
Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster

Update on Travel to the Eastern Conflict Area

September 13 – 17, 2021

Recommendation

- Activation of the sub-national clusters in Donetska GCA (Kramatorsk and Mariupol), Luhanska GCA (Sievierodonetsk) and in non-government areas. FSLC to identify partners to lead the sub-national cluster and a co-lead to assist in the lead's absence.
- FSLC sub-national cluster to be facilitated in Ukrainian / Russian. All IM products should be in English and Ukrainian, including the 5W report, dashboard, maps, guidelines, advocacy, and communication with the partners.
- FSLC to elaborate transparent approach to identifying the number of people in need and to call the FSLC Strategic Advisory Group (SAG).
- FSLC to work with partners to develop livelihood diversification projects and pay attention to the chronic humanitarian needs requiring a lifesaving response.
- Livelihoods Technical Working Group (LTWG) should start as coordinating is essential, including sharing lessons and methodology.

Summary

Overview of humanitarian needs.

Recent deterioration of security situation, intensified shelling and civilian casualties may engender the deterioration of food security situation.

The FSLC is going to call SAG to look at the PiN preliminary figure and approach.

Priorities in humanitarian response for 2022.

Most partners outlined the need for shifting humanitarian response priorities towards livelihoods, showing the need for livelihood diversification initiatives, and responding to the chronic humanitarian needs that require lifesaving support, especially in the 0—5 km zone along the contact line. In addition, the limited access to market, restricted humanitarian access, uptake in the violence, especially the indiscriminate shelling, and curtail of other drivers contribute to chronic vulnerability.

The distortion of the market directly affects the affected population along the contact line to participate in the local economy. Traders avoid areas along the contact line due to heightened insecurity caused by indiscriminate shelling and shoring. Farmers cannot sell their excess produce to purchase needed household items, including food, as they did before the crisis.

The shelling and threat of more violence create uncertainty for businesses that cannot attract investment—some companies are operating at less than 25% capacity. The lives of once employed are still on hold while they wait, hoping that they will walk back to their previous place of work one day.

The most vulnerable households like the elderly who comprise of over 50% of the population and the disable find it increasingly challenging to purchase their needs and therefore heavily reliant on humanitarian support along the line of contact. The need to strengthen market linkages and access is crucial to the humanitarian response.

Most of the partners expressed an interest in participating in the Livelihood Technical Working Group (LTWG). Therefore, the FSLC is discussing with partners the leadership of the LTWG.

FSLC partners expressed the need to reactivate the sub-national cluster. Some partners mentioned they could not follow the national meeting because of language difficulties and conducting the sub-national meeting in Ukrainian or Russian would boost their participation and improve the overall coordination in the field. However, the reactivation of the sub-national cluster would change attendance of those participating at the national level since the meeting are conducted in English and would require senior managers at head office to participate.

Principally, the sub-national cluster would enhance practical coordination, which is a pinnacle of this initiative.

The partners requested the cluster to ensure dual language when sharing FSLC products like the dashboards, minutes, and guidelines.

Meetings with partners in Donetsk GCA

FAO Kramatorsk field office

FAO provided an overview of the ongoing and planned activities in the field and below is the briefing overview of its activities under RPP:

Light Agricultural Advisory services—3 LAASs were established/identified 1 per oblast (Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia). Assistance with registration, needs assessment, capacity building. Plan to involve LAAS in implementing support strategies for selected value chains, connecting the service provider with farmers (voucher component). Web-platform was established, and mobile application is being designed. Procurement of equipment and capacity building to maintain web platform.

Cooperatives—needs assessment, capacity building through training and individual assistance, assistance with (re)registration of new or existing coops—investment support program.

Laboratory Services—lab equipment (PCR) was bought for laboratories in Donetsk (Mariupol regional laboratory of the State Service for Food Safety and Consumer Protection) and Luhansk oblasts (Lysychansk); planned procurement of lab equipment for marketplace laboratories.

Investment support—assessment of investment needs and funding opportunities, training to farmers with the participation of the relevant stakeholders, including Departments of Agri-Development.

Grant program—information support to farmers during UNDP grant program, training on business planning; planned investment support program from FAO to the grantees as a next step. Training needs assessment with further support with training.

Vocational Educational Training – 4 VETs were identified (2 in Donetsk oblast); curricula modification, development of short courses for adults, provision of equipment, staff capacity building, assessment of lacking technical skills among agricultural enterprises, ensure effective collaboration of agricultural TVET institutions with agricultural enterprises.

Assessment of clusters and associations in the targeted regions.

PiN

We met with People in Need leadership on livelihoods, including a representative from their home office.

It is developing its livelihood initiatives, starting with pilot phases, and scale-up based on lessons learned. The institution will also continue its humanitarian response (lifesaving) intervention in government and non-government controlled.

Their livelihood intervention will include value chain development, minimizing post-harvest losses through the development of food processing and (re) establishing access to markets, cooperative development, promoting resilience of farmers related to climate changes.

REACH

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the results on FSL-related indicators based on the recent MSNA assessment. Based on the clusters' preliminary calculations, the Food Consumption Score in 2021 MSNA in GCA showed better scores than in 2020. REACH confirmed that the assessment shows the positive dynamics in FCS. The following reasons made a compound impact on FCS improvement:

1. Changes in methodologies in part of different food groups' consumption
2. Changes in the geographical scope of the assessment (this year, all territory of Donetsk and Luhanska regions were covered with the assessment, while last year only 20 km zone along the contact line)
3. Improvement of the food security situation in areas beyond 5 km along the contact line should be verified and discussed with the partners operating on the ground.

