



Minutes of NATIONAL INTER-AGENCY MEETING

1 October 2021, 10:00-12:00

Remotely on Zoom

Chairperson(s)	Assem Abi Ali – LCRP General Supervisor, MoSA Elina Silen – Senior Inter-Agency Coordinator, UNDP Camilla Jelbart – Senior Inter-Agency Coordinator, UNHCR
Minutes prepared by	Hiba Ramadan – Senior Inter-Agency Assistant, UNHCR
Agenda of the Meeting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Situation Update on the LCRP Operational Environment - including latest VASyR and ARK/UNDP perception survey 2. Update by the Logistics Sector on fuel support 3. Winterization - preparedness, planned interventions and lessons learned 4. In-focus Mental health 5. AOB

Summary of Proceedings, Discussion and Action Points

1. Opening – Assem Abi Ali, LCRP General Supervisor, Ministry of Social Affairs

- The LCRP General Supervisor opened the meeting and thanked partners for their participation. He noted that a new government has been in office for two weeks. There will be ongoing continuity and proceeding in accordance with existing plans and priorities.
- The LCRP will continue in terms of what have been implemented during the past months and what should be conducted going forward. The plan is currently in the process of being extended for two years. Accordingly, joint work with partners is mandatory.
- With the removal of subsidies, the situation is critical and people’s vulnerabilities are escalating to levels that have never been indicated in the history of Lebanon. Accordingly, it is very important to joint efforts to provide support to those in need.

2. Situation Update on the LCRP Operational Environment - including latest VASyR and ARK/UNDP perception survey – Jad Ghosn, Information Manager Officer & Fadel Saleh, Conflict Analysis and Reporting Officer

- A 2-day VASyR Analysis Workshop held on 2nd and 3rd September brought together over 100 participants from all regions and sectors to provide in-depth interpretation and field-level insights on the 2021 VASyR results. In the workshop, an overview of the most current data (collected through the VASyR and other key data collection tools including the UNDP/ARK survey) were presented and discussed, ultimately resulting in 4 Analytical Papers (Protection Risks, Social Tensions, Socio-Economic Vulnerabilities, and Access to Services,) which are to be used by sectors in their planning moving forward. Key elements from the papers include:

A. Protection Risks

Legal Residency Status/Birth Registration

- Legal residency rates continue to deteriorate, 16% of individuals ages 15+ hold legal residency
- Younger people (15-34) less likely to have residency than older people
- Women/female headed HHs have lower rates of legal residency than men/MHHHs



- Women/FHHs have lower rates of legal residency than men/ MHHs
- Birth registration increased to 31% average with over 50% births registered with Nofous, a positive trend that is likely to continue

Top 3 Field Insights

1. North Lebanon: Notable residency decline of 10% from 2020 to 2021, whilst % in Tripoli City increased by 3%.
2. All regions: Further decline expected. Reduced GSO capacity. % of sponsorships expected to decline with unemployment.
3. Gender: Women and girls' residency deprioritized by households (13% disparity in Beirut) with exception of south of Lebanon

B. Social Tensions

- Key issues cited by refugees as drivers of tensions: 62% job competition, 31% aid bias
Continuing deterioration of the intercommunal tensions: 36% describe as negative, highest since the beginning of monitoring; compared to 24% in January 2021
Intra-Communal Relations: 31% of Lebanese describe relations as negative compared to 3% in 2018
Intra-Lebanese tensions are primarily driven by political/sectarian divides, followed by economic factors
- Currently, risks for escalation of communal tensions around the lifting of subsidies remain significant and are materializing between people (horizontal tensions)
- Perceptions that aid reaches those that most deserve it remain on similar levels since 2020. General perception that Syrians are receiving more assistance than Lebanese. Increasing vulnerabilities of Lebanese is used to request less assistance to Syrians. Access to cash and commodities risk driving tensions and violence.

