Bekaa Livelihoods and Social Stability Working Group Meeting Minutes

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| **Name** | Livelihoods and Social Stability WG Meeting | **Meeting date** | 13 June 2017 |
| **Meeting location** | UNHCR Offices, Zahle | **Meeting time** | 10:00 am |
| **Chair and co-chairs** | UNHCR (Paul Sawaya)  UNDP (Leila Ullrich – Noemie Lanternier)  MoSA (Hussein Salemm) | **Meeting duration** | 2.00 hrs |
| **Minutes prepared by** | Noemie Lanternier  (UNDP) |
| **Participants** | MoSA, MoIM, UNDP, UNHCR, ACF, Amel, Basmeh & Zeitooneh, GVC, COSV, Fondation Jean-Paul II, Forum ZFD, LOST, Mercy Corps, Nabad for Development, NEF, INTERSOS, Peace of Art, SCFG, SCI, UNIDO, UNRWA, WFP, World Vision. | | |
| **Agenda of the meeting** | 1. Welcome and introduction 2. Central update:   i) Livelihoods sector updates  ii) Briefing on OCHA’s LHF Allocation Priority (Deadline: 20 June)  iii) Results of LHSP baseline for Majdel Anjar and preliminary results of the Stabilization Survey   1. Update on Riyak and Zahle evictions 2. Social tensions update 3. UNIDO’s presentation on their livelihoods interventions in Bekaa 4. Youth empowerment and participation activities: best practices and lessons learnt from local partners 5. AOB | | |

**Summary of discussions and action points**

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| **1.** | **Welcome and Introduction** |
|  | * The chair welcomed the participants on behalf of the co-leads. * Partners were informed that Rania Hammoud, LH-SoST Field sector coordinator for Bekaa, had recently left her position at UNDP. A new coordinator will be recruited in the coming weeks and in the meantime, Checrallah Abou-Jaoude ([checrallah.abou-jaoude@undp.org](mailto:checrallah.abou-jaoude@undp.org)) will be partners’ main focal point. * The agenda was briefly presented and validated by participants. |
| **2.** | **Central Update** |
|  | 1. **Livelihoods sector updates** 2. **Job creation dashboard**: a thematic dashboard presenting key findings of the job creation support provided by LCRP partners in 2016 has been uploaded on the Inter-Agency webportal.   Overall, **22,502 jobs** have been provided by national and international partners under the crisis response last year.  The dashboard is accessible on the below link: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=13556>   1. **Market assessments mapping**: the sector has been mapping all the main market assessments/reports conducted by LH partners since 2013. The map will be refined, updated and shared with partners in the coming weeks. 2. **Private sector engagement workshop**: a PSE event will be organized on 22nd June in Beirut to assess the concrete impact of LCRP partners’ interventions on business development and explore possible ways in which to optimize livelihoods programmes and processes in the next four-year timeframe.   Four main topics will be discussed:   1. The role of PSE in bridging the gap between demand/supply side of labor; 2. Access to market for MSMEs, especially in vulnerable areas; 3. The role of corporate social responsibility and social entrepreneurship; 4. Private sector engagement model and way forward.  * Invitations have been sent out to identified LH partners and stakeholders depending on their level of involvement with the private sector.  1. **Referral mechanism:** initially piloted in Bekaa and currently being set up across the country. Its main objective is to provide a structured and efficient framework to share current opportunities potentially offered by livelihoods partners with other sectors to enable them to refer a limited number of vulnerable individuals in needs of livelihoods support. A one-pager was shared with partners to describe the functioning, rationale and objective of this mechanism.   **Action points**  => The PSE workshop report will be shared with sector partners after the event to facilitate the sharing of best practices and lessons learnt.  => If sector partners have the capacity to accept referrals from other sectors, they should fill in the online referral form whose link has been inserted in the one-pager in order to share information on the profile of targeted beneficiaries, as well as on the preferred duration/geographical scope of future referrals.   1. **Briefing on OCHA’s LHF Allocation Priority (Deadline: 20 June)**   A Standard Allocation of a maximum amount of $4 million has been launched on 30 May 2017 by OCHA.   * **Who can submit proposals**   I/LNGOs; Red cross/Red crescent; UN agencies (on exceptional basis)   * **Target group**   People with Specific Needs (PwSNs) such as disabled, older persons and individuals with mental health, in addition to marginalized groups or groups at risk, as well as Women and children at risk (e.g. survivors of violence, exploitation and abuse).   * **Priorities/Criteria**   All proposals must comply with **one or several of the below general priorities**   * Bridging of critical hum. funding gaps threatening the continuity of existing programmes; * Activities addressing critical gaps in services for vulnerable communities; * Activities to prevent and respond to evictions of the most vulnerable refugees not covered by assistance. * Projects designed to start 1st September 2017 * **Additional Criteria** * Activities implemented by NNGO or INGOs supporting NNGO/CBO CB through transfer of core technical skills/knowledge; * Activities demonstrating innovative interventions that can be piloted, documented and replicated as a good practice; * Cross-sectoral joint programming. * **Social stability focus**   Emergency eviction response projects mitigating the immediate impact of relocation of refugees on municipalities and host communities to defuse tensions/prevent secondary evictions (support to municipal services, LH and/or local dialogue initiatives).   * **Budget**   Despite the fact no budget ceiling has been clearly defined by OCHA, partners who plan on submitting a project proposal should ensure its overall budget doesn’t exceed **250,000 USD**. In fact, the global amount of the allocation is quite limited this year and will be funding several sectors.   * **Deadline**   Project proposals to be submitted by **20 June 2017 COB** via the Grant Management System (GMS) at cbpf.unocha.org. Applications must be submitted in English. For additional information on the application process, please contact Ms. Yendi Ghossein ([ghossein@un.org](mailto:ghossein@un.org)).  **Action point**  => If partners plan on submitting proposals, they should contact the relevant national sector coordinators:   * For Social Stability: [leila.ullrich@undp.org](mailto:leila.ullrich@undp.org) * For Livelihoods: [noemie.lanternier@undp.org](mailto:noemie.lanternier@undp.org) |
| **3.** | **Update on Riyak and Zahle evictions** |
|  | The MoSA regional coordination, Hussein Salemm, provided an update on Riyak and Zahle evictions.   1. **Riyak evictions**   These mass evictions, expected to continue throughout Ramadan, result from a LAF decision taken for security reasons. So far 3,400 refugees have been evicted (vs. 6,800 according to UNHCR).  A new partial tent count yields estimate of 1,425 households remaining in the eviction area - this figure is inconsistent with both the Army figure (3,800 persons) and the former estimate (6,200 persons).  46 sites have been completely abandoned.  UN Agencies (UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF), NGOs partners and Lebanese authorities (LAF, MoSA, MoIM) have been coordinating with each other to facilitate relocations. Many refugees have moved to Bar Elias (250 families – 4,000 m2 site), and additional small sites (between 8,000-10,000 m2) have been selected for future relocations with the GoL’s approval.  Regular meetings are organized with the LAF to discuss protection issues.  Rumors are spreading that the army will continue to conduct evictions, with a few exceptions (which would concern up to 20 tents of Syrian agricultural workers who have been living in the area for a long time).  **Discussion**   * Qu: what is planned for refugees who haven’t been relocated yet? * A: sites with existing settlements will be slightly expanded to accommodate 5 to 10 additional families with the approval of the government and line ministries (MoIM/MoSA). * Qu: have you noticed increased tension since the relocations took place? * A: Not so far, which is a positive sign. Nevertheless, we need to keep monitoring the situation. For instance, following the relocations in Barr Elias, a few negative comments were posted on social media (but this phenomenon has remained quite limited).   The strategy consisting of organizing small-scale relocations to different sites has been quite successful so far in mitigating tensions on the ground.   * Qu: Have the evictions affected the work of NGOs? * A: a few municipalities located in the vicinity of Riyak have closed Syrian shops and have interfered with the work of local NGOs. Partners are gradually shifting their interventions to other ITSs and areas outside of the eviction zone in order to continue their work.  1. **Zahle evictions**   These evictions were unilaterally decided by the Mayor of the municipality (who is also the Head of the Union of Municipality). Several municipal restrictions have been implemented to limit the work of Syrian refugees.  As a result, Syrians are prevented from working even if they respect existing laws and regulations. They are also not allowed to work alone in shops owned by Lebanese.  The governor of Bekaa has contested these measures and explained that municipalities in the governorate should respect their mandate and refrain from substituting themselves to the LAF/GSO.  Partners (including UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF and WFP) as well as line ministries (MoSA…) have met with the mayor to try to finds solutions. An action plan has been drafted which notably includes the organization of regular bi-monthly meetings with municipal authorities. MoSA is also coordinating with the Mayor on a daily basis.  