



## FOOD SECURITY CLUSTER

*Strengthening Humanitarian Response*

# Lessons Learned: The Food Security and Livelihoods Working Group, South Turkey

Exercise Conducted by WFP/FAO co-led Global Food Security Cluster

Draft



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## 1. Introduction

The Lessons Learned and Good Practices Project was designed to officially document key coordination accomplishments of the Food Security and Livelihoods Working Group (FSLWG) in South Turkey. The FSLWG in South Turkey is an example of a coordination solution initiated by the global Food Security Cluster (gFSC) in the absence of OCHA organized Cluster system and operational Cluster Lead Agencies.

The FSLWG is viewed as an example of a good practice of bringing together a diverse range of actors and providing them with an appropriate platform for coordination. This document captures the lessons learned from gFSC’s adaptive practices which led to the establishment of a successful coordination platform for cross-border operations for the Syria response.

## 2. Methodology

The findings in this report are the result of consultations/interviews with the core members of the FSLWG including the Cluster Lead Agencies, the NGO forum coordinator and FSLWG NGO co-chair GOAL. Literature reviews comprised the gFSC scoping mission report, FSLWG ToRs and meeting minutes. In addition, consultations were conducted with the other FSLWG members.

## 3. Coordination Context

To address the critical needs of the affected populations in Syria (especially in the Northern governorates), a number of agencies are providing food and livelihood related assistance from Southern Turkey through cross border operations mostly facilitated by the Turkish authorities. These activities started in late 2012 and have escalated rapidly over the months. Food assistance remains the largest single sector of the response from South Turkey with 70%<sup>1</sup> of relief items being food baskets and wheat flour. However, there is a growing interest for Cash and Vouchers, livelihoods and agriculture related interventions as reflected by smaller projects within the sector.

In January 2013, an NGO Forum was established in Southern Turkey for NGOs with operations in Northern Syria. The Forum was originally comprised of 10 Working Groups, including a Food Security and

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<sup>1</sup> Turkish Red Crescent zero point facilitation records

Livelihoods Working Group, that followed the Cluster model. Apart from the NGO forum members, there are several other actors including the Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU), Turkish Red Crescent (TRC), Syrian diaspora agencies and other international, national and local actors. In early 2013, OCHA set up an office in Gaziantep to facilitate coordination for all humanitarian actors.

In April 2013, the gFSC undertook a scoping mission to Gaziantep and Antakya to assess the kind of technical and coordination support the food security actors might need in the absence of an activated Cluster system. Consultations took place with relevant local actors (OCHA Turkey, the NGO forum Coordinator and NGO forum Food Security and Livelihoods Working Group, ACU, TRC and donors). One of the challenges articulated by operational actors was the absence of a common sectoral platform where various groups could strategically coordinate to improve the harmonization of relief efforts.

As a follow up, the gFSC deployed an Advisor from its Global Support Team (initially based within the OCHA Turkey office for a two month period) and an Information Management Officer in May 2013. In June 2013, after a series of further consultations with local actors, the gFSC established the Food Security and Livelihood Working Group (FSLWG) with over 30 partners using a coordination platform adapted to the local dynamics.

## 4. Coordination Solution

Due to the very slow process of NGO registration; the critical issues around security, the sensitive nature of most agencies' operations, high staff turn-over and small teams of staff members a 'light but effective sector coordination solution' was requested by partners. In response to the request, FSLWG was established to coordinate: information management; assessment information; capacity building; and advocacy/emergency preparedness.

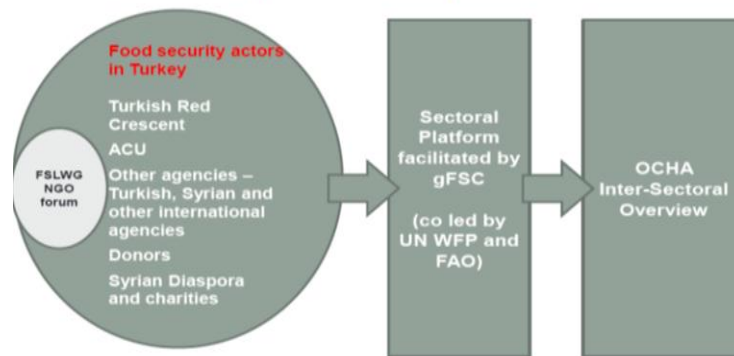
Without the activated cluster infrastructure, coordination becomes heavily reliant on relationship building and in the ability to demonstrate flexibility in building a relevant coordination infrastructure. Thus, the emphasis of FSLWG's coordination solution was on building and supporting existing systems and practices.