Top 3 Field Insights

1. North: Dollarized assistance is leading to exploitation (e.g., landlords believing refugees receive assistance in USD)
2. Bekaa: Municipalities and Lebanese request additional services (e.g., desludging, water, food, and livelihood interventions), and in some instances, putting pressure on partners
3. National: Domestic violence levels reported where women claim that their husbands are becoming more aggressive due to the economic crisis and their inability to provide for their families.

C. Socio-Economic Vulnerability

- Since 2019, economic and COVID-19 crises pushed almost the entire refugee population to below the SMEB (89%)
- Both the SMEB and MEB were revised and increased from last years
- Average HH debt has increased from 1,835,838 to 3,430,208 LBP
- For Syrians, poverty is at the same levels as in 2020 (89% of hhs under the SMEB, 91% under the MEB). Share spent on food maintains the increasing trend (40% in 2018 vs. 51% in 2021)
- **Food Security:** Compared to 2020, more households are reducing the portion size of meals and the number of meals eaten per day. More HHs are reducing their health and education expenditure.

Top Field Insights



1. North: Coping strategies include borrowing money, selling assets, children working in agriculture, children begging in Tripoli and other cities in the North, and also involving children in illegal activities. Spending money on food instead of health.
2. Bekaa: Agro production for own consumption (home farming projects).
3. Nationally: The main coping strategy is the substitution (type and/or cheaper brand) of foods. FHH (54%) more likely than MHH (38%) to borrow food or rely on help from friends/relatives because of a lack of food, which raises concerns over risk of exploitation
4. North: Extreme poverty (under SMEB) decreased in 8p.p from 92% in 2020 to 84% in 2021, but participants mentioned pockets of much higher poverty. Many families are receiving USD from family/friends abroad. Large share of families receiving assistance.
5. South: Many Lebanese families are receiving remittances from abroad.
6. Nationally: Not expected that the situation will improve soon. Even when assistance coverage has increased, the amount it is not enough to cover needs.

D. Access to Services

Health

- 91% received the required care in 2021, lowest rate was in Beirut
- 59% of households had a member that required medications in the last 3 months.
- 73% of households know how to access medical services in case a member is suspected to have COVID-19
- Increase in % of households who require PHC support, both for Lebanese and Syrians

Top 3 Field Insights

1. Lebanese increasingly becoming unable to afford healthcare services further exacerbating the pressure on the system > impact on secondary healthcare services
2. Children are being adversely affected by the current crisis (parents are re-prioritizing), vaccination rates have significantly dropped which is worrisome
3. People increasingly facing mental health issues - unavailability of medicine and medical services

Education

- School attendance (remote) in 2021 is higher for girls of all age groups. Overall, however, there is a decrease in the number of children attending school (11% of age 3-5; 53% of age 6–14; 27% of age 15-17)
- Main barriers to access to education are related to the cost of devices (for remote learning) as well as cost of transportation.
- The main reason for children aged 6-14 not attending school is economic (transportation and supplies)
- For women 19-24, main reason for not attending school is marriage
- 30% of children (6-17) have never attended school

Top 3 Field Insights

1. Learning modalities for second shift students were through WhatsApp, which explains the low rates of engagement of refugee children/ youth in distance learning
2. Ability of parents and caregivers as well as public school teachers to support children in distance learning is considered a barrier
3. Hands-on life skills trainings, which cannot be implemented through distance learning, remains a gap



Shelter

- Refugees still live in the same types of shelter (slight increase in residential and decrease in non-residential compared to 2020)
- A 5 percent point increase in female headed households (FHH) living in non-permanent shelters from 28% in 2020 to 33% in 2021.
- Increase in average rent in LBP in all shelter types and in all governorates
- 15% of HHs had their rent increased in the last 3 months (average increase 158,318 LBP)
- Households are struggling to pay rent due to the hyperinflation leading to an increase in debt and threats of evictions
- Increase in FHH in informal settlements. 33% in 2021, up from 28% in 2020

Top 3 Field Insights

1. Bekaa/Baalbek/Hermel: Decreased capacity of refugees to maintain their shelters on their own
2. BML: Increase of rental fees post-Beirut Blast response has been reported; this is mainly due to shelters, residential units and apartments being rehabilitated post-blast
3. North: Increased mobility in ISs due to communal tensions and major incidents in the last year

