Overview of HRP 2020 and FSLC objectives, indicators, and activities

Introduction

Since the Ukraine Food Security & Livelihoods Cluster (FSLC) was activated in December 2014, it has participated in the development of the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). In 2020, FSLC developed three objectives as well as activities and indicators for each objective. The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the 2020 HRP, which will serve as a guide for members of the Cluster when providing inputs towards the FSLC 2021 objectives, indicators, and activities.

Overview of the joint 2020 HRP and COVID-19 response

The Food Security & Livelihoods Cluster (FSLC) has three cluster objectives (COs): CO1: Ensure immediate access to food for the most vulnerable conflict-affected people; CO2: Improve food security status through provision of emergency and time-critical agriculture assistance; and CO3: Improve access to employment and income-generating opportunities through rehabilitation/building of sustainable livelihood assets. These cluster objectives contribute directly to the objectives of the 2020 Ukraine Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). The COs will remain the basis of our strategy to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 by: (1) adopting special measures in our response and community engagement to prevent the spread and transmission of COVID-19; and (2) using the program instruments under CO1 (immediate access to food) as well as CO2 and CO3 (agricultural and non-agricultural livelihood support) to address the disruption to livelihoods brought about by the protracted COVID-19 crisis.

In order to prevent the spread and transmission of COVID-19, all actions are being implemented through the guidance of the COVID-19 Ukraine FSLC guidelines note and the COVID-19 Ukraine assistance delivery protocol that all partners are expected to align with. The partners are focusing on people with special needs (PSN), and older people with chronic diseases and health issues who may need home delivery of food assistance under CO1. Regarding the modalities for CO2 and CO3, the FSLC partners in Ukraine use market-based cash or voucher assistance (CVA), or in-kind assistance/direct support (possible as a common package), or a mixture of modalities based on the context. The principles of appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, economy, and safety determine the choice of what modality to use. Through assessment missions, and complaints and response mechanisms, the partners ensure consultation and feedback from beneficiaries before any introduction or expansion of the above modalities, and to inform project redesign as may be needed.

The implementation of the existing HRP targets remains a top priority owing to the pandemic and the worrying economic vulnerabilities and food security situation, especially in view of the findings from a recent multi-sector needs assessment (MSNA 2020, REACH). The assessment indicates that women score worse at all levels of measurement in all food security indicators and
that vulnerability status has a much higher effect on the proportions of women who require some assistance than it does for men, in the non-government controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts (NGCA). Hence, the FSLC focuses on the reprioritization of livelihoods that addresses the economic vulnerabilities of the affected population to safeguard achievements already made by the cluster partners over the years. Unemployment levels among the working-age population were slightly lower (8.8%) in 2019,¹ but the rate of unemployment is likely to increase amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

A number of studies provide evidence that food insecurity may be aggravated as a result of reduced livelihood. The recent multi-sector needs assessment (MSNA 2020) in NGCA highlighted that a food security crisis may unfold in the coming months if no appropriate assistance from humanitarian actors is delivered. The recent MSNA (in the government-controlled area (GCA)) shows that after a slight stabilization in 2019, the share of households in Eastern Conflict Area GCA with poor and borderline food consumption scores increased from 11% to 15%. People in rural areas are more vulnerable: the share of households with poor and borderline food consumption scores is significantly higher (19%).

The FSLC partners continue to focus on economic vulnerabilities and introduce initiatives that aim at reducing the income gap by creating income-generating activities, including job creation. The cluster emphasizes own production through agricultural initiatives such as distribution of seeds, tools, and agricultural equipment to support farmers. The purpose is to protect livelihoods, especially in the GCA, and, where that is not possible, focus on immediate assistance in NGCA.

**The HRP and FSLC funding**

The 2020 HRP is underfunded, which required more targeted use of resources. One of FSLC's biggest challenges is the lack of adequate funding. The cluster has achieved less than 4.9% of the HRP financial target (US$ 18 million) and 3.8% of the financial progress for COVID-19 response according to Financial Tracking Service² (FTS) data for the eight months of 2020. In the event of a severe scarcity of funding, FSLC's focus will remain on targeting those identified as extremely vulnerable. Despite overall food security having improved since 2018, FSLC partners need to scale up the implementation of activities across the three key COs. There is a need for a multi-year funding commitment, especially for livelihood activities to address the minimal economic recovery of the affected population. The Ukraine MSNA in NGCA highlighted that a food security crisis may unfold in the coming months if no appropriate assistance from humanitarian actors is delivered.

**FSLC targeting**

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The targeting of beneficiaries is based on the usual FSLC approach of community-based vulnerability targeting to support the most vulnerable populations. The cluster targets the HRP “population group” categories *per se* and is based on vulnerability targeting within the conflict-affected area. The rationale is the protracted crisis, in addition to economic vulnerabilities, and food and livelihood insecurity prevention and response. The focus is on vulnerability wherever that may be in the conflict-affected area, including among women, girls, men, boys, older people, the unemployed, people with disabilities, and the chronically sick. The targeting of assistance mitigates the risk and adheres to “Do No Harm” principles for the conflict-affected population in Eastern Ukraine, ensuring that the most marginalized and vulnerable groups access assistance and that assistance does not exacerbate tensions between different social groups.

Research conducted by the Institute for Demography and Social Studies shows an increase in the structural poverty rate in Ukraine in 2020. The share of households whose food expenditure share exceeds 60% of income decreased from 26% in 2017 to 17% in 2019. However, the share of households with a food expenditure share of over 60% is expected to reach 22.1% by the end of 2020.³

**FSLC reporting and accountability to affected people (AAP)**

Reporting on output-level indicators is done through the 5W system, which tracks the number of beneficiaries receiving food, livelihood support, and non-agricultural livelihood support. Reporting on outcome-level indicators is possible through ongoing and planned⁴ assessments, alongside analysis conducted by the partners (looking at use of livelihood coping strategies, resilience capacity index, etc.). For example, reporting is conducted on access to basic services, consumption, assets, and new livelihood adaptation and adaptative capacity. AAP requires communication with communities (two-way flow of information), good community entry, and participatory approaches throughout the humanitarian project cycle. Inclusive ways of working require consideration of the needs of the young and old (age); of people with varying degrees of disability; and of women and girls, men and boys (gender). Community feedback and complaint response mechanisms are incorporated, in addition to increased community engagement. However, there is a need to build capacity in 2021 in order to strengthen AAP reporting through collaboration with the stakeholders (such as IOM, Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and the protection cluster.


⁴ FAO is planning to conduct a Food Security Assessment in Ukraine (GCA and NGCA) using the FAO Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) system methodology.