



Meeting Minutes: Food and Agriculture Sector Monthly Meeting (September 2021)

Location: Online MS. TEAMS Meeting, Damascus, Syria

Date: 15/09/2021

Time: 10:00 AM – 11:15 AM

Agenda:

1. Update on the water crisis and drought-like conditions emergency response plan - **Mohie**,
2. Progress and update on reserve allocation (RA) – **Coordinators and OCHA**,
3. Update on Agriculture Working Group (AWG) – **Jameson**,
4. Situational update and response in Dar'a – **Mohie**,
5. GBV mainstreaming action plan for FAS and way forward – **Ruba**,
6. Information Management (IM) – Monthly Operational Updates (Coverage and Gap) – **Moteb/Ruba**,
7. AOB.

Participants:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| i. ADRA - INGO | viii. IFRC - INGO |
| ii. AVSI - INGO | ix. OCHA - UN Agency |
| iii. BHA - INGO | x. Oxfam - INGO |
| iv. COOPI - INGO | xi. PUI - INGO |
| v. FAO - UN Agency | xii. SARC - NGO |
| vi. GOPA - NGO | xiii. WFP - UN Agency |
| vii. ICRC - INGO | xiv. ZOA - INGO |

Name of coordinators chairing meeting:

1. Mohie Alwahsh – FAS Coordinator (WFP)
2. Jameson Zvizvai – FAS Co-Coordinator (FAO)

- The meeting started with an introduction of FAS coordinator who welcomed all participants. This was then followed by a quick round of self-introductions by all participants.

1. **Update on the water crisis and drought-like conditions emergency response plan** [\[Download\]](#):

- The update on the water crisis and drought-like conditions emergency response plan was made by the FAS Coordinator who highlighted that a Response Plan consolidated to the Water Crisis in Northern and Northeastern Syria was launched on 9th Sept 2021 led by ISG, final chapter and funding required have been approved by the sectors at WoS level in collaboration and coordination with Syria HCT, NES Forum and Syria HLG hubs.
- The response plan has been circulated among FAS mailing list on 13th Sept 2021 which indicated that the response plan is geographically limited to the governorates of Deir-ez-Zor, Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa as well as northeastern Aleppo Governorate.
- Moreover, FAS submitted a plan for six months, identified funding gaps for the next four months (September-December 2021) and targeting immediate activities to be implemented in next six months (up to end-February 2022), and be connected with 2022 HRP. The main four prioritized activities of the plan aim at mitigating the impact of crises of low level of the Euphrates river as well as the drought-like conditions. as well as support the most food insecure households and farmers impacted by the water crisis.
- Overall, the funding requirements across all sectors estimated of \$200m, and the plan has been circulated to donors by OCHA and donors will reach out to sector coordinators.
- The overall response plan for FAS has been developed by huge contribution collaboration among the three hubs (i.e.: Syria HCT, NES Forum and Syria HLG) to ensure that the sector team looked at all areas and considered most recent secondary data and analysis can be incorporated.
- Mohie also recommended partners to look into the circulated response plan for more detailed insights.
- In terms of targeted geographical areas, Jameson, the FAS co-coordinator, indicated the sector team communicated to OCHA in order to highlight that other areas like the south of NES also impacted by drought like conditions, hence if you look at the 1st part of the plan there is a paragraph which acknowledges that the drought-like conditions are also impacting other areas.
- Furthermore, the geographical focus was because of confluence of various factors as there was increased vulnerability and intense needs looking at the combination of the various factors. But this is not to say that other areas (south of north east) have not been affected, they have been affected and the sector really encourage partners to also consider those areas. Moreover, FAO is currently finalizing the crop and food security assessment (CFSAM) which will be finalize in the couple of weeks to come. Once CFSAM is out it will be circulated to the sector partners.
- The second issue that Jameson highlighted was mainly on the key activities as Mohie have said, the sector is really looking at the immediate activities that can happen within the next four to six months which looking at

the protection of food rations, targeting the farmer were been affected by water scarcity followed by the provision of agriculture productive assets (mainly seed) followed by protecting livestock assets in terms of providing livestock feed and veterinary support and finally, the rehabilitation, changing or modifying the water plumbing sets so that it can continue supporting the affected areas.

- The coordinator asked if there are any partners is planning to advocate for intervention in the water crises or in stage received fund or still in the process of prioritizing the water crises advocacy funding. and partners to inform the sector in terms of any funding plans to response to the water crisis.