Water and Sanitation

- 89% have access to improved drinking water source (87% in 2020). Lowest in North (81%) and Nabatiyeh (82%)
- 48% of households reported paying for drinking water in the last month: 63,500 LBP (avg)
- Bottled mineral water (38%) remains to be the most used drinking water source that households rely on (37% in 2020)
- 89% of individuals have access to an improved sanitation facility (91% in 2020, and 94% in 2019). With 67% access in non-permanent shelters (78% in 2020)
- The use of a basic sanitation service (an improved not-shared sanitation facility) is 76% (77% in 2020), with the lowest rate in Akkar (59%) and Bekaa (61%)

Energy

- Note worsening context since data was collected
- Fuel- and electricity shortages have a knock-on effect on water access (lack of pumping for private boreholes) as well as collection of solid waste.
- 97% of households had access to electricity (96% in 2019 and 2020)
- 65% of HHs used diesel generators as source of electricity (61% in 2020)

Top 3 Field Insights

1. Akkar was most heavily affected due to fuel / electricity shortages and high reliance on private bore holes, which, due to the lack of pumping, often remain un-operational
2. Informal settlements are most affected due to a lack of access to electricity from the grid (impacting WASH) and a lack of desludging
3. Negative coping strategies are a source of concern and potentially a source of tension (e.g., using water from the river, burning of solid waste)

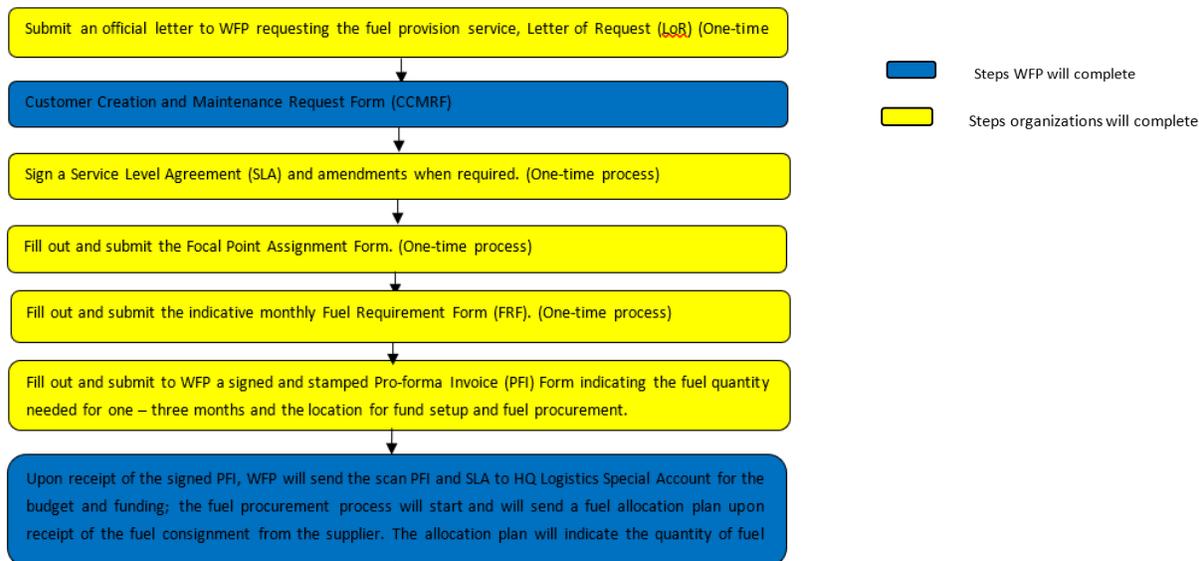
Discussion:

