> <p>GBV sub-sector to consider exploring with interested members of the sub-sector and other INGOs already working on mapping services available and accessible for GBV survivors and other sectoral groups the option of women friendly spaces in Syria</p>

WFP is collaborating with UNFPA on the GBV portfolio and is providing support to women survivors. The question of how to work on this through partners was raised, as was the need to identify NGOs to develop targeted project for women's empowerment.

Vocational training for male and female youth in some locations is being delivered through community centres, focusing on IT, languages, etc.

Safe spaces for women, also referred to as women friendly spaces established with UNFPA's support, have greater acceptance of community members and are possible in more stable environments. Currently there are 11 safe spaces and 5 more planned to be established this year that provide comprehensive response to GBV, also providing services linked to women's economic empowerment.

A mapping exercise of existing services inside Syria that could support the development of referral pathways for survivors of GBV is currently underway by a group of INGOs in Jordan.

Some partners require that their staff and volunteers sign a commitment regarding the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as human trafficking.

A challenge for humanitarian actors to address when planning interventions on the prevention, mitigation and response to GBV, is associated to the absence of accessible services for survivors, the limited privacy and confidentiality in

communities, which can lead to stigmatisation of survivors.

becoming a confidential entry point for humanitarian actors and survivors to report incidences of GBV, **AS LONG AS AND ONLY IF** a referral pathway can be established that assures the safety and security of survivors, associated services are accessible, and confidentiality protocols are in place. These should always be essential conditions, and are critical in all instances and especially in contexts where survivors of sexual and gender-based violence are at risk of stigmatisation, banishment, and worse.

	<p>There is reportedly much denial on occurrences of GBV happening; admitting to it is seen as tarnishing the image of the community; issues linked to GBV emerge during gynaecological / obstetric services, and abortion requests. From mid-wives know of cases of male / female rapes.</p>		
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">IN-HOUSE CAPACITY</p>	<p>The GenCap Advisor in South Turkey set-up and trained members of a gender network, including FAO &amp; WFP gender focal points, who are also involved in reviewing HPF related project proposals using the Gender Marker, and to some extent strengthening the capacity of partners. In the Jordan hub, the GenCap Advisor supported the review of project proposals with the Gender Marker, while in the Damascus Hub the FAO &amp; WFP gender focal points did.</p> <p>The WFP Gender Focal Point in Damascus will be delivering a workshop in May re: basic knowledge, identifying gender sensitive indicators and data to be collected; the workshop will bring together the gender focal points from sub-offices in Syria; guidelines and training materials available in Arabic.</p> <p>Local partners reported that the role of women as aid workers has been on the increase as in many places men are not allowed to speak to women and in others they are afraid to be there as they may be forcibly recruited by armed groups.</p> <p>An INGO is in the process of developing gender</p>	<p>Gender equality / gender mainstreaming tends to be mixed-up with GBV.</p> <p>Some Syrian NGOs are recently formed and are not sufficiently familiar with humanitarian principles, centrality of protection, gender equality / gender mainstreaming, and AAP.</p> <p>Even when international and national partners are aware of issues there is insufficient capacity in-house, which leads to difficulties and gaps in translating into operations approaches that they still do not fully understand such as gender mainstreaming, centrality of protection, prevention, mitigation and response to GBV, accountability to affected populations...</p>	<p>The CLAs with the FSS / C are encouraged to explore the contours of a role for FAO / WFP gender &amp; AAP focal points in supporting the food security cluster/sector and its partners, many of which are partners of both WFP and FAO.</p> <p>As recommended earlier: CLAs &amp; FSS / C to plan and deliver a workshop for cluster members and selected CLA staff (i.e. Program, VAM, M&amp;E, etc.) on gender mainstreaming with emphasis on gender and age sensitive analysis and what this means for program interventions. District level sex and age disaggregated data of the WFP led Food Security Assessment, the FSLA Preliminary Analysis of the Livelihood FGD, and other recent assessments from partners as applicable to be used for the gender analysis. A first workshop could be held in one of cross-border hubs, with a second within Syria.</p> <p>CLAs &amp; FSS / C are encouraged to explore with the in-country GenCap Advisers in South Turkey / Gaziantep and in Jordan additional Training of trainers workshops for gender</p>