Apart from the discussion of improved FCS, the possibility of consolidating efforts of multiple livelihood assessments undertaken by different partners mainly for their programmatic purposes. Instead of multiple different assessments, it would be good to conduct one comprehensive representative assessment that would reflect the picture of livelihoods in the Eastern Conflict Area (ECA).

FSLC meeting with partners and local government

12 participants representing 7 institutions attended the FSLC meeting Kramatorsk. The institutions include NGOs, local government (Department of Agro-industrial Development and Land Relations and Department of Investment-Innovative Development and External Relations of Donetsk Oblast State Administration), international organizations, including UN agencies.

Among crucial outcomes of the meeting, trends in humanitarian needs were discussed, HRP priorities for 2022 were identified, consultation with partners on the necessity of sub-national FSLC reestablishment was undertaken. The minutes of the meeting are attached.



FSLC meeting with partners and local government in Kramatorsk, September 14th

DAI

We met Timothy Madigan (Deputy Chief of Party USAID/DAI Economic Resilience Activity), Brian Milakovsky (Economic Resilience Strategy Lead), Iryna Malysheva (Monitoring, Evaluation, Adapting and Learning Director). In pursuit of the previous discussion, DAI finds it reasonable that their presence in part of livelihood support would be reflected in informational products of the FSLC. Therefore, DAI expressed willingness to share their 5W reports with the cluster. The meeting with DAI technical team was a success and the cluster has shared on the reporting forms.

Emmanuel

The institution shared their observation on the current situation on humanitarian needs. According to their hotline, the number of referrals requesting assistants has significantly reduced compared to previous years. For example, the number of vulnerable individuals

assisted has reduced by 90%—10,000 to 1,000 cases per month. They noticed that providing people agricultural support (livestock, crops, tools for backyard farming) makes them less reliant on direct food assistance and promotes self-sustenance. As for response priorities 2022, they would allocate 30% for food assistance, 10% for micro-business grants, 60% for agricultural inputs.



FSLC team meeting with Emmanuel

Ukraine Red Cross Society (URC), Donetsk regional organization

URC provides the bulk of humanitarian response in ECA: in 2021, the Donetsk RC distributed about 10 thousand food kits. However, they do not actively participate in the cluster meetings and do not share information on the number of beneficiaries covered. As revealed during the discussion, the major obstacle to active participation is the language barrier, as most staff are national. Translating all cluster materials into Ukrainian and providing translation during the cluster meetings would facilitate their active participation. The FSLC also will provide a training session for URC on how to fill in the 5W report.

As for the trends in food security, despite the relative improvement beyond the 20 km zone, the number of acute food-insecure people remains significant in the 5km zone along the contact line, where access to markets is disrupted, especially for people with disabilities and those living in isolated communities. Furthermore, for people of working age, lack of employment opportunities remains the most critical issue.

Meetings with partners in Luhanska GCA

ASB

ASB noticed that from their perception, the food security situation in the settlements in the 5km zone along the contact line remains approximately at the same level as last year. Among the conditions that make people vulnerable remain a lack of employment, security incidents, limited transportation, restricted access to markets that hinder access to food and sources of income. As for key priorities for 2022, were mentioned job places creation, especially for people 40—60 years (including high-technological production that could employ highly qualified people that lost their jobs because of reducing productivities of technological enterprises), restoring access to markets, and creation of new market links, training for people to gain new skills.

DAI.

We met Oleksandra Mukhamedova, M&E Officer, to discuss which activities implemented by DAI would be reasonable to reflect on the FSLC informational products. The discussion also would contribute to the development of the FSLC activity matrix for 2022. As a result, DAI agreed to share the actual beneficiary coverage at the following data collection round at the beginning of October and planning figures by November.

Ukraine Red Cross Society, Lugansk regional organization.

As URC in Donetska GCA, URC Lugansk regional organization is one of the key humanitarian responders. In January—February 2021, they distributed 10,030 food kits in settlements within the 5 km zone along the contact line (funded by German RC) and assisted 385 households with agricultural grants by UAH 5,888 (funded by the Austrian Red Cross). Unfortunately, as Donetsk regional RC, they also do not participate in cluster activities and do not share the data with the cluster. Apart from the language barrier, they experience a lack of human resources, and they cannot merge and track the data on the number of beneficiaries reached.

URC also expressed the need for support in project proposal development to get funding from donors.

URC mentioned that people moving from NGCA through Russia registered on the GCA side but reside in NGCA because of a lack of resources to rent a house in GCA. This issue is inherent to the northern districts of Luhanska GCA.

The reestablishment of the sub-national cluster and facilitation of the meeting in Ukrainian or Russian they considered helpful if it produces any practical outcome, as OCHA's GCMs ensure general coordination issues and information sharing.



FSLC team meeting with URC, Lugansk regional organization

Joint meeting with NRC and DRC

The key outcomes of the meeting are as follows.

Sub-national level of coordination would ease coordination of livelihood activities, improve engagement, coordination, ensure better access to data and information sharing, and harmonize the livelihood approach.

The gap between spending and earning is not still being addressed. The need to increase investment in livelihoods, including diversifying the local economies, should be articulated to the donor community. In addition, the cooperation with local authorities also needs to be strengthened and partners' ability to forge coordination and referral between actors providing food assistance and livelihoods support.

Caritas

Caritas provides food assistance in Luhanska GCA in locations within a 5km zone along the contact line. The modality is in kind, as most beneficiaries are people with disabilities living in isolated settlements with no access to markets.

Although the food security situation did not change significantly during the last year, since the recent time, the security situation has deteriorated with intensified shelling from the NGCA side.

The partner also expressed the need for translation into local languages of all materials and meetings.



FSLC team meeting with Caritas in Rubizhne

September 20, 2021