The NGO forum's coordination solutions were integrated into the new FSLWG as were the concerns of a large number of Turkish, Syrian and other agencies who were not linked into the coordination structure. The volatile political situation, shrinking humanitarian space, almost daily changes in the context of operations and security threats made coordination efforts very challenging. Over time, the FSLWG was able to build its community with regular meetings that provided strategic direction and a sense of common purpose among its diverse partners.

FSLWG was also quick on delivering demand driven services such as information products (3Ws report and maps) that provided a combined analysis for cross border and cross line response; technical guidance materials; indicators for assessment harmonization and associated trainings. FSLWG's capacity was further strengthened by the skills brought by the co-chair GOAL. The co-chair provided field level information; technical support and Arabic language capacity.

The NGO forum's decision to disband its Food Security Working Group was evidence that the gFSC initiated FSLWG was able to provide coordination solution that benefitted all actors. Most major stakeholders have labelled the FSLWG as a model for other global Clusters in this particular situation.

## Food security sectoral platform



### Lessons Learned:

- 3.1 A coordination solution in a non-Cluster environment is possible by drawing from the available technical resources and capacities of both the Cluster Lead Agencies and the gFSC partners. The technical support provided by the CLAs to FSLWG partners demonstrated their commitment to strengthen the overall community of food security and livelihoods actors engaged in Syria response; and FSLWG partners' willingness to participate exemplified their commitment to coordination
- 3.2 The gFSC's existing capacity within its inter agency Global Support Team enabled rapid deployment and immediate follow up to its scoping mission. The MoU with an NGO (HelpAge International) assisted the quick deployment of an advisor with NGO background who could provide the necessary coordination support.
- 3.3 Taking the time to appreciate what was in place and seeing how to strengthen and support the systems while encouraging inclusivity – as opposed to setting up a parallel/duplicate structure was important in terms of building relationships early in the process. In many senses relationship building was the most important element.
- 3.4 The gFSC's relationship with its global partners played an important role in supporting engagement at the field level. For instance, FSLWG partners' staff have been involved with gFSC global working groups, and were well aware of gFSC resources. This enhanced opportunities for local capacity building and initiatives.
- 3.5 Quality programming can be integrated in highly complex operations by prepositioning practical resources that blend well with partners' implementation strategies. For example, the common understanding on vulnerability criteria has a significant impact on integrating gender, age, disability, protection in FSLWG partners' projects.

## 5. Way forward

- Coordination in South Turkey is gradually becoming more structured. The focus will be on sector assessments, the development of a strategic response plan and the establishment of technical systems and products such as price monitoring system, training opportunities and more comprehensive information products.
- Elements of quality programming will continue to be an integral part of the sector assessment and response plan.
- There will also be scope for expanding coordination solutions through broader collaboration with activities and good practices from other countries in the region involved.

The FSLWG's initial success was largely due to the trust gained from the operational actors and subsequently from its members. It set the ground work for an adaptive coordination solution and is now the foundation for a more comprehensive infrastructure. The trust based relationship that has been the fundamental reason for the FSLWG's success will continue to guide its work as it goes forward.

# ANNEX 1 – FSLWG Terms of Reference

*A living document to be adapted to the evolving context. Excerpts taken from FSLWG ToRs.*

## 1. Membership and frequency of meetings

Membership is open to all humanitarian organizations with completed, planned or ongoing activities for food security, livelihoods and agriculture related activities. Actors in coordination role will represent their respective coordination bodies. NGO forum FSLWG will merge with the gFSC facilitated FSL sector Working Group and will attend the meetings.

The sector working group is facilitated/chaired by global Food Security Cluster and co chaired by a member on a rotational basis.

