JORDAN REFUGEE RESPONSE INTER-SECTOR WORKING GROUP

Standard Operating Procedures for Needs Assessments

The first version of the SOPs was finalized on 06 April 2014 by the Inter-Sector Working Group (ISWG), which was updated on 06 March 2016. This document will be revised and updated, according to need.

Context, purpose and scope of this document

1. Context

With the conflict in Syria ongoing, refugees continue to enter Jordan in search of protection and safety. As the Syrian refugee population grows in Jordan, and as persons of concern move internally within the country, developing their own coping strategies, the information needs of humanitarian organisations increase. The humanitarian community looks for an accurate and reliable understanding of beneficiaries' needs in order to be able to better design programming to support and assist.

Following discussions at Sector Working Groups, and subsequently at the Inter-Sector Working Group level, some of the challenges that have been faced at field level are:
- a lack of systematic coordination of assessments;
- an automatic tendency to aim for primary data collection;
- a lack of sharing of results meaning that secondary data is not readily available;
- duplication of information needs.

The Inter-Sector Working Group (ISWG) understands that these challenges have caused over-assessment and 'assessment fatigue' within beneficiaries, causing frustration, and potentially skewing the results of surveys.

2. Purpose of this document

The establishment of common Standard Operating Procedures for conducting, coordinating and sharing the results of assessments was identified, by the ISWG, as a priority. These SOPs are intended to guide agencies through the process of coordinating needs assessments, within the refugee component of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) in part to reduce duplication of efforts. These SOPs focus on supporting and promoting information-sharing between agencies, and ensuring that appropriate Sector Working Groups are able to provide technical input where relevant.

3. Scope of this document

These SOPs apply to all data collection exercises (whether primary or secondary) involving any part of the refugee or host communities in Jordan including:
- knowledge, attitudes and practice (KAP) surveys;
- needs assessments;
- contextual analysis or research by individuals, organisations or institutions; and
- large project or programme evaluations.

These SOPs do not apply to data collection activities which are considered part of normal programming, including:
- gathering of output-level data;

- post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) activities; and
- beneficiary selection activities for approved projects.

This SOP does not cover obtaining government approval for assessments. Requesting authorisation from MOPIC is a separate and parallel process which agencies should go through. Additionally, agencies should seek the approval of the appropriate line ministries. The assessments / researches having a Health component, shall be additionally communicated to the Health sector chair for the further guidance and approval.[1] Lastly, approval by the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate (SRAD) is required in some geographical locations, such as in Zaatari Camp and Azraq Camp.[2] For more detail for Zaatari Camp, please see **Annex 4**.

Additional guidance for external academic researchers including university students, please see **Annex 5**.

Principles

When planning, conducting or reporting a needs assessment with any part of the refugee or host communities in Jordan, agencies should be guided by the following principles:

Assessment design

- Assessments should inform decision-making: agencies conducting assessments should have a clear understanding of how the information from an assessment will be used prior to starting the assessment process.
- Assessments should include a review of secondary data, where such data is available. Primary data collection should only be undertaken if information is not available already through data collection that is completed or in progress or is not available through key informant interviews with service providers, and if the primary data collection would fill a clearly identified information gap. If similar information is available through secondary data, and it can be taken to be reasonably current, further primary data collection should be avoided.
- Primary data collection activities should be coordinated wherever possible. This can either be through joint assessments where agencies collaborate to undertake the same data collection exercise, or harmonised assessments with agencies agreeing a minimum set of data to collect and a standard methodology to ensure that information is comparable.
- Data collection activities should be participatory wherever possible, including affected populations in the design, implementation and analysis of the data. The results should be shared with the affected population, and in particular, efforts should be made to advise the informants of the results of the assessment. Data should be verified with assessment participants, and triangulated where possible.
- The sample size for assessments should be the minimum possible whilst ensuring that the assessment provides sufficient data to be representative of the target population. Additionally, the number of women, girls, boys and men should be statistically representative of the target population.
- Assessments should have ethical justification for being conducted. Research that can equally be carried out on populations not of concern should be restricted, and studies limited to questions that cannot be addressed in any other context. Research should be of direct benefit to the target population.
- The 'Do No Harm' principle should be understood and strictly adhered to in all situations. The intended benefit to assessment participants must be balanced against the risks involved in conducting the assessments. This includes: being mindful of the mental capacity of the informants; the likely (unintended) consequences of participation; the confidentiality in the space of consultation; and the length of time for consultation etc.