Overall, 7,000 Syrians could be relocated.  This situation has exacerbated tensions between a fraction of the Lebanese population and the municipal police. In fact, Lebanese shop owners and land owners have protested against these regulations and Syrians’ arrests and some NGOs have stopped working in the municipality.  Partners agreed that the limitations imposed on NGOs work by municipal authorities have been an issue.  The municipality of Zahle doesn’t allow shelter assistance in certain areas, while other municipalities such as Khirbet Qanafar have prevented NGOs from supporting some ITSs.  **Discussion**   * Qu: Do we know how many refugees have relocated to Bar Elias? * A: since most relocations result from the unilateral decisions of Syrian refugees, it has been difficult to track the overall number of individuals concerned. We estimate that 1,800 people have yet to be relocated. It has been easier in the case of Riyak evictions since refugees had requested prior approval before relocating. * Qu: in the case of Zahle, could these relocations be considered as forced relocations? * A: refugees are not forced to relocate as such but other means are used to make them leave, including psychological pressure, visits from the authorities, etc. * Qu: have tensions increased since refugees relocated to Bar Elias? * A: we haven’t noticed an increase in tension trends there. Nevertheless, local actors (including NGOs) fear that during the summer, refugees will be blamed for water shortages. In fact, water supplies have been a recurring issue in this locality but the situation is expected to worsen due to the recent relocations. In other areas, tensions are expected to increase due to solid waste management or electricity shortages.   Other localities, such as Saadnayel may face similar issues in the next few weeks since some refugees have relocated there. The Mayor of Saadnayel has already complained about the lack of available space in the village to accommodate new comers. Partners have a collective responsibility in addressing these issues and in implementing the priority measures listed in the action plan (including facilitating relocations, organizing regular coordination meetings with local authorities and conducting advocacy campaigns at the central level).   * Qu: how have local mayors reacted to these recent relocations? * A: in Bar Elias, the Mayor has been quite flexible and has notably approved the relocation of 3,000 refugees in his municipality. The situation is more complex with the Mayor of Zahle who has complained about the lack of support provided to poor Lebanese in his municipality (where reside around 7,000 NPTP beneficiaries). He hasn’t requested any financial assistance from partners but support in relocating refugees to other areas.   This complex situation gives partners an opportunity to build improved relationships with the Mayor and pave the way for a more fruitful collaboration in the future.  **Action point**  => Partners are encouraged to liaise with the sector’s co-leads to inform them of any tension development/challenges they may face as a result of the recent evictions/ relocations. |
| **4.** | **Social tensions update** |
|  | This agenda item was postponed to the next WG meeting due to time constraints. |
| **5.** | **UNIDO’s presentation on their livelihoods interventions in Bekaa** |
|  | Ms. Nada Barakat, National project coordinator at UNIDO, provided a brief overview of the agency’s main livelihoods interventions in the Bekaa.  A short video introducing UNIDO’s LH activities in the Bekaa was shown to participants (it mainly focused on a project supporting 15 MSMEs intervening in the non-food sector up until December 2015). It was followed by a detailed presentation on the support provided by the agency to local economic development and job creation in Lebanon.   * The main objective of UNIDO is to ensure an Inclusive & Sustainable Industrial Development in the country. Their approach relies on a multiplier effect model based on the idea that 1 job in manufacturing creates 2.2 jobs in other sectors. * UNIDO’s strategy concentrates on the 5 below pillars:   + **Pillar 1**: Establish Industrial Zones     - Through the development of Master‐plans for 3 Industrial Zones in Lebanon located in the Bekaa, Baalbek and South, with a total estimated impact of 30,000 jobs.   + **Pillar 2**: Develop Agro‐industries chains     - Support to 4industries in the Bekaa (including tomato production, agriculture cooperatives…)   + **Pillar 3**: Promote “Green Industries”   + **Pillar 4**: Support to SME competitiveness     - Enterprise-level support: through:   1) Business development;   * Construction of pressurized painting rooms and support to 30 companies in the region to comply with environmental/health regulations. * Launch of “Creative Lebanon” project in partnership with Rural Delights.   