



COVID-19 RESPONSE: LEGS GUIDANCE NOTE

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The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting on lives and livelihoods across the globe, as well as affecting all aspects of development and humanitarian endeavour. This LEGS Guidance Note aims to highlight ways in which the LEGS Approach can be applied in the current situation, both to inform on-going operations and also to guide preparations for the pandemic's eventual recovery phase. This is a working document that will be revised and updated as new information and feedback becomes available.

Many livestock keeping communities around the world are already vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters, including drought, flood, earthquakes, tsunamis and conflict, and some are already in the midst of crises such as the locust infestation in East Africa. Some will become more vulnerable as a result of the pandemic, as many emergency response operations are restricted or put on hold. However, some activities are continuing, albeit in many cases under different and difficult operating environments, and LEGS standards and guidance may be helpful in these circumstances. There is also the need to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on livestock and their owners to plan for the post-COVID-19 recovery phase, to address the impacts both of the pandemic and of other disasters which have continued to affect livestock keeping communities, and again LEGS guidance can be applicable here.

LEGS GUIDANCE APPLICABLE TO CURRENT ACTION

- The **LEGS Livelihoods Objectives** emphasise the importance of considering livelihoods in disaster response. The COVID-19 pandemic is an economic as well as a health crisis, and whilst the primary focus of most operations is rightly on saving lives, the impact on livelihoods will become increasingly acute, with predictions of an L-shaped recession in most low income countries. This should be recognised and addressed wherever possible. Planning for recovery (see below) should also be part of current activities.
- The LEGS **Core Standards** (see box) remain relevant and important for any emergency response, in particular *Standard 1: Participation* and the rights of affected communities to be engaged in decision making that affects their lives; and *Standard 2: Preparedness*,

LEGS 8 Core Standards

The LEGS Handbook features eight Core Standards, which are common and integral to all livestock interventions.

 Participation <p>The affected population actively participates in the assessment, design, implementation, and monitoring & evaluation of the livestock programme.</p>	 Preparedness <p>Emergency responses are based on the principles of disaster risk reduction (DRR), including preparedness, contingency planning and early response.</p>
 Competencies <p>Staff possess appropriate qualifications, attitudes and experience to effectively plan, implement and assess livelihoods-based livestock programmes in emergency contexts.</p>	 Initial Assessment & Response Identification <p>The most appropriate, timely and feasible responses are identified through a participatory process, and based on assessment of the role of livestock in livelihoods, the nature of the emergency and the operational and policy context.</p>
 Technical Analysis & Intervention <p>Livestock interventions are based on sound technical analysis and fairly implemented based on transparent and participatory targeting.</p>	 M&E and Livelihoods Impact <p>Conducted to check and refine implementation as necessary, as well as to draw lessons for future programming.</p>
 Policy & Advocacy <p>Where possible, policy obstacles to the effective implementation of emergency response and support to the livelihoods of affected communities are identified and addressed.</p>	 Coordination <p>Different livestock interventions are harmonized and are complementary to humanitarian interventions intended to save lives and livelihoods; they do not interfere with immediate activities to save human lives.</p>

which highlights the importance of preparing and planning to address the impacts of the crisis.

- LEGS cross-cutting issues such as *Gender and Social Equity*, and *Protection* should also not be overlooked in the haste to respond to the crisis. As for any crisis, the impact of the pandemic is different for men and women; and children, women and other socially differentiated groups may become more vulnerable as a result (see also the CPMS and HIS standards in the Additional Resources below).
- The **LEGS Assessment Checklists** emphasise the importance of understanding the role of livestock in livelihoods and the impact of any given crisis on production and management. This information is vital to ensure that livelihoods are appropriately supported. For most small scale livestock keepers animals represent a direct food source as well as a financial asset that can be sold. In the current crisis the role of livestock may change as other food sources become restricted – for example greater reliance on household poultry to produce eggs for home consumption; or the loss of livestock assets as animals are consumed in the absence of other food sources. Innovative approaches may be used to gather this important information on the current and changing role of livestock in livelihoods, for example using mobile phones rather than face-to-face interviews.
- The **Participatory Response Identification Matrix (PRIM)** is a participatory tool to facilitate response planning. It provides a useful context-specific tool to help foster the identification of appropriate and timely activities that meet the needs of affected communities and promotes their participation in decision making. In the current crisis a PRIM could be completed virtually, using online meeting technology, which would help to support consultation in decision making and planning.
- The major disruption to movement, markets and services during the current crisis has an impact on livestock production and ultimately on the food security and livelihoods of affected communities. This may include: stress sales of livestock at lower than usual prices leading to asset loss; the loss of or limited access to markets reducing livestock keepers' income; transhumance and other movement-based livestock production strategies affected; restricted movements in urban and peri-urban settings affecting livestock management; and labour shortages due to family illness. In these contexts some LEGS Standards may be particularly applicable (see also MERS Handbook in the Additional Resources below):
 - **LEGS Standard 2: Commercial Destocking** provides guidance on support to markets for livestock offtake, which could be applied to support livestock sales where markets are still functioning.
 - **LEGS Standards on Veterinary Support** provide guidance on support for animal health. Where possible, the supply chain for these services should be supported through the crisis, not only to respond to current need, but also to help the private sector systems that may be particularly hard hit but that will be vital in the recovery phase and into the long term (see LEGS Handbook *Veterinary Support chapter: Local Capacities, and Affordability and Cost Recovery*, p114-5).
 - Similarly, where possible the supply of feed should be supported through the crisis, see the **LEGS Standards on Ensuring Feed Supplies**, in particular *Feed Standard 4: Sources and Distribution*. Restrictions on movement and transport may foster the use of local feed, as encouraged by LEGS – see *Guidance Note 6: Indigenous distribution structures*. Support to feed banks to increase local feed availability may be a suitable response during the crisis, see *Feed Case Study 6.3*.
 - Livestock-keepers currently in IDP or refugee camps may find it very difficult to access feed and water for their livestock. The LEGS Policy Brief **Addressing the Challenges of Livestock in Camps** (available on the LEGS website resources page) highlights some of these issues.
 - Depending on the feasibility of movement and the functioning of local markets, cash and/or voucher responses may be more appropriate than in-kind support during this crisis – see the LEGS Handbook **Cash Transfers section** on pages 63-66 including Tables 3.5 and 3.6 (see also guidance from CaLP in the Additional Resources below) .