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[1] Please contact Ibraheem Abu-Siam *abusiam@unhcr.org*
[2] In Zaatari Camp, the finalised questions should be presented to SRAD for approval. This is an obligatory step, which is applicable to Azraq camp, too.

- Mitigation measures against any identified risks must be in place before any primary data collection commences. This may include offering services or counselling as part of the primary data collection phases, which is only possible with qualified and experienced members of the assessment team. (See Ethics Checklist, Annex 2)
- Assessments that relate to SGBV will follow the WHO Ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies *(http://www.who.int/gender/documents/OMS_Ethics&Safety10Aug07.pdf)*

Assessment implementation

- Participants in assessments (interviewees, focus group participants, etc.) should give 'informed consent', understanding why they are asked to share information and how that information will be used. This includes the degree to which information will remain confidential and how it will be shared with third parties. For participants under 18, informed consent should additionally be sought from parents or legal guardians.
- The assessment should seek the views of women, girls, boys and men of all age groups, in ways that are both ethical and culturally-sensitive, and likely to collect valid information about their respective needs (including specific needs, such as those relating to disability, injury or ageing), unless the assessment is focussing on a particular sub-group.
- Assessors should be in the position to refer individuals to appropriate support mechanisms should difficult issues be discussed or raised, such as protection concerns, including sexual or gender-based violence.
- Organisations should not provide incentives to households participating in assessments, as this causes bias.

Process

In order to ensure appropriate coordination of assessments, an agency wishing to conduct an assessment should go through the following process, with further details on each step detailed below:

1. Define the objective for the assessment, and how the information will be used;
2. Complete the Ethics Checklist (see Annex 2);
3. Upload the proposed assessment data onto the Needs Assessments Registry; *http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107*
4. Inform geographic coordination structures (Camp Management, or urban coordination systems);
5. Inform geographic sector Working Groups, where applicable;
6. Inform country-level sector Working Groups;
7. Share questionnaire with sector chairs, where requested (for primary data collection[3] only);
8. Sector Working Group chairs (or Sub-sector Working Group chairs) mark assessments as 'approved' in the Needs Assessments Registry (for primary data collection only);
9. Conduct primary data collection;
10. Update information on the Needs Assessment Registry;
11. Share the assessment findings with corresponding coordination mechanisms (both geographic and sector-based).

Despite many steps, this is not an intensive process, and several steps can be undertaken in parallel (see attached flowchart). Agencies should allow a minimum of two weeks, however, to complete this process, and this procedure should not take more than six weeks. In general sufficient time should be allowed to ensure that a Sector Working Group or Task Force meeting can take place during which upcoming assessments are

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[3] Primary data collection includes any data collection activity where the source of information is direct contact with human subjects, including both refugees and Jordanian citizens.

discussed. Agencies wishing to undertake assessments should be able to discuss the objectives of the assessment, and potentially the type of questions asked.

Agencies are expected to go through the process outlined above. In exceptional circumstances, however, such as during periods of emergency operations, the process can be fast-tracked.

1. Define the objective for the assessment, and how the information will be used
Information about all previous and planned assessments should be in the Needs Assessments Registry. Agencies will be expected to review previous and planned assessments that address similar data. When proposing to undertake primary data collection, agencies will be encouraged to demonstrate a suitably thorough secondary data review as justification. It should be clear, from the outset, what exact information is sought through the assessment, and how the data will be used, such as what programmatic decisions will the information inform.

2. Complete Ethics Checklist (Annex 2)
The Ethics Checklist is intended to first assist agencies in addressing ethical concerns in the planning phases and, second, to aid sector leads in the review of proposed assessments.

