

Meeting Minutes: Food and Agriculture Sector (FAS) Monthly Meeting (October 2021)

Location: Online MS. TEAMS Meeting, Damascus, Syria

Date: 26/10/2021

Time: 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

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Participants:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| i. AAH - INGO | viii. OCHA - UN Agency |
| ii. ADRA - INGO | ix. Oxfam - INGO |
| iii. AVSI - INGO | x. PUI - INGO |
| iv. EPDC - INGO | xi. RESCATE - INGO |
| v. FAO - UN Agency | xii. UNHCR - UN Agency |
| vi. ICRC - INGO | xiii. WFP - UN Agency |
| vii. NRC - INGO | xiv. ZOA - INGO |

Name of coordinators chairing meeting:

1. Mohie Alwahsh – FAS Coordinator (WFP) - Presenter.
2. Jameson Zvizvai – FAS Co-Coordinator (FAO) - Meeting Chairperson.
3. Eliso Chabrava - DINGO - Presenter.
4. Reham Al Jeiroudi - OCHA SHF - Presenter.
5. Ruba Khanji - FAS IMO& Gender Focal Point - Presenter.
6. Moteb Marei - FAS IMO - Presenter.
7. Mohammed Krimeed - FAS Sub national Coordinator (South Area) - Presenter.

1. Welcome remarks and introductions:

- Jameson, FAS Co-coordinator, started the meeting and welcomed all participants, and acknowledged the presence of the DINGO representatives; Soura and Eliso.

2. Discussion on the DINGO Coordination Brief Paper and open discussion and brainstorming on how the sector can improve on the weak areas identified [\[Download\]](#):

- Eliso, DINGO Chairperson, appreciated the invitation from FAS to bring some of the key findings of a briefing paper that Damascus based NGOs put together because of the survey that was conducted in August, 2021.
- The paper was looking at three focus areas related to humanitarian coordination for Damascus or Syria Base response. One aspect of the survey looked at the presence and participation of INGOs in Syria HCT hub (i.e. Damascus based) in the various humanitarian coordination forums. The second aspect looked at information sharing and more specifically the 4Ws. The DINGOs highlighted that some of the concerns pertaining to the level of detail and information shared to the sector versus the products that is then shared. The third aspect looked at the leadership opportunities that INGOs currently have in different coordination forms.
- The survey had a response rate of 85% of all Damascus based NGOs. At least 27 INGOs are currently operational in Syria HCT.
- In terms of the presence of INGOs in different sector coordination forums,, 85% of organizations who took part in the survey mentioned that they are present in at least one sector coordination forum in Syria. Moreover, it was also mentioned that the participation or the choice of sectors in which INGOs participated in, largely depends on their technical expertise in specific thematic areas or depends on the programs that they normally implement.
- The survey findings showed that there are some sectors which have a higher participation of INGOs, and the leaders are the highest number of INGOs participate in. For example, Protection sector and Education Sector are one of the well represented sectors by NGOs as well as the Food Security Sector (FSS). In other sectors like Risk Education and Nutrition, the participation of INGOs is relatively low and this could be attributed to the fact that INGOs may not have expertise in certain specific areas. Furthermore, there are quite few INGOs

implementing risk education activities and this could explain the logic regarding the low participation in certain sectors compared to others..

- In terms of information sharing, it was identified as one of the most challenging issues that was affecting capacity of INGOs to meaningfully plan their humanitarian response. In addition, DINGOs feel very responsible in providing inputs to 4Ws requested by different sectors. But then there is a feeling that the information and products shared back by sectors sometimes lacks the expected details, based on the level of detailed initially shared by the DINGOs. Moreover, there is a recognition that some partners prefer to maintain their confidentiality at different levels but respecting that there should be a bit more detail in the information shared back by sectors.
- In terms of information sharing, 20% of DINGOs indicated that there was very limited reciprocity in terms of regular information sharing. The 20% of DINGOs who expressed this concern felt that they give information to sectors, but they are not receiving it back. On a more positive note, there are 83% of DINGOs who indicated that when they felt that the information was missing, or they needed some more detailed information and requested it from sectors, they have received it.
- So basically, the information is more available upon request and proactively shared. Eliso also highlighted that within the detailed paper itself, there was more detailed info and highlights on the specific sectors from which information is shared more proactively with higher level of detail as opposed to sectors where this is felt like a still needs improvement.
- The last aspect of the paper was related to the Leadership Opportunities that INGOs are given in various coordination sectors. The paper highlights that during ten years of humanitarian response in Syria, there hasn't been an occasion where any INGO is put in a position of Co-leading a sector. This situation could be due to some external factors that may limit space for DINGOs to take co-leadership roles. DINGO representatives highlighted that it does not have to be necessarily called Co-leadership, but it can be a form of secretariat or any other modality that can be discussed and agreed. However, DINGOs feel that this is something that is strongly needed also because some of the DINGOs have strong expertise in specific thematic fields and would like this knowledge to be brought to the sector. This will contribute to the overall response in Syria and will enhance coordination within the sector and across sectors.
- The paper also provides a bit of a breakdown in terms of participation or leadership roles at INGOs given at sector level, as opposed to Sub working group or working group forums. The paper highlights that while at the sector level there is less leadership role given or no leadership role given to DINGOs, it's relatively more representative in sub working groups and working group level. The paper list the six examples of working groups where DINGOs have been given an opportunity to contribute, as in a leadership role. These groups are Cash working group (CWG), Nutrition working group, HLP technical working group, LCD technical working group, Facility Rehabilitation Sub Working Group and the Health Quality Sub Working Group. .After the DINGO