LEGS GUIDANCE APPLICABLE TO PLANNING FOR FUTURE ACTION

- While active responses may not be possible during the crisis, there is the opportunity to prepare detailed plans for the recovery phase, once movement is possible and operations can resume. The **LEGS Core Standard 2: Preparedness** provides the basis for this process, including the development of detailed plans and drawing on any assessment information it is possible to collect during the crisis itself (see Assessment Checklists above).
- Each of the six technical chapters of LEGS begin with **Standard 1: Assessment and planning** related to the particular technical intervention. These encourage detailed planning of activities based on local information and needs and are supported by **Decision Trees** for each intervention. The subsequent standards for each technical area may be applicable to a post-COVID-19 response, depending on local needs and contexts; some of particular relevance are highlighted here:
 - **LEGS Standard 2: Commercial Destocking** may provide guidance on support to markets for livestock offtake if needed and appropriate to meet livestock owners' cash needs in the recovery phase.
 - **LEGS Veterinary Support chapter** highlights the importance of protecting and supporting the private sector systems which livestock keepers depend on, including private service providers (for example Community Animal Health Workers) and private veterinary pharmacies. These services can be affected both by the impact of disasters such as the current pandemic but also by the impact of free services and free distribution of veterinary medicines which undermine their viability in the longer term (see LEGS Handbook *Veterinary Support chapter: Local Capacities, and Affordability and Cost Recovery*, p114-5).
 - The LEGS **Standards on Provision of Livestock** focus on replacing lost livestock assets and also building assets for recovery. Both options may be applicable in a post-COVID-19 response, based on a clear understanding of the current and potential role of livestock in livelihoods (see *Standard 1: Assessment and Planning, Key Action 1: Role of livestock in livelihoods*). The *Provision of Livestock Decision Tree* provides guidance in unpacking this issue further.

This Guidance Note aims to highlight tools and information that may be of use in planning for current and future livestock-based responses. We welcome feedback from the field on current experiences, good practice and lessons learned so that we can update and improve this Guidance Note - please contact the [LEGS Coordinator](#).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- *The LEGS Handbook*: <https://www.livestock-emergency.net/download-legs/>
- *Addressing the Challenges of Livestock in Camps* – LEGS Policy Brief: https://www.livestock-emergency.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/LEGS-PolicyBrief1_2017.pdf
- *Applying humanitarian standards to fight COVID-19* – guidance from Sphere and its partners in the Humanitarian Standards Partnership: <https://spherestandards.org/coronavirus/>
- *MERS Guidance in Response to COVID-19* – from the Minimum Economic Recovery Standards: www.mershandbook.org
- *Minimum Economic Recovery Standards (MERS)* – Handbook: www.mershandbook.org
- *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS)* – Handbook: https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/6819/pdf/cp_minimum_standards_english_2013_v2.pdf
- *CVA in COVID-19 Contexts* – Guidance from the CaLP network: <https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/cva-in-covid-19-contexts-guidance-from-the-calp-network/>
- *Humanitarian Inclusion Standards (HIS)* – Handbook: https://humanity-inclusion.org.uk/sn_uploads/document/humanitarian-inclusion-standards-for-older-people-and-people-with-disabilities-ADCAP.pdf
- *Interim Guidance: Gender Alert for COVID-19 Outbreak* – IASC Reference Group for Gender in Humanitarian Action: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-standing-committee/interim-guidance-gender-alert-covid-19-outbreak-developed-iasc>