3. Upload the proposed assessment data onto the Needs Assessments Registry
http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107
Details of the planned assessment should be uploaded into the Needs Assessments Registry. This will include the expected data to be collected, the methodology, the target population, the sample size and the time frame. (This information may not be completely available at this stage, but any information that is available should be uploaded, and missing information should be completed / changing information should be updated as soon as possible.) Registering plans as early as possible will allow other agencies to know what data is due to be collected. This will include whether the assessment is expected to include primary data collection, or only a secondary data review.

4. Review data in the Assessments Registry
Information about all previous and planned assessments should be in the Needs Assessments Registry. Agencies will be expected to review previous and planned assessments that address similar data. When proposing to undertake primary data collection, agencies will be encouraged to demonstrate a suitably thorough secondary data review as justification.
The Coordination Associate could support by providing links to assessments that collect similar data to the proposed data collection exercise.

5. Inform geographic coordination structures (Camp Management, or urban coordination systems)
On a regular basis, geographic coordination structures are expected to review what assessments are planned in their areas. If there is the opportunity for collaboration or joint data collection, they will be encouraged to promote this amongst participating agencies.
The Coordination Associate could support by providing the coordinator with a list of newly proposed or updated assessments within the relevant geographical area, including links to the assessment in the Needs Assessment Registry, as well as a list of other planned assessments for information and reference.

6. Inform geographic sector WGs, where applicable
On a regular basis, geographic sector WGs (and HCSP mechanisms where applicable) are expected to review what assessments are planned in their areas. If there is the opportunity for collaboration or joint data collection, they will be encouraged to promote this amongst participating agencies.
The Coordination Associate could support by providing the coordinator with a list of newly proposed or updated assessments within the relevant geographical area and sector, including links to the assessment in the Assessment Registry, as well as a list of other planned assessments for information and reference.

7. Inform country-level Sector Working Groups
On a regular basis, country-level Sector Working Groups mechanisms are expected to review what assessments are planned in their areas. If there is the opportunity for collaboration or joint data collection, they will be

encouraged to promote this amongst participating agencies. The agency proposing the assessment should check with the Sector Leads that their lines of inquiry are useful for the relevant sectors. If not, prioritized lines of inquiry should be incorporated into the assessment.

The Coordination Associate could support by providing the coordinator with a list of newly proposed or updated assessments within the relevant sector, including links to the assessment in the Needs Assessment Registry, as well as a list of other planned assessments for information and reference.

8. Share questionnaire with sector chairs where requested (for primary data collection only)

Sector Working Group chairs can request to see the questionnaire, to ensure it will collect relevant data from a technical standpoint and seek data which is prioritised by the Sector Working Group. If, after having informed country-level Sector Working Groups, the chair requests to see a copy of the questionnaire to be used, a final draft should be shared with them if they ask. Sector Working Group chairs will then have three working days during which to raise questions, or to request the assessment be put on hold until a full Sector Working Group meeting can be held, or at least feedback sought via email. Feedback should be provided within three weeks.

The Coordination Associate could support this process by reminding sector chairs of upcoming deadlines for responses.

9. Sector Working Group chairs mark assessments as 'approved' in the Needs Assessments Registry (for primary data collection only)

If the following criteria are met:
- primary data collection is justified;
- there are no apparent ethical considerations or concerns;
- the assessment is expected to collect useful and relevant data for the sector;
- the data collection methods for women, girls, boys and men are valid; and
- the Sector Working Group chairs have no comments on the questionnaire

They can then mark the assessment as 'approved' in the Needs Assessments Registry, to confirm that this process has been followed sufficiently.

This approval process applies equally to sub-sector Working Group chairs, where the assessment falls just under one sub-sector. If it falls under multiple sub-sectors of one sector, the Sector chair becomes responsible to approve the assessment. Assessments across multiple sectors will need the approval of the Inter Sector WG Chair, who is responsible for gathering feedback from each relevant Sector Working Group chair.

The Coordination Associate could support by doing this on behalf of Sector Working Group chairs, upon their instruction.

10. Conduct primary data collection

The agency conducts the primary data collection. Following data collection, Sector Working Group chairs can offer support and guidance on data analysis, if appropriate.

11. Update information on the Needs Assessments Registry

On completion of the assessment, the agency should check the information on the Needs Assessments Registry, and update it. Assessment results and analysis should also be uploaded.