briefing paper was released, there was one additional working group that was established. This is the Agriculture Working Group (AWG) and one of the DINGOs was nominated as a co-Chair.

- There is also 71% INGOs expressed their readiness to step up to a leadership role in various sectors if there would be given an opportunity to do so. The paper highlights the sector where DINGOs feel that they can take up leadership roles. and these are the protection, education, health sector, cash working group, WASH sector and so on. There are at least 11 forums listed by NGOs, where they see capacity to take up or to contribute more to the sector's leadership capacity. One important aspect is also the feedback that INGOs normally receive that in many cases there is a feeling that they are being invited to contribute to different sectors or working groups and so on, but the participation level sometimes is disappointing. DINGOs highlighted that because they do not have meaningful leadership role in any other sectors. They do not invest human resources or fund-raise to secure adequate expertise for representation or coordination because they feel that this is not something they should not prioritize since they have no leadership role. Since DINGOs do not have any leadership role in most sectors, they are not sure whether they should invest in dedicated staff positions or expertise to contribute to the sector.
- The paper lists conclusions and recommendations based on the findings where there are specific suggestions on how to proceed and have a more inclusive and participatory humanitarian coordination system. In terms of information sharing, there is need to scale up dialogue and information sharing between the DINGOs and sector coordinators and OCHA as well. The meeting noted that this dialogue has actually been intensified recently and based on the evidence that the paper provided, there is some constructive engagement being done by INGOs and OCHA, with the different sectors to help overcome some of the challenges that were listed in the paper.
- Moteb confirmed that the 5Ws data is being shared back to partners with coded information on a monthly basis. The FAS Syria HCT team is sharing the power BI dashboard at whole of Syria (WoS) level for the FSS (which has a lot of information, infographics, maps for coverage vs gaps and trends. Partners are invited to visit this dashboard and filter on Syria HCT to help them access detailed and holistic idea on the sector's response in Syria HCT. Furthermore, sector team remains available to respond to any relevant information requested.
- Mohie acknowledged the discussion within the DINGOs discussion with the sector and all joint efforts on the findings and highlighted that FAS team is making some progress and the sector have this attention to have all perspectives of the joint efforts. As for the agriculture working group (AWG), the sector team is working with ACF/AAH to ensure that an INGO is also sharing responsibility in terms of co-chairing that platform. This will ensure that there are joint efforts and multiple discussion with all INGOs participations. Furthermore, it is important to have inclusive participation and shared responsibilities in the AWG so that all expertise and

experiences come on-board, from INGOs, local NGOs as well as the UN, within the various WGs. Within FAS we have a very positive dynamic with engagement and having this conversation again through this platform will further enhance our collective efforts together. In terms of information sharing all partners are very committed and continue to provide great inputs, as well as communication channel including inputs from partners, and sector shared back information to guide the analysis. Moving forward, especially with the group we need to keep this conversation going on where as we already started by example with agriculture working group (AWG) within the Food and Agriculture sector.

- Jameson highlighted that FAS already updated their cluster lead agencies (CLAs), both for FAO and WFP on the key findings from the DINGOs paper. Which specifically seeks to enhance a more participatory humanitarian coordination system. Jameson highlighted that the FAS fully acknowledges that there certain aspects regarding coordination that might need a bit of improvement. Last year the sector conducted a Cluster Coordination, Performance Monitoring (CCPM 2020) and the key findings were also circulated. There are some areas that were highlighted by the global food security cluster (gFSC) that were executed well, while some functions of the sector in Syria HCT also needed a bit of improvement. Jameson highlighted that the CCPM findings are also informing our work plan for 2021 into 2022. Information sharing is one of the sector's core functions as we try to support service delivery and monitor the implementation of the humanitarian response. As a sector, we have 7 core functions and information sharing is quite a critical aspect, so we would really want to see how best we can continue this discussion and dialogue moving forward so we can immediately improve on some of the aspects.
- Jameson highlighted that some of the recommendations would probably need further consultations with the CLAs. Jameson highlighted that the sector would want to thank the DINGOs for providing a snap of the key findings and recommendations, to the sector membership. The insights and concerns from the DINGO paper particularly on participation, leadership and information sharing are also quite important and the sector will keep in touch with the DINGOs, moving forward.