2. Progress and update on reserve allocation (RA)

- Mohie highlighted that the reserve strategy paper for the FAS has been submitted to SHF as well as the multi-sectorial. In terms of prioritization and planning, OCAH is planning to release the RA to address emerging humanitarian needs.
- The RA seeks to address the impact of the ongoing Euphrates river low level and drought-like conditions and other emerging challenges (TBC).
- OCHA plans to release the 2nd RA and announce the overall sector and multisector envelopes in the coming days.
- The update on the RA will be shared with FAS once it is released by OCHA.

3. Update on Agriculture Working Group (AWG):

- The FAS co-coordinator (Jameson) updated the participants convening the AWG which will be under umbrella of the FAS.
- Elections were held in September 2021.
- Action Against Hunger (AAH) duly elected as Syria HCT AWG co-Chair together with FAO.
- A survey to determine the 2021 priorities has also been sent to AWG and completed on 16th September,2021.
- There is still room for partners to join the AWG. IMOs will be sending an email to request sector partners who might still be interested to join the AWG.
- The AWG will be quite useful, as there be discussion around technical considerations, and some of technical guidance and SOPs for various interventions including a bit of planning around how best to improve our interventions looking at crop production and livestock production including also water resources and irrigation systems.

4. Situational update and response in Dar'a:

- The FAS coordinator highlighted that the recent developments in Dar's response. The situation in terms in access and response has been improved since the start of Sep,21 and Key takeaway points are:
- Shortages of flour and other essential food items in Dar'a Al-Balad continue, and the local market is unable to meet the population's needs.

- WFP's August cycle for the distribution of general food assistance delivery of food including ready-to-eat packages (RTE) to an estimated 445,000 people across Dar'a Governorate is delayed.
- WFP and other sector partners have provided ready-to-eat and regular food rations to IDPs residing in six collective centers or within the host community.
- About 21,000 people have been reached. Over 1,230 ready-to-eat packages were distributed to IDP families in the collective shelters as well as the IDPs in host communities of Um Al Mayadeen, Nimeh and Bosra Ash Sham. A further 3,121 food baskets from WFP and sector partner were provided to IDPs in host communities. In total, the distributions benefitted approximately 21,000 people. In addition, partners have distributed about 44,000 bundles of bread to IDPs.
- WFP has pre-positioned an additional 5,004 RTE packages, benefitting about 25,000 people, to be delivered through the planned inter-agency convoy and additional RTE supplies are in the pipeline for distribution to further scale up the response.
- SARC resumed its pending July cycle distribution of food rations and wheat flour to several areas including areas hosting IDPs from Dar'a Al-Balad; these food rations were dispatched prior to the escalation of the insecurity in July. The distribution was initially scheduled from 25th to 31st July but was delayed due to security conditions on ground. Approximately 128,125 people in 21 locations will benefit from this cycle.
- More comprehensive updated will be shared in the next FAS monthly meeting.
- Khodeza from Oxfam asked if there is any plans for detailed needs for Dar'a and the sector coordinator mentioned that there were discussions through ISC in the last meeting and Lama from OCHA gave some insights in terms of the ongoing assessments and interventions in Dar'a and there is no specific IS mission. However, SARC is already distributing food assistance in Dar'a Albalad and the needs assessment is updated based on the population movement and security development in the area. So far, there are no huge gaps in the response, most of the sectors are already reposition the assistance in Dar'a and the response is ongoing. Recently, there are interventions in some areas that were not accessible for a while. Furthermore, partners in the field and UN focal points are continuously following up and updating on the needs and response.
- Mohie highlighted that WFP has conducted initial understanding assessment when the conflict started. And there is plan to conduct an assessment by WFP, timeline TBC.
- Hubrecht from BHA asked if there is possibility to expand a bit about the status of humanitarian access at this point as well as if SARC currently in Dar'a Albalad. Mohie confirmed that SARC is already operating in Dar'a Albalad in collective centers and areas around and Lama (OCHA) also confirmed the same point and elaborated more around the population returned except for some few HHs that their houses been damaged and UNHCR with partners are responding to them. In addition, students who their schools were been used for collective shelters transferred to other schools. Moreover, damaged bakeries were been rehabilitated and re-equipped

and provided with wheat flour. SARC distributed 1000 food rations with 1000 NFI kits which adequate for 5000 HHs.