The Coordination Associate could support by advising the agency on what information is required in the Registry, and checking data quality and consistency in the uploaded information.

12. Share the assessment report with corresponding coordination mechanisms (both geographic and sector-based)

Results of the assessment are shared with the appropriate coordination mechanisms. It is recommended to present the information back to Sector Working Groups, but this does not constitute endorsement of the analysis. The information provided back to the sectors should include a summary of findings as well as any recommended actions for the relevant Sectors. Where possible, this should also include information about the link between the assessment findings and activities of the agency such as planned interventions or programme modifications. The original data would remain owned by the agency undertaking the assessment.
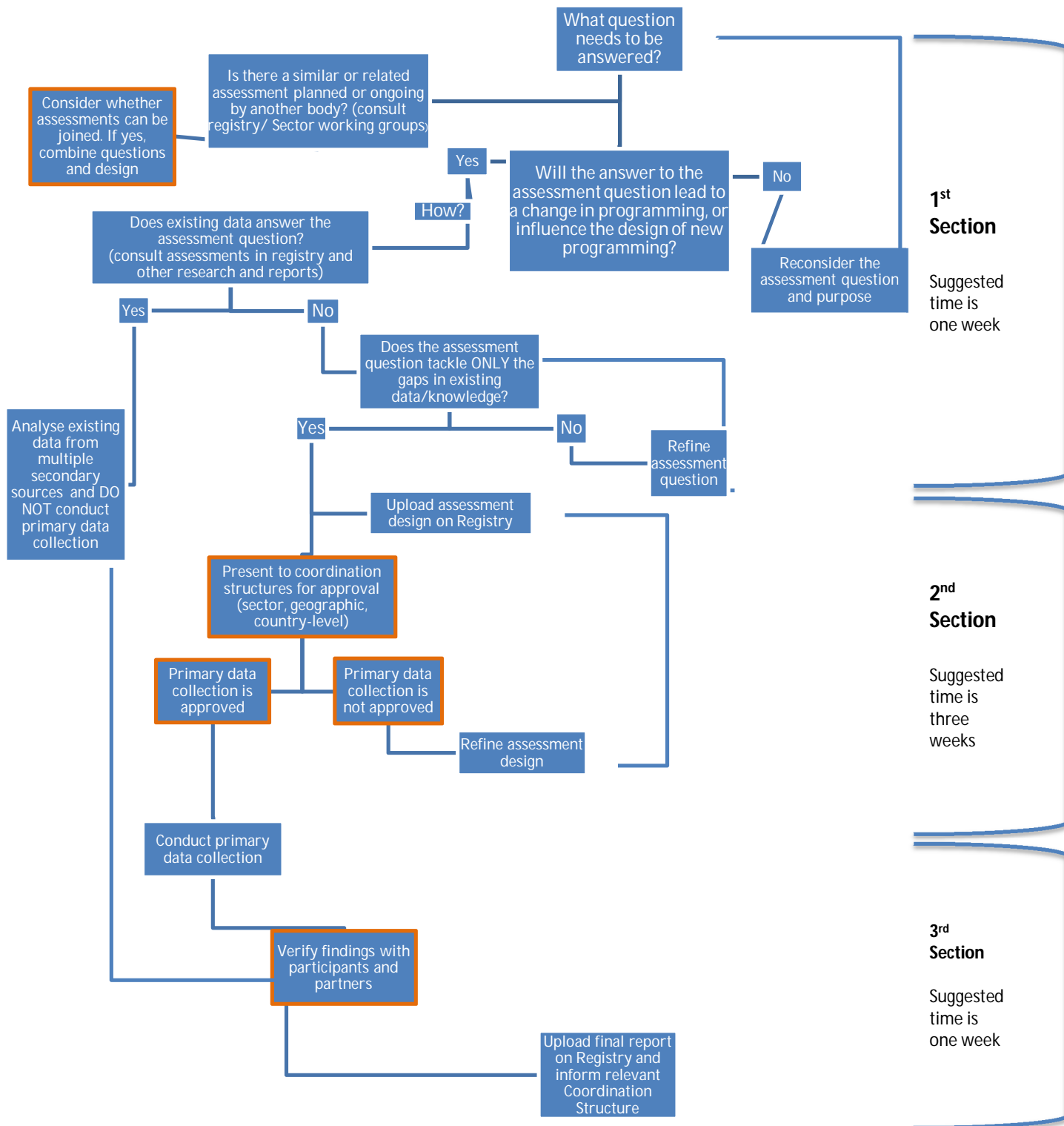
The Coordination Associate could support by providing the coordinator with a list recently updated and completed assessments within the relevant geographical area and/or sector, including links to the analysis in the