2) Product development   * To promote the work of olive oil producers, the furniture cluster in Tripoli and blow glass artisan in South; and   3) Community integration   * Through creation of C2C: a platform for experience exchange between the Lebanese SMEs and skilled Syrian workers.   + - Workforce market based support through:   1) Technical trainings;  2) Women empowerment (thanks notably to technology transfers);  3) Job placement support.   * + - Support was provided to over 58 vulnerable MSMEs in Bekaa/Baalbek which enabled the creation of around 655 jobs. To ensure the sustainability of its interventions, the main objective of UNIDO is to maintain these jobs in the long term instead of creating new ones.   + **Pillar 5**: Support to Vulnerable Communities   UNIDO highlighted in its presentation that investment has a multiplier effect: each dollar invested has a multiplier effect of 4.  => Strong focus is being made on job creation, especially through a dedicated support to the agro-food and handicraft value chains.  Please refer to the PPT presentation for additional information.  **Discussion**   * Qu: Was a market study conducted to define which sectors/value chains should be prioritized ? * A: The prioritization was made based an already available resources and reports. * Qu: Has the tensed security situation in Baalbek affected local businesses? * A: It has not been a major issue for us since we tend to operate in reasonably safe areas. On the opposite, informal competition has been identified as the main challenge for beneficiaries. * Qu: Are the industrial zones you referred to already operational? * A: The construction hasn’t started yet since the feasibility studies are still ongoing. We expect these zones to be fully functional in a five-year timeframe. * Qu: Are the aforementioned agricultural value chains (olive oil, tomatoes…) exclusively supported by UNIDO in the Bekaa? * A: No, there are actually being supported across the country. * Qu: How has your collaboration with MoIM evolved and how would you define it? * A: our collaboration with MoIM has been very active. MoIM only works with registered / formal businesses which has limited UNIDO’s ability to support informal enterprises. The agency has received lists of registered SMEs which could potentially be supported and has visited these companies to collect information on their specific needs and expectations. |
| **6.** | **Youth empowerment and participation activities** |
|  | Save the Children and GVC presented best practices and lessons learnt from their youth empowerment & participations activities in the Bekaa.  This exercise will provide useful information on possible ways in which to improve SoST programming in the months and years to come.   * **GVC** * The NGO is currently supporting the municipalities of Al-Ain and Al-Qaa (up until the end of August). * The objective is to improve the capacities of the local communities in North Bekaa to increase social cohesion and mitigate tensions between Lebanese and Syrian communities. * The main challenges concern:   + The difficulty of agreeing on a schedule meeting all youth needs (in project’s launching phase)   + Time and funding constraints * Lessons learnt/recommendations: * Ensure transportation to incentivize youth’s participation * Municipalities reported to easily sustain this type of initiative when it supported by construction/infrastructures or vocational training initiatives * Youth with impairment/disabilities should be more involved in youth empowerment activities. * **SCI** * The NGO supported the municipalities of Qab Elias, Al Marj and Majdal Anjar through two main types of support modalities:   + Life skills training, Youth Group (Recreational Activities), Community Initiative, Safe Identification and referrals, Computer literacy   + Humanitarian Traineeship (18 – 24) * Main identified challenges:   + Low participation of Lebanese youth in some activities due to school timing/winter.   + Fairly set the transportation allowance   + Parents’ mentality   + Link project/activities objectives to the youth real life   + Lebanese youth implementing projects in ITS * Main lessons learnt/recommendations: * Youth facilitators role in recruitment and training delivery * Access and community acceptance * Areas of operation/most vulnerable areas * PSS and youth resilience is requested * More sustainable activities (Traineeship program) * Youth targeted for life skills trainings – conflict resolution PB component |
| **7.** | **AOB** |
|  | * The **next Bekaa LH-SoST working group meeting** will be held on **11 July (10am - 12pm)** (location TBC). If partners wish to suggest agenda items, they are invited to liaise with the interim field coordinator, Checrallah Abou-Jaoude ([checrallah.abou-jaoude@undp.org](mailto:checrallah.abou-jaoude@undp.org)). |

**Participants list**

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