STRATEGIC ADVISORY GROUP MEETING:
DATE: Friday March 27th
TIME: 11 – 12.30 pm
LOCATION: OCHA, Juba

PARTICIPANTS:
AT OCHA: Justus Vundi (FSLC), Alistair Short (FSLC), Paulina Bockowska (FSLC), Edwin Marita (CMD), Betty Koiti (ACTED)
ON-LINE: Night Michael (WFP), Keri Dodge (USAID)

AGENDA:
1. CCPM initial comments & discussion for all 7 core functions;
2. SSHF: preparing SAG members for the review process 2 – 14 April (see attached timeline)
3. COVID-19: what does the partners require from the FSLC?

CCPM REVIEW
Participants analyzed the Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring survey results.

1. Supporting service delivery
   a. Regarding the partners satisfaction with the cluster meetings, the location was discussed as the main drawback. The capacity of the room is not big enough for the number of usual participants. FSL Cluster meetings are too crowded, which makes it more difficult to give every participant a chance to ask questions or contribute to the discussion. However it was noted that meeting facilitators always allocate time for questions and partners have a possibility to raise their concerns.
   b. Possible action point suggested by the participants: looking into alternative venue for the FSL Cluster meetings which will accommodate the needs of the partners.
   c. Regarding the 5Ws process, it was suggested that new partners should be introduced to it early on and be encouraged to participate, as it determines their future chances of participating in the HRP. The FSL Cluster conducts informative meetings with new entrants and will look into incorporating in them 5Ws information session, however the main challenge is the large number of new entrants.
   d. It was mentioned that some partners are facing challenges collecting the data required for the new reporting template, however the template itself was praised as a good way forward. Often in project justification the disability and gender are being mentioned, but there was no
quality data on integrating those issues in the FSL programming. Now some partners are adjusting their reporting tools to capture such data.

2. Informing strategic decisions of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and Humanitarian Country Team (HCT)
   a. At the beginning of the discussion it was concluded that it is very difficult to measure the extent to which FSL Cluster activities informed the strategic decisions of the HC and HCT, especially from the partners perspective. In the future iterations of the CCPM it may be useful to reach out to HC and HCT for feedback in this regard instead.
   b. Nevertheless, needs assessment, IPC reports and general information sharing was mentioned as one of the most beneficial FSL Cluster functions.
   c. In the survey comments sections few partners expressed that they do not feel all partners are being equally involved in the various processes and activities.
   d. Majority of the cross-cutting issues are good on paper. They are mentioned in the project proposals, but are not captured in implementation, nor reporting. Going forward it is one of the areas that cluster needs to improve, as many negative comments regarded lack of focus on disability and gender. WFP informed that it has made a provision for their implementing partners to have a designated officer focusing purely on cross-cutting issues.
   e. Another topic that was covered was connection with the sub-cluster level. The current challenge is the break-down in the flow of information between sub-clusters and country cluster in Juba. Main reason for that is lack of processes and mechanisms in place, such as handovers; and hence during the turn-over of staff at the sub-cluster level, the connection with Juba gets lost.
   f. It was discussed that the issue may not be FSCLC involvement in the assessments, but the feedback mechanism to the partners, and sharing of the assessment reports with them on regular basis. The cluster collects assessments reports from different sources in the designated repository, which is accessible to everyone via the cluster website. Reportedly many partners are unaware of this, hence one of the action points is informing partners on where to find the assessments and that the repository is being updated on regular basis. Also, on the way forward the cluster is in the process of recruiting the assessment officer, who will focus on increasing the quality of assessments reports produced by partners. A debriefing session after the assessments was suggested, however it does not seem a feasible solution considering the number of assessments and cluster partners.
   g. A question was raised whether the FSL cluster ever carries out Monitoring and Evaluation missions or Audit Missions, or it purely relies on partner’s self-reporting. FSL Cluster does not have a capacity to carry out monitoring of the partners, OCHA however has a M&E team that samples a proportion of the projects and conducts monitoring. However, the resulting reports are only shared with the partners concerned. It would be beneficial to share those reports with the wider community, even if just in form of lessons-learned or guidelines. It was recommended during the meeting that more spot-checks required, especially for smaller NGOs to double-check their reporting with what’s happening on the ground.

3. Planning and implementing Cluster Strategies
a. Participants were surprised that only 55% of partners reported that the process for selecting HRP projects was informed, clear and transparent. According to them the process was very clear and inclusive, when it comes to both cluster priorities and the requirements. The cluster priorities were determined and communicated way before the HRP process officially started, as FSL cluster encourages the partners to align their planning to priorities and needs as defined by the IPC process and needs assessments. Everything is evidence based.

b. However, the participants mentioned that there was a confusion between members of the review committee around the unit cost (the cost per beneficiary). During the review process there was no agreement on how the cost per beneficiary translates into different modalities. Food security interventions unit cost is higher than livelihoods interventions.