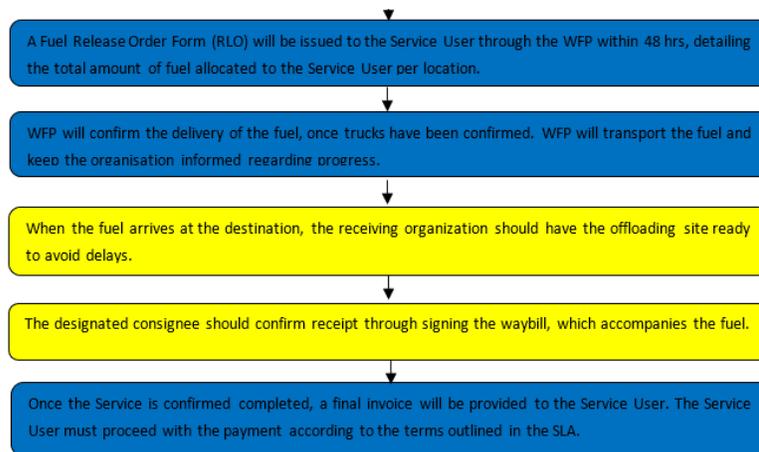


- [MoIM] - When conducting negotiations with municipalities threatening to carry out evictions of Syrian Refugees or removal of informal settlements, MoIM and MoSA coordinators need to be able to lead any tensions mitigation knowing that they can offer the complaining municipality some minor things such as waste bins, dislodging, a waste truck, sometimes cash assistance etc. If this could avoid tensions or evictions, it is important to consider this issue especially before winter and the huge amount of threat of eviction of ISs.

2. Update by the Logistics Sector on fuel support – Katja Hildebrand, Logistics Working Group Coordinator

- RC/HC has requested WFP – as the lead agency of the Logistics Cluster – to activate the sector in Lebanon to start identifying options to facilitate access to fuel.
- Main Purpose of the Logistics Cluster:
 - ✓ Ensuring sufficient fuel for basic and life-saving health services: public hospitals, PHCCs, dispensaries, UNWRA facilities, cold chain, nat'l TB and AIDS programmes throughout the country.
 - ✓ Keeping water stations active and operational across the country.
 - ✓ Ensuring business continuity through functional office facilities and movement of staff for the humanitarian community.
- WFP contracted local fuel suppliers to secure a bulk fuel pipeline to the end-users by coordinating with the relevant Sectors.
- International superintendent company to ensure that the planned quantities are being provided to the designated end-users.
- **SUPPORT TO THE HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY – cost recovery basis:**





Questions and Answers:

- Q: Is it planned to include PRCS hospitals and clinics in the emergency fuel plan through in-kind component. A final decision was expected from OCHA and the health sector.
- A: The following were recently included: private hospitals, health care center, UNRWA facilities, HIV program, and mass vaccination sites.
- Q: Could the plan be expanded to include office diesel and housing for health staff?
- A: This has not been discussed and not in the initial plan, asked for business continuity for colleagues to continue to come to the office.
- Q: Can petrol for vehicles be expanded to hospital staff and what are the criteria for inclusion, is it for NGO vehicles only?
- A: There are negotiations on the behalf of the humanitarian community about vehicles owned by the humanitarian community and not the staff directly
- Q: The official letter that should be submitted with the needs of diesel to get support. Is it free of charge?
- A: The flow chart, including the letter of request, is referring to diesel provision to humanitarian organizations, to keep the office generator running. The delivery to public hospitals is coordinated with Health Sector and MoPH.

3. Winterization - preparedness, planned interventions and lessons learned (Elina Silen, Senior Inter-Agency Coordinator)

- **Seasonal hardship** greatly affects already economically vulnerable families: will be further exacerbated by the current fuel and economic crisis.
- In the upcoming winter, there are concerns regarding gaps in **municipals capacity** to prepare and respond
- **Winter Preparedness in place for 2022/2023 include:**
 - Winter Cash Based Interventions for Syrian and Palestine refugees and Lebanese
 - Distribution of in-kind core relief items + food parcels
 - Shelter weatherproofing through kit distribution [*in Informal Settlements only*]
 - Relocation sites
 - Communication with communities
 - Mapping tension risks and mitigation measures