3. Planning for the Gender and Safety Monitoring Survey:

- Ruba, the sector gender focal point, indicated that the survey for the assessment on gender integration and GB mitigation procedures was developed through cooperation among the WFP gender focal person, the UNFPA gender consultant, FAO gender focal point who also acts as the sector's gender focal point and the GBV sub-sector. The survey was disseminated to all sector partners so that they may complete the brief questions to help the sector better understand the current status of gender mainstreaming.
- Ruba highlighted that only five partners completed the survey and she asked the remaining partners to complete the questionnaire in order to feed into the sector's action plan and the training requirements.

4. SHF RA allocation updates [[Download](#)]:

- Mohie highlighted that OCHA released the 2021 SHF Second Reserve Allocation on the 24th of October 2021. He also alluded that the allocation strategy paper for the 2021 reserve allocation, including the sector’s prioritization were circulated through the sector mailing list.
- The main objective of RA is very clear “*To support immediate scale up of efforts in response to the impact of the water crisis as well as bolster provision of winter appropriate assistance*”.
- Total RA Envelope – 20 Million USD. With 5 Million USD being the envelope for the Multisector (MS). Sectoral priorities under the multi-sector include;
 - 1) To provide Protection Food Rations (PFRs), through in-kind or CVA, Supplementary food assistance (top up),
 - 2) Distribution of quality emergency agriculture inputs (cereals, vegetables or legumes),
 - 3) Light rehabilitation of farmer’s water pumping sets and irrigation networks and Various trainings as recommended.

A total of 3 Million was allocated for the Food and Agriculture Sector (FAS) for

- i. Provision of Food or Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) targeting vulnerable and food insecure households,
- ii. Emergency distribution of quality Agriculture Inputs (Staples – Wheat and Barley) and
- iii. Supporting asset protection through distribution of emergency livestock feed and related training.

- The allocation paper provides more details about priorities and sector partners were advised to go through the paper and related guiding documents circulated, specifically under the Food and Agriculture Sector section and as well as under the Multi sector envelope and section.
- Project Proposal Deadline set by OCHA SHF team is the **2nd of November 2021**, Damascus time: 18:00. It is important to flag that the duration is a bit tight only 8 days and partners were advised to align with the deadline since there would be no extension.
- In addition, we have started bilateral discussions with different partners in terms of guidance and recommendations.
- Jameson highlighted that the multi sector is looking at interlinked actions or interventions which seek to address particularly the water crisis and the interlinked challenges. So, based on the on the paper which was endorsed by the advisory board (AB), partners are encouraged to develop realistic and time bound multi sector interventions that cover more than one sector for not more than nine months. Partners are encouraged to read through the strategy paper thoroughly, ensuring that they adhere to some of the eligible actions and the duration that is mentioned there.

- Reham, SHF OCHA program associate, started a short presentation regarding the reserve allocation and stressed on the 2 main objectives. The first one is about Multisectoral response to the water crisis and the second one is to provide the winter assistance for the vulnerable people to respond to harsh winter conditions.
- Regarding the FAS sector related activities, these can be applied for under the multi sector or standalone envelopes. The total amount of this reserve allocation is 20 million and as highlighted by Mohie it is 3 Million for FAS standalone and 5 Million for the multi sector.
- The deadline is 2nd Nov,21 and from 4th to 9th November there will be a strategic and technical review. From 14th to 15th November there will be HC and AB proposal endorsement and finally from 16th November OCHA will get back with feedback to all partners on the submitted proposals to do any adjustment if needed and then to proceed with the grant agreements.
- In terms of the eligibility criteria, the starting point is that the submission should be done by an eligible partner who has completed the due diligence and passed the capacity assessment. The partner should not have any outstanding SHF report and must always be coordinating with the relevant sector. All proposal should be in line with the allocation paper and in line with the HRP. The proposals must be submitted on GMS, no offline submission is accepted, and the proposal should be well developed in terms of LOGFRAME and budgeting, needs analysis and in alignment with the strategy paper.
- Some documents were provided in the email circulated earlier which gives guidance related to budget preparation and SHF manual. The minimum amount for any project will be a 250 thousand and each partner is allowed for two maximum proposal. The duration of the proposal should be from three to nine months, and the proposal has to be needs based and addressing vulnerable groups.
- These are the main points, and we would like to reinforce as mentioned earlier by Mohie that for all technical matters and design, sector partners have to coordinate with the sector, to ensure that their proposals are technically sound and adhere to the sector guidance. SHF focal point team will be ready for any support related to Grant Management System (GMS) or proposal development. We have also circulated the focal point details from SHF part in case you need any support.
- Soura from RESCATE, stated that in all sectors the geographical areas can be picked for Syria HCT hub, but only the winterization, which is speaking about ~~WeS~~, does that mean that the 20 million is to be shared with within ~~WeS~~ in general, this is one thing and the other thing there has been a discussion on the overall allocation amongst INGOs through the last three days, and most of them are asking for extending the proposal submission time as It is not enough to build a well-structured project. Soura wanted to know if there is any flexibility on the 2nd of November deadline.
- Jameson confirmed that the locations for the multi sector envelope are at the end of page 6 in the allocation strategy paper and they are clear geographic priorities that have been highlighted, these are mainly Deir-ez-