	<p>and protection training curriculum in Arabic taking into account the conservative socio-cultural norms of environments where assistance is delivered.</p>		<p>focal points designated by partners, including FAO, WFP, INGOs, NGOs, on the Gender Marker. This would also allow gender focal points appointed by local partners to cascade the training that is context specific to local organisations and broaden capacity at the local level and harder to reach areas.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">IMPLEMENTATION</p>	<p><b>Food Assistance:</b></p> <p>Some INGOs through local partners have set-up distribution points that are closer to communities to minimize risks for beneficiaries and increase access, providing in some locations house to house distribution for the elderly and persons with disabilities or WITH mobility issues, and in areas where it would be difficult and risky for eligible beneficiaries and for staff / volunteers to gather at distribution points.</p> <p>Women in some localities have reported having problems carrying the food parcels and as a result more distribution points were established with greater proximity to villages, and the content of parcels were adjusted or redistributed to reduce the weight of each parcel;</p> <p>Some INGOs from South Turkey are supporting pin through Cash and Voucher for food: that reduces the problem of carrying food because in many cases food is delivered by the shops, and distributions points are also avoided;</p>	<p><b>Food Assistance:</b></p> <p>The weight of food parcels may be a cause of concern when these have to be picked up by women, the elderly or persons with disabilities. A number of partners have addressed this concern by increasing the number and proximity of distribution points and modified the weight of food parcels.</p> <p>Complaints were reported to have been received on the organization of the distributions, with women stating that it is daunting to access distribution points given the large number of people.</p> <p>According to partners, without women on distribution lines, women will not be reached.</p> <p>Questions were raised about the setting-up of sex-segregated distribution lines which seem to promote practices of segregation that were not usual prior to the crisis and possibly reinforcing and replicating the socio-cultural norms being more recently imposed in some parts of the country.</p>	<p><b>Food Assistance:</b></p> <p>CLA’s and Food Security Sector partners to ensure the parcels destined to vulnerable groups that may be constrained by their capacity to carry heavy packages have access to other modalities, including house to house distribution or transport, building on some of the good practices already in place.</p> <p>CLA’s and implementing partners to assess the advisability of introducing modalities that may reinforce socio-cultural norms that are not prevalent in a given context</p> <p><b>Livelihoods:</b></p> <p>Per the findings of assessments referenced in the first section of the table, women are key actors in the agricultural sector and this is on the increase as a result of men’s migration and other causes.</p> <p><i>“65% of the economically active population in agriculture in Syria is estimated to be female, but women only make up 22% of the economically active population as a whole”.</i></p>

**Livelihoods:**

FAO is focusing on agriculture with some attention given to women headed households, for instance backyard farming, while seeds for open farming of larger fields are distributed to men who own the land and are considered farmers. This is in contrast with results of a recent FAO – RFSAN assessment in Southern Syria, where data shows that the proportion of women who are economically active in agriculture has increased from 59% to 65%, while the proportion of men has decrease from 41% to 35%. It therefore appears that even though women may not own the land they farm, they are key to agricultural production.

Scaling up of livelihood interventions in rural areas with access that are relatively stable and where partners are available; this also involves increasing the capacity of local NGOs and giving priority to women headed households

National partners in Homs, Tartous and Latakia involved in food distribution, including the voucher program for pregnant and lactating women, livelihoods initiatives, irrigation, farming and processing of agricultural products, to name some

Livelihoods interventions are new for SARC. Interventions also target women headed households, with vocational training specifically designed for women (would be good to know

**Livelihoods:**

Questions raised on existing systems of livelihoods, who is involved and in what way: women considered essential actors as they have connections to and knowledge of local markets.

In designing livelihood interventions, it will be essential to map out for instance who does what in rural agriculture and target resources accordingly, ensuring that the role of women is understood, recognized and supported, even though they may not be the owner of the land

more about this)

The Rural Women’s Empowerment Directorate (Ministry of Agriculture) is proposing to reach women headed households, with the support of WFP and FAO, by creating collective income generating and employment opportunities, in light of the significant proportion of these households after 5 years of crisis. Ideas presented to go beyond food assistance included cattle rearing and milk production / processing / marketing, and collective agriculture on government owned lands. It was suggested that initial focus could be to scale up initiatives that have proven to be successful, such as the kitchen gardens and poultry rearing. It was felt that the agricultural sector will increasingly depend on women as there was doubt that men who had left would return or be interested in agriculture.

