

# Concept Note

Operational coordination of food security and livelihoods interventions through cross-checking of beneficiary national identification numbers

## BACKGROUND

In April 2020, Food Security Sector (FSS) identified high coverage by large number of partners for cash assistance in Ukhiya and Teknaf in response to COVID-19 economic repercussions based on partners' planning information– see [FSS interactive dashboard for host community response](#). Due to lockdown measures to minimize the spread of COVID-19, 18 partners have re-programmed livelihood support activities to unconditional cash assistance and/or started new programmes to respond to emerging needs of impacted vulnerable Bangladeshis in host community through food and cash assistance.

As requested by some partners (WFP, UNHCR, IOM, and World Vision), FSS began conducting a de-duplication exercise using national identification number (NID) of beneficiaries as unique identifier to avoid beneficiaries receiving the same types of assistance at the same time by multiple partners, while other areas and beneficiaries were underserved.

In addition, the need to strengthen beneficiary data management capacity at field level became apparent after FSS received a request from UNO offices to support data collection and beneficiary database management. This is to ensure data quality (i.e. accurate NIDs, phone numbers) to enable beneficiary deduplication.

In order to protect privacy and beneficiaries' data, FSS requested to partners to only share NID number of beneficiaries and FSS shared only the duplicate NIDs with partners who requested the service.

## DEDUPLICATION EXERCISE

The deduplication exercise was conducted using Microsoft Excel after receiving partners' list of beneficiaries' NIDs - unique beneficiary identifier chosen due to wide ownership in host community.

Partners that participated in the exercise had all programs distributing unconditional cash assistance, even if differing in terms of value of assistance/transfer value, duration of assistance (one-off or repeated on monthly basis), delivery mechanism (cash in hand, cash in envelope, bank transfer, and [mobile money](#)), and targeting criteria.

From April to August FSS has received and cross-checked over 88,000 entries – many of which came as a result of UNO's request to partners to support additional households – by 7 partners who all provided unconditional cash assistance to host communities in Ukhiya and Teknaf. Through cross-checking partners' beneficiary lists, FSS found that 27% of beneficiaries targeted were targeted by multiple partners<sup>1</sup>.

**Transfer value:** Referencing [Cox's Bazar Transfers Working Group](#) and [Bangladesh Cash Working Group](#) guideline for MPCG in the context of COVID-19, FSS requested partners to harmonize the transfer value to BDT 3,500 or 4,500 per household per month, depending on the purpose of the intervention.

**Duration:** The duration of cash assistance varied from one-off to maximum six months duration. Existing beneficiaries received monthly unconditional cash grants before returning to receiving conditional cash grant as support to their income generation and livelihoods.

**Delivery mechanism:** 78% of cash transfers took place cash-in-hand at distribution points, 20% were transferred using mobile money, almost 2% were distributed door-to-door, and less than 1% were through bank

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<sup>1</sup> Duplication rate as of June from initial rounds of cross-checking was 5% but increased to 27% after multiple rounds of cross-checking per partner. This significant increase is likely caused by partners' response to UNOs request to assist additional households and NIDs which had been rounded.

transfers. Challenges with beneficiaries not having a mobile money or bank account were common amongst partners.

**Targeting:** vulnerable Bangladeshis whose food security and livelihoods have been affected by COVID-19 were targeted. Out of 7 partners who have shared their NIDs, 4 partners (WFP, UNHCR, IOM, WVI) have targeted their multi-year livelihood beneficiaries with unconditional cash and 3 partners have added unconditional cash assistance to existing assistance such as agricultural inputs or WASH interventions.

Below table shows the summary figures from the deduplication exercise – 27% of the 88,432 entries were unique duplicates in beneficiaries' lists of different organizations and 4% of all NIDs submitted to FSS had anomalies in the entries.