Assessment Registry. The update could potentially include a summary of key findings from relevant assessments, as well as a list of other completed assessments for information and reference.

Dispute resolution

- Disagreement between the Sector Chair and a requesting organization on the rejection of an assessment can be referred to the Inter-Sector Working Group. The review will not take longer than 2 weeks.
- Disagreement between the Inter-Sector Working Group and a requesting organization on the rejection of an assessment can be referred to the Inter-Agency Task Force. The review will not take longer than 4 weeks.
- Should the review be urgent, the UNHCR Representative, in consultation with the sector chair and the head of the requesting organization, can take a final decision.
- Assessments which remain unfunded and unimplemented for six months after the initial planned date will be removed from the Needs Assessments Registry.

What question needs to be answered?

Is there a similar or related assessment planned or ongoing by another body? (consult registry/ Sector working groups)

Consider whether assessments can be joined. If yes, combine questions and design

Yes

How?

Will the answer to the assessment question lead to a change in programming, or influence the design of new programming?

No

Reconsider the assessment question and purpose

1st Section

Suggested time is one week

Does existing data answer the assessment question? (consult assessments in registry and other research and reports)

Yes

No

Analyse existing data from multiple secondary sources and DO NOT conduct primary data collection

Does the assessment question tackle ONLY the gaps in existing data/knowledge?

Yes

No

Refine assessment question

Upload assessment design on Registry

Present to coordination structures for approval (sector, geographic, country-level)

2nd Section

Suggested time is three weeks

Primary data collection is approved

Primary data collection is not approved

Refine assessment design

Conduct primary data collection

3rd Section

Suggested time is one week

Verify findings with participants and partners

Upload final report on Registry and inform relevant Coordination Structure

7

When planning, conducting and reporting a needs assessment with any part of the refugee or host communities in Jordan, agencies should be guided by the principles contained on Pages 2-3 above. To this end, the checklist below should be completed and shared with Sector Working Group chairs in order to assist in their review of assessment proposals.

•   **What information is sought from the assessment?**

•   **What relationship does the information sought bear to programming for the refugee or host communities? What impact, if any, will it have on programming?**

•   **How far does existing secondary data inform the programmatic design/improvement described above?**

•   **What are the risks involved in conducting the assessment? How are these risks mitigated?**

Phase	Risks (i.e. to quality of data)	Mitigating measures
Secondary data collection	-unrepresentative sample -non-disaggregated data (W,G,B,M) -scope of existing secondary data too narrow -methodology of existing reports was flawed -major or significant informants were not consulted -data not verified	
Phase	Risks	Mitigating measures
Primary data collection	-consent may not be free and informed (especially if working with children) -participants are not fully able to refuse to participate (especially if participants are approached through service providers) -information may not be treated confidentially -assessment team does not have expertise to deal with protection or other issues arising -assessment team does not have information on referral pathways/SOPs -similar questions have already been posed and so participants' answers may be influenced	

•   **How is age, gender and diversity incorporated into the proposed sample?**

Annex 3 – Accessing the Online Needs Assessment Registry Tool

The online registry tool can be accessed using the inter-agency web portal. Following is the link to access:

http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107

Login Details

There are 3 types of user logins to be used to access the Admin Panel of the online registry tool. Every login has different access rights and responsibilities.

1. *Partner*
2. *Assessment Approver*
3. *Admin*

1. **Partner account:**
   It is a Needs Assessment Admin account for partners. This account can create new assessments and edit those assessments created by this user. The user has also the option to change the password.