4. Monitoring and evaluating performance
   a. The IM products provide very limited options when it comes to giving credit to partners for the activities they are conducting.
   b. Same issue as raised under point 2 – there is no verification of partners 5Ws reporting or quality control of their interventions.

5. Building national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning
   a. Whenever the cluster has access to early warning information, it is being shared with all partners and other relevant stakeholders.
   b. Cluster does not have a national contingency plan, there is not one (exception being the very recent COVID-19 CP); there are numerous CPs which are developed at state level by State ICWG/ newly established (2019) Solutions Working Groups; the Juba CP for mass influx of IDPs was developed in 2017 with WFP and six other FSLC partners (reviewed annually) and renewed annually ever since.

6. Advocacy
   a. Advocacy is one of the cluster’s strengths, as shown through the diversity of presentations during various cluster’s events (LTWG, ATWG, FSLC Meetings). The Cluster provided regular updates and consistent messaging on the locust situation; Ebola and now COVID. The FSL Cluster regularly disseminates IPC IM products dissemination, making sure it is not just passive information sharing, but effective active communication ensuring that IPC messages are understood.
   b. Cluster does not have official advocacy policy.
   c. Currently all the information that comes out from the cluster, is coming only in English, which is a big limitation. Possible point for consideration: advocacy messages in local languages to increase the reach. Cluster does not have a translation capacity, however the moment it gets the access to materials in local language\(^1\), it makes sure those are shared with the wider audience.

7. Accountability to affected population (AAP)

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\(^1\) In 2018 FSLC worked with ‘translators without borders’ and finalized PSEA messaging in Nuer, Dinka and Bari!
a. Cluster does not have an AAP mechanism itself, however it often presents and shares the partner’s practices, mechanisms and findings around the AAP.
b. AAP is a bit of a weak link for many partners. There is lots of vagueness when it comes to what AAP constitutes. Different partners approach it differently and there is no common understanding on what kind of information and feedback from the beneficiaries should be captured.
c. Action point: FSLC should think about tools to capture the AAP information from the partners and based on this carry out capacity assessment and then share good practices from partners who are strong in this area.
d. The specification of South Sudan context makes implementing AAP quite challenging, no possible for effective hotline due to limited telecommunication infrastructure. Post Distribution Monitoring is very challenging to carry out due to costs and access constrains for carrying out HHs surveys in the field.
e. FSLC should also address the protection concerns raised, so not just focus on good practices, but point out bad practices, adopting a more pro-active approach.
f. An important point was raised regarding the accountability to service providers, especially in terms of the contracts and working conditions for people employed to deliver assistance. This issue is completely overlooked currently.
g. CMD implements AAP through direct contact and working with community or setting up suggestion boxes in over 70 schools they are working in, making sure they are available in local languages and ensure the anonymity of the responders in line with the protection standards.

Concluding Remarks:

The CCPM captured all the activities that the cluster engage in and it provides a good guidance when it comes to areas of improvement. Overall the survey results are positive, some comments are rather generic, however it does highlight specific issues that cluster should focus on. During the meeting a few actions points were raised, some can be directly implemented by the cluster, others require a little more consideration, but overall it is a good starting point.

Main actions point (key issues) from 2018 review are still valid:

- Improve linkages between national and sub-national
- Improve the quality of the food security assessments produced

Main challenges for achieving those objectives was understaffing – few months with no INGO co-coordinator; few months with IMO capacity at 50%; no FSL assessment officer until now.

The biggest limitation of the HRP 2020 review process was a lack of rationalization session, during which reviews come together and go over their scoring and reasoning behind it.

One of the generic action points is a review of the CCPM questionnaire itself. The language used is quite complicated and not easy to comprehend and some questions are ambiguous.

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2 Planned in 2020 if partnership with INTERNEWS takes off, post COVID-19;
STRATEGIC REVIEW COMMITTEE FOR SSHF

- SSHF review process should be inclusive of the SAG until the very end. It was not the case during HRP 2020 review process but would have been beneficial. Review committee should only leave the room once all members agree on the list of projects.
- Partners selection for SSHF should be finalized mid-April.
- By the end of the partners selection process, items should be already pre-positioned at respective humanitarian hubs.
- Targeting guidelines (selection criteria) for beneficiaries to be determined.
- Ideally, the FSL Cluster would like the partners to start the preparatory activities for their respective projects before the formal SA1 contracts are signed to make sure seeds are distributed to beneficiaries before the start of a wet season to allow for planting.

Both Edwin and Betty agreed to be part of the review process for SSHF that should kick in on Thursday.

COVID-19 – What can cluster do to support partners in Covid-19

New guidelines on food distributions during the pandemic will be implemented soon. Most likely outcome is splitting of distributions so that smaller groups of people are served at once.