5. GBV mainstreaming action plan for FAS and way forward:

- Ruba, The FAS GBV focal point, highlighted that the GBV integration plan which was developed in cooperation with UNFPA has been shared with the sector partners
- The recommended key indicators were as below:

Suggested Action points	Relevant indicators
Harmonize the safety monitoring tool and SOP across the sector	# number of partners who conduct site monitoring and/or safety Audit to check the safety of beneficiaries and PWD using the harmonized tool
Generate/ develop recommendations based on the results of the safety monitoring/audit	# of recommendations that came out as the result of site monitoring/safety audits to enhance the safety and security of services
Train staff on GBV risk mitigation (through the e-learning course)	# of staff that are trained on GBV Risk mitigation e-learning course
Develop guidance / SOPs on implementing complaints mechanism	# number of partners that have a complaint mechanism

- Ruba, mentioned that safety monitoring tool has been finalized and it will be shared with FAS through the mailing list. The tool is to have an idea about the situation and what partners are doing in these regards and it isn't an evaluation tool but to have a general overview on what is going on.
- Partners are encouraged to ask for any required support or training about the GBV subject and to provide feedback on the safety monitoring tool.
- Patricia, the WFP Gender Officer, highlighted the capacity assessment survey will not aim at evaluating any partners but rather try to understand from our perspective what is the current gender capacities within the organizations. To make things more practical, the GBV team in the FAS want to reflect a little bit on how the assistance is being provided especially at food distribution points whether there are specific safety risks taking into consideration and mitigate it when delivering the assistance. In addition, the team want to understand within the organizational capacities whether there is ability within the partners organizations to mainstream gender as part of the programme and whether there is a person to dedicated to do this or not, whether there are some consultancies were hired to work on that aspect. This is particularly important because whenever we are delivering assistance, we have to ensure that protection and gender are mainstreamed, and risks are mitigated to the extent possible. Moreover, accountability constitutes a main element of protection mainstreaming and within the survey there is a section to understand whether the partners have in-place beneficiary feedback mechanisms, whether beneficiaries are being consulted through out programme cycles and whether their feedback is being taking to consideration whenever we are assessing them.

- The survey will be shared with FAS partners who will have to participate and complete the questions of the survey. The estimated time to complete the survey is 10 mins. Once the survey round is completed the GBV team will discuss the results in order to where we stand in terms of existent capacities so we don't activate any action that might be too advance or maybe too basic at the very first step.

6. Information Management (IM) – Monthly Operational Updates (Coverage and Gap) [[Download](#)]:

- Moteb, the sector IMO, started the presentation about monthly operational updates of the FAS coverage and Gap.
- The Partners' Presence Map shows the distribution of partners at sub-district level based on the monthly 5Ws data received from the FAS partners (9 INGOs and 4 UN Agencies). The map shows the highest number of partners were presented in Jebel Saman Sub-district (7 Partners) in Aleppo governorate followed by Homs Sub-district (5 partners) in Homs governorate.
- The SO1 Food Assistance Dashboard shows the highest percentage of coverage vs Gap was in Quneitra governorate. The overall reach of SO1 was 3.8M as of July,21. The delivery modality of in-kind assistance was 89.1% whereas for cash & voucher was 10.9%. The maximum number of Reach per Governorate was in Rural Damascus with 884,238 beneficiaries reached in July,21.
- The SO2&SO3 Agriculture / Livelihoods Dashboard shows the highest percentage of coverage vs Gap was in Quneitra governorate. The overall reach of SO2&SO3 was 242K (Cumulative reach from Jan to July,21. The delivery modality of in-kind assistance was 91.7% whereas for cash & voucher was 7.7%. The maximum number of Reach per Governorate was in Deir-ez-Zor with 171,426 beneficiaries reached.
- For the Integration Strategy (IS) which includes sector objectives SO1 and SO2&SO3, the dashboard shows the overall reach of the IS was 86K (Cumulative reach from Jan to July,21. The maximum number of Reach per Governorate was in Latakia with 15,120 beneficiaries reached.
- Jameson highlighted that there is a clear indication from Gap Analysis of SO2&SO3 that the current responses are quite limited while there is increased need for humanitarian assistance particularly food assistance as a result of this protracted crises and the worsening economic situation and also the climate challenges. There is significant need for the sector to workaroud stabilizing livelihoods and particularly agriculture-based livelihoods so the sector will also try to be working around advocating for more support and more focus for agriculture in order to support food insecure families so that they can re-engage towards a journey of self-reliance. Furthermore, the Gap Analysis speaks into significant gaps in the entire HRP response but more in SO2&SO3 and sector partners also needs to engage and develop their strategies and to look around how to stabilize livelihoods interventions and market-based interventions.

- AOB:

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11:10 am and the date for the next meeting will be communicated in due course.