2. **Assessment Approver:**
   This account is for Sector Working Group chairs/Inter-Sector chair who can see and edit every assessment in the registry, but only has access to the 'approval' fields, the general information about the edited assessment is displayed, but only in read-only mode. The user has also the option to change the password.

3. **Admin:**
   This account is for focal point who will have the admin rights to maintain the online tool and manage assigning the user accounts to partners and assessment approvers.

Requesting User accounts:

All the user login requests should be forwarded to Murad Alsamhouri (ALSAMHOU@unhcr.org)

The Basic Needs and Livelihoods Working Group (BNLWG) at Zaatari Camp is an inter-sectorial forum that coordinates assessments and facilitates information-sharing between agencies on completed assessments and results, including by the regular use of the Needs Assessment Registry.

For all assessments that include interactions with the refugee community in Zaatari (interviews or group discussions), organizations and academic institutions are required to adhere to the present Assessment SOPs. This Annex describes the steps that are needed in order to receive BNLWG approval for carrying out assessments in Zaatari Refugee camp. It covers:

1. *Required documents*
2. *Presentation at the BNLWG*
3. *Review of the assessment documentation*
4. *Needs Assessment Registry*

Required Documents

The following documents have to be shared in English (some documents are needed in Arabic as well) with the BNLWG co-chairs at least five working days before a BNLWG meeting in order to include the assessment request as an agenda point in the upcoming meeting:

1. ***One page summary of results for a secondary data review that justifies primary data collection (in English only).*** *The BNLWG encourages visiting the Syrian Refugees Inter-Agency Web Portal, and more specifically the Needs Assessment Registry to access relevant information at* http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107

2. ***Assessment Terms of Reference (English and Arabic versions are needed), including:***
- *topic and objective for the research*
- *sampling methodology*
- *questionnaires to be used*
- *intended research location and duration*
- *how the information will be used*

3. ***Duly completed our online form with contact details of the assessment focal point***, *which can be accessed at* here.

4. ***IDs for anyone entering the camp to present the assessment at the BNLWG, and the car license for any car entering the camp***

For academic research specifically, the following additional documents must be shared with the BNLWG:

5. ***Reference letter from the research institute/university for the purpose of verification***

6. ***Approval from the ethics committee of the institute/university for the research***

7. ***Description of the support required from the humanitarian agencies*** *working in the location where the assessment would be conducted*

8. ***Description of the relevance of the collected data for humanitarian agencies*** *in Zaatari (not only for the researchers/university students)*

9. ***Confirmation that the research will be used exclusively for academic / research purposes*** *(e.g. not for writing articles in the newspaper, etc.)*

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[4] *Last updated on 18 February 2016. This is a working document and content is subject to change as required*

For <u>health-related assessments, authorization from the Ministry of Health is required before submitting the assessment request to the BNLWG</u>. However, after receiving the approval from the Ministry of Health, the assessment request still has to be submitted to the BNLWG in line with the abovementioned steps. For further details on health-related specific procedures, please contact Iyad Shtayiat, UNHCR Assistant Public Health Officer, at SHTAYIAT@unhcr.org

Presentation, Review and Endorsement

Provided the above documents are shared at least 5 days prior to the meeting, the assessment request must then be presented to the BNLWG. A representative of the organization/ academic institution will be requested to prepare a short presentation and attend a BNLWG meeting in Zaatari camp in order to present the assessment request to the members. UNHCR will facilitate the entry permit request to the camp. As mentioned in the "Required Documents" section, the following documents have to be shared with the BNLWG at least five days before the meeting:

- *IDs copies of all the concerned individuals, including the driver*
- *Copy of the car license*

Following the presentation to the BNLWG, members will be given 5 working days to review the assessment tools and information provided, and suggest changes/adjustments if needed. Based on the nature of the assessment and the researcher's willingness to adapt to suggested changes, the BNLWG retains the right to reject the assessment request. If any feedback is provided, the organization/academic institution is expected to address all the working group inputs accordingly in order for the assessment request to be endorsed. If no feedback is received by the BNLWG members, the assessment request will be considered endorsed. *Following endorsement by the BNLWG, UNHCR Camp Management will submit an official letter to SRAD on the assessment request, and will notify the concerned organization/academic institution once data collection can start.*

Once all of the above is complete (documents, presentation, review, endorsement, SRAD permits), <u>then</u> data collection can start within the camp. The length of the process depends on the feedback provided by the BNLWG and the ability of organizations/academic researchers to adapt assessment tools accordingly and in a timely manner in order for the assessment to be endorsed. Moreover, it depends on the length of the SRAD approval process. There is no specific timing for the endorsement process as it varies on a case by case basis, but the BNLWG advises organizations/academic institutions to plan for at least a month from the date the presentation is done to the BNLWG.

