Food Security Sector Working Group
Minutes of Meeting

Location: Ministry of Agriculture, Beirut- Lebanon

Date: 11/09/2019


Discussion
The meeting was co-chaired between the FSS management team and the MoA focal points. After a welcoming opening from MoA, Ms. De Gregorio, the FSS Coordinator presented the Agenda of the meeting, which included the following topics:

1. Presentation on the Inter-Agency Referral System by WFP
2. Presentation on the Referral Information Management System by DRC
3. Presentation on targeting by WFP
4. Presentation on Quinoa value Chain by CONCERN
5. Presentation on the FSS updates
6. AOB

1. Presentation on the Inter-Agency Referral System by WFP

A presentation on The Inter-Agency Referral System based on protection referrals monitoring was delivered by WFP protection officer. It was established in 2017 as part of the Inter-Agency Referral Tool Kit to harmonize Inter sector referrals, enhance collaboration and promote accountability towards beneficiaries (together with IRF, Minimum standards and Mapping of services).

The referral system will ensure that all cases based on needs will have access to services and assistance and consequently identify delays and gaps in service provision.

In addition, participants were informed that the template Form regarding the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Individual Referrals will be shared among the FSSWG members and it was highlighted that the protection sector report their referrals on Activity Info (AI).
The functioning of the referral system was as well explained in the subsequent order: partners report on AI, then data is extracted and checked by the protection sector coordinator which will be analyzed upon field analysis and consequently bilateral discussions with relevant sectors are carried out.

Regarding setting up the referral system for the FSS, it has been highlighted that targets need to be clear and defined, this can be done through the update by all partners of the 4Ws matrix and consequently this will allow having an idea if the FSS receives referrals as well as identifying the gaps in the assistance provision.

As a result, in order for the FSS to be aligned with the IA referral system, in addition to the 4Ws matrix, the contact referral pathway needs to be updated and coordination with other sectors strengthened on how reporting is done on AI.

Finally it is important to note that to date no harmonized and systematic inter-sector feedback system is in place in addition to the fact that regional variations occur within sectors for referrals (i.e. in one area referrals go through sector coordinators, in another area referrals go through referral pathway).

2. Presentation on the Referral Information Management System (RIMS) by DRC

The second presentation was delivered by DRC team where explanation was given on how the RIMS complements the IA referral system. It was stated that the main gaps in referrals in Lebanon include among others: Lack of organization in referrals processes, lack of unified platform to manage all sectors/organizations’ referrals, lack of understanding of referrals not only as a process, but also as a system with influencing factors, lack of knowledge of other sectors and their eligibility criteria. As a result, there is a necessity for a more dynamic and updated service mapping.

As the referral pathway is the process by which a beneficiary is referred from one service provider to another where beneficiaries will have information on available services and will be helped to access these services, DRC developed the RIMS with the aim at improving the humanitarian response in Lebanon which is influenced through effective and accountable referral pathway and evidence-based information.

RIMS improved the referral pathway which was made manually and digitized it to better track and monitor with having an online smart service mapping, possibility of analyzing data and allow better coordination on referrals. As a result, RIMS allows personalized dashboard and customized dashboard. RIMS will allow better designing programmes and better reporting mechanism through the extraction of needed data and allows data management as well.

It is to be noted that RIMS tool is used currently by 30 partners with the goal of improving the accuracy of referrals.

Afterwards, the main features of RIMS were presented ensuring data protection and data confidentiality at the same time.

Discussions:
The main question raised was on how to be a partner and benefit from the RIMS. For that, it was explained that this is done through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that requires assessing the needs of the potential partner for data management and consequently training will be provided and passwords accesses. As RIMS is funded by donors it is free of charge.

So the system allows to know if a partner is providing a particular service in order to refer a beneficiary to this service provider.

On a question regarding coordination with the UN system, DRC team explained as well that it abides to UN Inter-Agency and supports reporting under AI which facilitates the work of the IA.

3. Presentation on targeting and Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) by WFP

Mr. Simon Renk, Head of M&E/ VAM at WFP delivered a presentation on targeting. He explained that since the onset of the Syria crisis in 2011, blanket targeting was done where food and basic assistance was provided to new displaced arrivals, then in 2014 targeting was based on home visits where the most vulnerable were identified up to 2016 where targeting is based since then on desk formula.

Afterwards, the targeting process with the timeline was briefly explained along with the eligibility for WFP assistance through Food e-cards (managed by WFP), multi-purpose cash for essential needs (also provided by UNHCR) and Cash for food e-cards with the planning figures for 2019-2020.