## 2. Purpose and responsibilities

The sector working group will ensure that key aspects required to ensure a minimum level of coordination are addressed and linked with coordination efforts in Amman with actors inside Syria. The sector working group will provide an inclusive **common platform** for **coordination** for food security, livelihoods and agriculture related activities through four major responsibilities:

### Information management:

- The sector will collect and compile 3Ws as per sectoral 3Ws template that has been adjusted to local contexts.
- The information from 3Ws will be shared as per information sharing protocol.
- The 3Ws will be used for two levels of analysis
  - a) Local level gaps analysis
  - b) Comprehensive gaps analysis with overall picture of the Syria response.

Expected output: To maintain an ongoing mapping of 3/4Ws for sectoral response and gaps analysis and to report against the sectoral output indicators on a monthly basis.

### Sectoral assessment coordination:

- Survey of surveys to keep track of the sectoral assessments being conducted by various actors and feeding that into STIMA.
- Proposing a list of core indicators for harmonizing assessments conducted by various agencies in the sector and also for measuring outcomes/outputs.
- Ensuring that the proposed indicators are in line with the indicators being used for the overall response.

Expected output: To harmonize assessments in the sector through a list of common core indicators to get an overview of sectoral needs and gaps for response planning and advocacy.

### Capacity building:

- Provide normative guidance on minimum humanitarian standards, protection and IASC cross cutting issues.
- Provide guidance on standardization of activities (food basket, wheat flour fortification).
- Provide trainings on specific requests for the sector actors.

Expected output: To make available appropriate and contextualized guidance to support the quality of response

### Advocacy and emergency preparedness:

- Provide space to various humanitarian actors for sharing information, critical gaps, good practices, lessons learned, emergency preparedness and other issues of sectoral relevance.
- Compile information for evidence-based sectoral advocacy.

Expected output: To support operational coordination of actors by providing a platform for exchanging information/good practices and identifying key needs for advocacy.

## **Tasks of the chair**

1. Carry out the overall responsibilities in the ToRs to meet the expected outputs and overall purpose of the sector working group.
2. Convene and facilitate meetings of the sector working (and/or joint meetings with another working group), increasing or reducing their frequency as needed but being careful to avoid meeting overload.
3. Ensure that sector working group is well-managed and action and results-oriented, with decisions clearly communicated to relevant partners and stakeholders.
4. Ensure that meetings are managed in line with the Principles of Partnership.
5. Facilitate agreement on an efficient division of labour and the assignment of responsibilities amongst members which takes account of their comparative advantages and complementarities.
6. Designate focal points or working groups for specific issues where necessary.
7. Ensure that the strategic operational framework of the sector working group is updated regularly according to evolving needs.

Separate ToRs available for the FSLWG support team (Coordinator, Information Management Officer and other staff).

## **Tasks of the co chair**

1. Participate in FSLWG meetings regularly, and facilitating the meeting when appropriate;
2. Maintain appropriate links and dialogue with FSLWG partners and other relevant actors; especially the NGO Forum and in Antakya where FSLWG team does not have permanent presence currently;
3. Participate actively in priority setting for meeting agenda and the development of a crisis response strategy and action plan;
4. Participate actively in sector/inter-agency contingency planning and preparedness, ensuring that the FSLWG members are also contributing to and sharing responsibilities
5. Promote/support training of staff and capacity building of FSLWG partners.
6. Represent the interests of the sector in discussions with stakeholders on priorities, resource mobilization and advocacy
7. Provide access to Arabaic language translation as and when required.
8. Bring primary information and bring urgent needs/issues to FSLWG's attention from direct access to field

## **Tasks of members**

1. Each member will identify a dedicated focal point to facilitate communications, as well as to ensure that they have the opportunity to participate to their maximum capacity;
2. Each member will, as much as possible, attend sector working group meetings and contribute in the agenda and action points; and will update the working group on specific area of concerns/unmet needs.
3. Each member is encouraged to contribute to the 3Ws data for maintaining an up to date sectoral gaps analysis.
4. The focal point person of each member will contribute to the relevant strategic planning and implementation of the sectoral responsibilities.
5. The focal point person, or a suitable technically skilled alternate, if available, will support relevant working groups/sub groups established by the sector working group.