<u>Once data collection is approved, UNHCR will facilitate access to the camp for enumerators engaged in the assessment if needed</u>. In order to request entry permit to the camp, the following documents have to be shared with the BNLWG <u>at least five days prior to starting data collection</u>:

- *IDs copies of all the concerned individuals, including the driver*
- *Copy of the car license*

Needs Assessment Registry

BNLWG co-chairs will share the endorsed assessment tools with UNHCR Information Management Officer in Zaatari on a monthly basis so that all relevant information can be regularly uploaded onto the Needs Assessment Registry.

Organizations/academic institutions conducting assessments in Zaatari commit to share assessment results and raw data with the BNLWG co-chairs once data collection is completed and the information analyzed. The BNLWG co-chairs will contact assessment focal points in the organization/academic institution to follow-up on data sharing requirements. Organizations and institutions that do not follow up, share results, or fail to comply with the assessment SOPs in general will not be considered for future assessments in Zaatari camp.

BNLWG co-chair' contacts

UNHCR: Livia das Neves; email: dasneves@unhcr.org*; Tel: 0796083917*
ACTED: Chris Ringer; email: chris.ringer@acted.org*; Tel: 0798021366*

Annex 5 – External academic researchers including university students

Annex 5 applies only to external academic researches, not to media inquiries.

External academic researchers, including university students, request various agencies in the Sector Working Groups to extend supports for their researches.

In order to ensure appropriate coordination of such requests, an external academic researcher/university student wishing to conduct a research should go through the following process.

Note: External academic researchers should take all the responsibilities to obtain the government's approval for their own researches by themselves. (Contacting agencies in the Sector Working Groups does not result in the government's approval.)

1. External academic researchers are requested to provide the following documentations.
    a. a reference letter from a research institute/university for the purpose of verification
    b. the topic and the objective for the research, the intended research location and duration, and how the information will be used
    c. approval from the ethics committee of the institute/university for the research
    d. what would be the support required from the humanitarian agencies working in the location where the assessment would be conducted
    e. relevance of the collected data for humanitarian agencies (not only for the researchers/university students)
    f. Confirmation that the research will be used exclusively for academic / research purposes (ie. not for writing articles in the newspaper, etc.)

2. External academic researchers are requested to carefully review the published assessment reports available at the Needs Assessment Registry http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107, in order to avoid duplication of researches.

3. Country-level Sector Working Group chairs are informed to consider a possibility to extend any support or advice.

4. Geographic coordination structures (Camp Management, or urban coordination systems) are informed, where applicable, to consider a possibility to extend any support or advice.

5. External academic researchers are requested to share the findings of the research with the relevant coordination group.

Extracted from *(http://www.who.int/gender/documents/OMS_Ethics&Safety10Aug07.pdf)*

1. The benefits to respondents or communities of documenting sexual violence must be greater than the risks to respondents and communities.

2. Information gathering and documentation must be done in a manner that presents the least risk to respondents, is methodologically sound, and builds on current experience and good practice.

3. Basic care and support for survivors/victims must be available locally before commencing any activity that may involve individuals disclosing information about their experiences of sexual violence.

4. The safety and security of all those involved in information gathering about sexual violence is of paramount concern and in emergency settings in particular should be continuously monitored.

5. The confidentiality of individuals who provide information about sexual violence must be protected at all times.

6. Anyone providing information about sexual violence must give informed consent before participating in the data gathering activity.

7. All members of the data collection team must be carefully selected and receive relevant and sufficient specialized training and ongoing support.

8. Additional safeguards must be put into place if children (i.e. those under 18 years) are to be the subject of information gathering.