Cumulative number of NIDs cross-checked	Cumulative number of duplicate NIDs	Cumulative number of unique duplicate NIDs	Cumulative number of NIDs with anomalies (e.g. NID rounded)
<b>88,432</b>	<b>26,809</b>	<b>23,816</b>	<b>3,099</b>

as of 25 August 2020

FSS shared the results of analysis bilaterally with partners for their information and follow-up actions, flagging potential risk of exclusion error due to data quality issues, and whether beneficiaries identified as duplicate were targeted by multiple partners. In case the rounded NIDs matched, FSS recommended partners to pay extra attention when retaining or removing the beneficiaries from the list as the probability of the NIDs being an exact match is low. Generally, partners followed-up and reached an agreement bi-laterally.

Possible agreements included: staggering distributions (i.e. one organisation distributed in one month, another organisation in another month); complementing activities and assistance (i.e. one organisation distributed one type of assistance example MSA of BDT 1,000 and another topped up to BDT 4,500); special/geographical targeting.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Partners checked and cleared their beneficiary lists with UNOs but there were still duplications found from cross-checking the lists.
- Lists shared by UNOs included anomalies such as rounded NIDs and symbols which affected the accuracy of identification of duplicates resulting in potential for inclusion and exclusion error.
- Some beneficiaries do not have an NID, or one NID is used by multiple people living in different locations
- Partners selected beneficiaries from multi-year livelihoods projects hence duplications had been going on since the start of their programme.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Partners appreciated the exercise and requested to continue and to expand to other types of assistance beyond cash assistance, particularly for multi-year programmes (such as livelihoods grants and agricultural inputs).

The risk of overlapping might be increased by the amount of funds the donors are restricting in two Upazillas only (Ukhiya/Teknaf). Considering a wider target area (potentially the whole Cox's Bazar district) would reduce the risk of duplication of intervention.

Due to the increased number of partners programming in Ukhiya and Teknaf and in Cox's Bazar District, the need for a common inter-agency beneficiary database system is clear and urgent.

To further strengthen data protection and privacy, FSS team and partners must ensure informed consent from beneficiaries, agreement or common understanding among partners on third party data-sharing, and standardized retention and disposal of personal data.

Following discussions with key FSS partners, FSS proposes the below plan:

**Phase one:**

Creation/expansion of an inter-agency beneficiary data management platform for interventions in the host community (Ukhiya and Teknaf, potentially expanding to all districts of Cox's Bazar)

SCOPE - WFP corporate beneficiary and transfer management platform - appears to be the most suitable and appropriate platform. Possible approaches using SCOPE are:

- Light approach – WFP provides access to only SCOPE's Registration Application which can be used by partners to collect beneficiary data to solve the issue on data quality. SCOPE would provide ONLY de-duplication services – beneficiary details are inputted, and SCOPE would inform whether the beneficiary is already targeted by other partners (yes/no).
- Full approach – All partners sign SCOPE Service Agreements with WFP. Partners can register beneficiaries directly in SCOPE's Registration Application, print SCOPECARDS (if necessary and/or desired), and use beneficiary management and entitlement transfer functionalities. Partners can create programmatic interventions in SCOPE and deliver them through the SCOPECARD (if desired).
  - Please note that the SCOPECARD is an offline delivery mechanism, which requires FAMOCO devices.
  - For the host community, in most cases, agencies may choose to deliver cash through Financial Service Providers. In such cases, the SCOPECARD would not be necessary, unless agencies wish to use the SCOPECARD as a supplementary identification document only. The SCOPECARD will not store any biometrics for the host community.

WFP livelihood beneficiaries are registered in the platform.

WFP, IOM, FAO are cooperating through SAFE Plus programme.

Other agencies have adopted (IOM, UNICEF) or expressed interest in using the platform (UNFPA) for their programmes.

**Phase two:**

Supporting inter-operability with GoB social safety nets data management systems.

Once the common inter-agency beneficiary data-management system is up and running and proves effective, the system can develop inter-operability with the GoB social safety nets data-management systems.

This phase can contribute to strengthen local authorities' capacity in beneficiary management and it will require agreements with government authorities.

UNO of Ukhia had expressed interest in support for beneficiary data management.