- Communication with authorities
- Site improvements (addressing flood risk, access obstruction) [*in ISs only*]
- Fuel to institutions (health centers & schools)
- Key challenge in terms of winter preparedness are delays in activities due to COVID-19 and lack of funding for certain activities. Specific concerns include lack of weatherproofing and the level of preparedness regarding addressing flood risks.
- Current Available Stocks can cover up to 50,000 people. Communication has been sent out to contingency stocks users with instructions on how to update the stocks
- **Challenges and Lessons Learned from 2020: Actions**
 - Preparedness for swift emergency response
 - Be precise in what we are asking in assessments
 - Ensure targeted prevention by identifying the specific locations that are most impacted by extreme weather
 - Improve inclusiveness of coordination with NNGOs: utilize IA service mapping to identify partner
 - Protection mainstreaming in the response
- **Five key risks were identified with a high degree of impact & probability and in need of conflict sensitivity considerations:**
 - *Increased inter/intra-communal tensions due to perception aid bias*
 - *Lack of coordination between LCRP and non LCRP partners (local charities, foundations, etc.) resulting in duplicated targeting.*
 - *The distribution of fuel (if considered) resulting in communal reactions both against frontline staff as well as those benefiting from the assistance.*
 - *Accountability concerns against local authorities.*
 - *Decreased operational space.*

- **Regional Updates:**

Beqaa

- Workshops are conducted each year in September with the objective of reflecting on the SOPs for Beqaa region. **This can be considered as a best practice.**
- Five themes were chosen for the winter response workshop: COVID-19 measures, relocation sites, prevention and mitigation measures, communication with community and social tensions.

BML

- Tensions between host and refugees are still at same level and main reason is job competition. Some municipalities have concerns in terms of security as they believe that some shelter kits being provided may reach people who have committed crimes and can use these kits to hide from authorities. In general, requests for support from municipalities is increasing – some municipalities will withhold assistance until additional support is provided.

4. Update on the In-focus Mental Health (Simona Perri, Inter-Agency Gender Specialist)

The In-focus on Mental Health is being developed through collecting data, evidence, projects, and best practices that are supported under the LCRP framework to address mental health psychosocial needs. An advanced analysis has been developed. The Inter-Sector is calling on all partners to share inputs in terms of assessments, data, best practices, and recommendations. The document will be structured in a way where it



includes main needs, achievements with a strong Gender and Age analysis with main barriers to access these services, and finally it will include the recommendations.

5. AOB: Annual retargeting of UNHCR and WFP Multi-Purpose Cash and Food Assistance (*Sussane Carl, Basic Assistance Programme Officer, UNHCR*)

- The selection of the targeting of the new cycle that will start in November has been finalized. The announcement will go out on October 7.
- Different types of messages will be sent for the following groups – 1) those with assistance maintained; 2) the newly included for assistance; 3) those transferred between different types of assistance; 4) the fully discontinued
- If families are discontinued but they are still eligible for winter assistance they will be informed in the same message.
- Also included in the discontinuation message is the information on the “Grievance Redress Mechanism” which will be similar to last year: this will be running until 19 November, to collect claims from refugees who are discontinued or not assisted. From these claims, only a small number of refugees will be reincluded in the assistance. This mechanism serves primarily to account for errors that could have occurred from the targeting formula.
- The overall coverage of UNHCR and WFP combined will remain – more or less – the same, which means that the discontinuation and inclusions are somewhat equal.
- WFP is not discontinuing anyone below the SMEB. Only households above the SMEB will be discontinued (this is around 400,000 for the entire refugee population).
- Overall, around 29,000 households will be discontinued or newly included. These are approximate numbers.
- There are different packages for assistance: the most vulnerable will be selected to receive the full package based on the most recent transfer value which will be a combination of 800,000 LBP/family cash assistance for basic needs and 300,000 LBP/person up to a maximum of 6 members for food (on a monthly basis for both).
- The other categories will receive either only food assistance (300,000 LBP/person up to a maximum of 6 members) or only basic needs assistance (800,000 LBP/family cash assistance).
- Nothing is changing in terms of modality: the red cards will still be used.