Zor, Ar-Raqqa and the respective Sub-districts. This is the geographical focus of the multi sector proposals, which may combine WASH, Education, Food and Agriculture, ERL, Protection or Health related interventions. The multisector interventions have to be within the mentioned proposed locations. For the specific locations for the Food and Agriculture sector standalone envelope for 3 M, the locations are also elaborated the annex 2, which is found right at the end of page 16 of 2021 reserve allocation strategy paper. Furthermore, Moteb will also share the offline downloaded FAS & MS annexes with Soura right after the meeting.

- Reham confirmed the reserve allocation will not be extended and there is a need to respond to the water crisis and winter response. So unfortunately, note that 2nd of November at 6:00 PM is the hard deadline for submission, since the reserve allocation usually takes 5 working days and this timeline is in line with global guidance.
- Isam from WFP indicated that there will not be sufficient time for the distribution of wheat and barley seeds as those are seasonal crops, and they should be distributed in specific months so if there is possibility for extension or changing the distribution plan it would be very helpful. Jameson highlighted that the sector will engage with OCHA and CLAs for a lite revision of the seed options, to include legumes and winter vegetables. Jameson promised all sector partners that they will be informed of these changes, once effected.

5. Water Crisis Response Plan (WCRP) monitoring and reporting arrangements:

- Moteb indicated that the sectors' information management officers (IMOs) are going to identify partners who are operating in the sub-districts under the water crises response from the 5Ws reports.
- Then IMOs will prepare a simple tool and share with the identified partners to report on the response by the 27th of each month as requested by OCHA.
- Once the final version is out, the data will be shared with concerned partners for final consultation and confirmation before dissemination.
- After that the data will be shared with WoS for further analysis and consolidation.
- There was a question asking about the 5th W in the 5Ws template and Moteb highlighted that the fifth W represented (To Whom) and the response will be provided as number of HHs, Beneficiaries... .)

6. Dar'a response updates:

- Mohie, gave a quick update on the response in Dar'a until mid of October 2021. In terms of the dispatch, it is ongoing and back to the normal cycles since WFP distribution is continuous to Dar'a AL-balad and deliveries in other areas are now back on track. In terms of the border, Nasib Jaber border is already open and the commercial tracks crossing between Syria and Jordan had now been activated. WFP market price monitoring has however noticed that prices of most food commodities had increased by between 30 to 50% as of October 2021.

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- Mohammad Krimeed, the sub national sector coordinator for south area, elaborated further in terms of dispatches and distributions. He mentioned that WFP has been able to continue with dispatch operations over the past two months when the and where the hostilities were taking place. It has been decided to catch up with all of the distribution cycles and as of the beginning of this week, almost 290,000 rations will be dispatched as part of the three dispatch cycles (over 50% has been dispatched). Quite a significant amount of that has been distributed already. To date, WFP distributed food for around 620,000 people out of a plan of 1.4 million. The distribution cycles will be extended by another month.
- In terms of access, WFP has been able to conduct a field visit last month and there were ongoing visits in the last 10 days of this month which started earlier this week. So far, the field missions are proceeding smoothly but it is important to highlight that the situation is highly volatile in the governorate as the needs have grown significantly since the last update from UNDSS.
- In terms of price monitoring, it's mainly attributed to the opening of a massive border where a lot of commodities and vegetables are being allowed for export. The food prices have risen significantly over a period of one week. WFP is now preparing an update that will be shared by the end of the week on further price monitoring trends in the governorate.
- Soura asked if people returned to Dar'a AL-balad from the shelters after the agreement. Krimeed indicated that after the agreement was signed on the 7 September 2021 and shortly after the signing, over 90% of temporarily displaced families had returned.
- Isam from WFP also made an additional update that on the 25th of October 2021, an announcement was made by all parties that reconciliation agreements have been concluded covering all areas. However, the access is not that easy since because access is only limited to specific locations and even a high level UN mission could not enter Dar'a Al-balad or even the western parts.

7. 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.