Communal type IGA that benefit the whole community were also suggested by local NGOs as a modality for livelihood interventions, including communal kitchens where paid cooks prepare food to sell to households who can pay, with free distribution made to more vulnerable households who can’t pay. The collective cattle rearing concept for milk production, processing and marketing was also presented, with in this instance profits from sales being reinvested in interventions to benefit IDPs. For localities where markets are functioning, it was proposed that food vouchers replace food distribution.

	<p>Produce with high nutritional value for markets could come from agricultural cash for work initiatives which would also create employment for IDPs.</p>		
MONITORING	<p>WFP monitoring of food distribution to beneficiaries captures data disaggregated by sex and age groups (0-5; 6-18; 18-59, above 59). The data is provided on a monthly basis to the FS sector.</p> <p>WFP and implementing partners have third party monitoring in place to conduct post distribution monitoring that also looks at how vulnerability criteria are met and takes note of women headed households, based on their family book, with some flexibility afforded to women headed households in the absence of main breadwinner even though family book is in man's name. PDM also looks at household level coping mechanisms</p> <p>On-site distribution monitors report untoward behaviour, such as an implementing partner deciding who would get food parcels based on appearance; this has led to increasing capacity development and the need to stick to the list of beneficiaries that were established by the local councils, and vetting of sample by monitors the week preceding distribution.</p>		<p>CLAs with the FSS /C and implementing partners to consider assigning a role for on-site and post-distribution monitoring teams, including third party monitoring teams, to assess issues related to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse. If acted upon, a first step would be orientation sessions that could be cascaded to monitoring teams on the ground.</p> <p>CLAs and particularly all Food Security Sector partners to ensure a good balance (at least 60 - 40 or 40 - 60) of women and men are represented on monitoring teams.</p>

A number of INGOs and SARC stated that they include women in monitoring and other types of committees so that their perspectives are obtained; they apply the vulnerability criteria included in agreements with partners and their evaluation teams include both women and men. According to ICRC the separate male / female distribution lines is more of an efficiency measure than a protection one.

Cooperating partners have data teams on the ground and gather data on vulnerability criteria as well as monitor the situation (conflicts, population movement, etc.)

INGOs who do direct cross-border response have robust monitoring and evaluation systems, as well as details on beneficiary groups. Their ability to operate in Syria builds on experience of last few years where invested in building relationships and trust – however to preserve the safety of their staff they do not share the data per se, even between divisions within the organization

Beneficiary satisfaction/feedback survey conducted by an international cooperating partner; the question deck could be shared upon request with WFP.

INGOs and local NGOs indicated that complaints mechanisms are in place in many distribution points, though not many complaints are received and those that are mainly concern the contents and quantities of the food packages, which was also raised during post distribution monitoring.

Some partners advertise the complaints / feedback mechanism with banners displayed at the distribution points

A number of partners, both international and national, said complaints mechanisms do not necessarily work as people do not feel safe raising concerns and fears that about absence of confidentiality in the handling and response to complaints / feedback.

Partners indicated that complaints were received on the organization of the distributions, with women stating that it is daunting to access distribution points given the large number of people.

Attempts are being made by partners to use different language and refer to “feedback” instead of “complaints” mechanisms, as it was felt it came across as negative.

The information gathered on feedback and complaints mechanisms is light and merits further attention, especially given concerns raised by beneficiaries around safety and fear of retaliation or exclusion if they complain. Based on the exchange with an INGO met in Jordan, their experience with beneficiary satisfaction surveys, which generate significant feedback from beneficiaries could potentially be replicated by others. Given their willingness to share the question deck for their survey with WFP, with whom they have a FLA, this could be a good opportunity to explore and adapt a tested approach. Once the question deck has been shared with WFP, the FSS Coordinator for the whole of Syria is encouraged to approach WFP to obtain and adapt the beneficiary satisfaction survey for its use.

During a meeting with national partners inside Syria, it became apparent that local partners are keen to share their experiences. The option of organizing a forum where local partners willing to do so can exchange views first-hand could prove helpful for trust-building and for increased effectiveness of the response.