Mr. Renk highlighted that some vulnerable Syrians were not reached due to gaps in funding and some HHs were not receiving assistance on continuous basis especially for food e-cards and it is forecasted that additional 3,000 cases will be added as targets in 2020.

Comparison of data between 2018 and 2019 for WFP caseload were also presented highlighting that the difference in the shift of modalities is due to demographics where the same number of people is reached but less HHs.

Another presentation by WFP was delivered on targeting and communications with communities.

As for targeting the main outreach activities are: (i) training on targeting to raise awareness and understand better the process of inclusion and discontinuity in assistance; (ii) Interactive Sessions with Community Reference Groups on the GRM to give suggestions and provide trainings; (iii) Interactive Sessions with Community Reference Groups on the GRM through social media; and (iv) Enhance the Q&A (targeting and eligibility) to involve colleagues in drafting of questionnaires.

In addition, the presentation explained what call centers activities were conducted as these include: (i) trainings of Operators; (ii) study visits for Refugees; and (iv) drop-in visits for FSSWG Partners in addition to SMS for newly included, maintained and excluded families.

Besides, a brief on the GRM was presented which is an alternative inclusion pathway for cash and food assistance based on a refugee-initiated process. It serves to increase accountability to affected
populations. As such, claims are accepted either the call centers or though UNHCR reception centers and partners hotline.

As for eligibility, the basis being the UNHCR database and no additional data collection is required and criteria will be used for selection and prioritization procedure will be implemented.

Finally as for communication, field staff can inform refugees about the GRM and how to place a claim and starting January 2020, eligibility will be announced through SMS for those fulfilling the criteria.

**Discussions:**

Clarification was requested for the HHs excluded from the multi-purpose Cash modality, where it was explained that they receive calls from the Agencies and in case they have specific needs they can be referred as several partners have their proper assistance programs and are not WFP partners.

4. **Presentation on Quinoa value Chain by CONCERN**

Ms. Salam Jabakhanji, presented Concern’s intervention on the Quinoa Value Chain pilot project for small-scale farmers in Akkar.

Ms. Jabakhanji highlighted the rationale behind choosing Quinoa further to a previous FAO/MoA/ LARI project which tested different varieties of quinoa stating that in addition to its nutritional value and promising expanding international markets, benefits reside from cultivating in marginalized lands.

Three dunums of land were selected in Akkar and 200 kg of quinoa seeds were purchased by Concern for the project.

In collaboration with LARI, around 30 farmers were trained along with 15 workers on topics such as land preparation, sowing, controlling pests and diseases and the adoption of drip irrigation till harvesting techniques. The production cycle lasted from 120 days to 140 days.

In addition, a de-saponification machine manufactured in Lebanon for saponine removal of Quinoa Seeds was purchased.
Discussions:

Main concerns raised during discussion were:

- No assessment done for export markets potential and access to markets
- Packaging the products: Concern replied that currently they are working on packaging issues
- Will this pilot prove the economic return feasibility and profitability to farmers of this crop versus the cost of production (labors, inputs, irrigation etc.)
- Vulnerability to frost, unfavorable climate conditions which might affect flowering especially in Akkar during specific periods of the year

5. Presentation on the FSS updates

Following, was a presentation delivered by Ms. De Gregorio, the FSS Coordinator, giving a brief on main facts and figures related to the response from the FSS perspective. The main updates presented corresponded to the main indicators required to draft the mid-year narrative dashboard for the sector covering the period (Jan - June 2019). As a result the main indicators’ results included the funding status of the sector, the population reached for in-kind and cash-based assistance, the reached vulnerable Lebanese host communities and farmers as well as the technical support dedicated to agricultural livelihoods activities in addition to investment support to small-scale farmers.

It has been noted that once the dashboard validated by the Inter-Agency team management, it will be disseminated to all FSSWG partners.

6. AOB

Finally, the FSS Coordinator presented the main activities to be conducted:

- FSSWG core group first meeting will be held on the Food Security Sector Strategy for the LCRP planning process 2020;
- FSS field consultations will be carried out from 16 September-20 September 2019 (Situation analysis, sector strategy, cross-sectoral themes);
- 23 September 2019 (TBC): first meeting of the technical subgroup on agricultural value chains with LH sector;
- October 2019: draft of the FSS strategy to be circulated with FSSWG
- Main events during the coming 3 months in preparation of the LCRP planning process 2020.
**Action points**

- Partners to update the matrix that will be circulated regarding the partners’ interventions from January till September 2019 on trainings and agricultural activities to feed for the preparation of a FSS brief on agricultural value chains.

**Next WG meeting will be on or around 8 October 2019.**