UNHCR-WFP COLLABORATION ON ASSISTANCE TO SYRIAN REFUGEES IN JORDAN

LEARNING REVIEW

BEST PRACTICES, CHALLENGES, AND LESSONS LEARNT

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UNHCR Jordan Call Center

INTRODUCTION

Jordan is a middle-income country with a population of around 10 million. As of 31st March 2021, there are 665,404 registered Syrian refugees in Jordan (UNHCR proGres), with an additional approximate 90,000 refugees from other countries including Iraq, Yemen, Sudan, and Somalia. 83 percent of registered refugees live in host communities in urban and rural areas.

Refugees in Jordan face a difficult socio-economic environment. Their access to jobs and livelihoods is limited and a majority live under the poverty line struggling to meet daily needs. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated regulations to limit the spread of the virus, economic hardship, unemployment and debt levels have significantly increased among refugee populations.

In Jordan, WFP provides close to 105,000 households living in camps and communities with monthly food assistance in the form of cash-based transfers. UNHCR provides cash assistance for basic needs to 30,000 Syrian families and 3,000 non-Syrian families living out of camps, and quarterly assistance to all persons of concern living in camps, in addition to providing assistance in other areas such as access to basic services and protection. UNHCR coordinates the refugee response under the leadership of the Government of Jordan, in a collaborative effort with the donor community, UN agencies, international and national NGOs, community-based organizations, refugees and host communities.

Following a request from UNHCR and WFP Jordan country offices, the UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub has undertaken a learning review aimed at identifying best practices, successes, and challenges in UNHCR-WFP collaboration on the assistance to Syrian refugees in Jordan. The document covers a range of thematic areas, focusing on assessments and analysis, monitoring, targeting, data sharing, and accountability to affected people (AAP), while touching on broader coordination issues.

> The review aims to capture best practices, successes, challenges and lessons shared by current and former UNHCR and WFP Jordan staff. In that sense, the findings are historical in nature - covering the period from January 2014 until May 2021 – and do not reflect positive evolving coordination and collaboration between UNHCR and WFP in Jordan. This exercise is primarily based on staff feedback and does not aim to be exhaustive or authoritative, but to provide some insight into inter-agency collaborative practices.

METHODOLOGY

An initial desk review of key documents relating to UNHCR and WFP work and partnerships in-country was conducted, alongside a survey sent to UNHCR and WFP staff. In addition, a series of semi-structured interviews with UNHCR and WFP staff currently working in Jordan, and those who recently left were held to provide an overview of historical collaboration. The interviews were reflective in nature and focused on collaboration between the two agencies; what has been working well and what hasn't, and how things could be improved. In total 15 interviews were held from November 2020 to March 2021. The information contained in this report is a synthesis of this desk review and the reflections and opinions of the UNHCR and WFP staff that were interviewed and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Joint UNHCR-WFP Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the onset of the Syria crisis, the UNHCR and WFP Jordan country offices have been at the forefront of developing a broad range of partnerships on different activities through coordination and technical cooperation across a range of thematic areas.

In the past years, the relationship between UNHCR and WFP Jordan was significantly affected by disagreements on the methods to deliver cash assistance. In part because of the initial creation of separate cash delivery systems (OneCard and CCF) and differing opinions on the management of shared systems, as well as developments in cash coordination in other countries such as Lebanon and Turkey, and donor priorities towards a unified approach (interpreted as one-agency approach) to the delivery of cash for basic needs. This initially had a negative impact on other aspects of the working relationship between UNHCR and WFP, leading to reported difficulties in collaborating on some other technical initiatives, which has significantly improved in recent years.

Despite these challenges, the commitment from both UNHCR and WFP colleagues to collaborate is notable, with regular meetings and consultations at all levels, from strategic decision making, to specific technical and operational issues. In many technical areas colleagues have been willing to adapt approaches to accommodate the other agency, which has reinforced the relationship between the agencies in specific areas. In addition, both agencies have committed staff time and resources to support the other agency's activities. However, in some technical areas where joint or aligned activities might have been possible, such as a joint targeting approach for Syrian refugees, or joint post-distribution monitoring for example, this was not pursued.

Close collaboration has happened in certain areas of, such as accountability to affected populations (AAP), and in sharing personal data of persons of concern, to some extent on assessments, assistance provision, camp coordination, protection referrals, and beneficiary verification while to a lesser extent in monitoring and targeting. The two agencies have made significant collaborative progress in recent years, with the signing of the 2018 country-level Data Sharing Agreement, close collaboration on AAP, including communication with communities, and with the roll-out of the COVID-19 Joint Multi-Sectoral Rapid Needs Assessment for Syrian Refugees.

AREA	LEVEL OF COLLABORATION
ASSESSMENTS	• Regular separate multi-sectoral assessments per agency, with increase in joint assessments • Strong support to each other's planning, implementation, and analysis • Joint assessments have been undertaken, including upcoming plans • Coordination on the roll-out of mobile wallet in and out of camps
PROGRAMME	• Close cooperation on camp coordination • Close cooperation on processing appeals to WFP targeting results, which included WFP desk review, UNHCR reach out, case analysis, and individual case processing
TARGETING	• Separate approaches to the targeting of assistance for different assistance purposes: WFP cash for food and UNHCR cash for basic needs (rent, water, non-food items, and utilities) • Close collaboration around the targeting process itself, including information sharing, feedback and appeals, protection referrals, and targeting models • WFP presence and engagement on the board of the VAF, and provision of input to VAF questionnaire, indicators, training of enumerators, analysis and findings in reports

	• WFP use of VAF indicators from home visits in analysis to inform targeting and eligibility for food assistance outside of camps
DATA SHARING	• Well established two-way sharing of data based on 2018 in-country data sharing agreement, which has been frequently reviewed and amended to respond to WFP's data needs • Strong collaboration on beneficiary verification
MONITORING	• Separate monitoring of assistance provision, sharing of upcoming monitoring plans and methodologies, and reports
AAP	• Close collaboration on communication with communities, including channels • Separate feedback mechanisms, but with referral mechanisms in place

❖ **Policy and programming**

The war in Syria was and remains one of the world's largest and most deadly humanitarian crisis, generating enormous political attention and financial contributions by international donors. In that sense, as a leading refugee host country, the Jordan response has been a highly visible for both agencies, with enormous pressure to provide adequate and adapted humanitarian assistance in a middle-income country.

Great value has been placed on corporate priorities, institutional objectives, approaches and products, lending strain to technical collaboration where considerable methodological divergence became apparent over time. What may have been possible to achieve at the technical level was not feasible given strategic differences between the two agencies, concerns over operational control, variance in policy orientations (such as for cash), sunk costs, and perceived reputational risk.

Notable examples include differences between the agencies on the Common Cash Facility and OneCard approach, and subsequently blockchain technology, the rollout of IrisGuard technology, and WFP targeting approaches and the use of the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF).

❖ **Decentralized collaboration**

Where before coordination was centralized with individual focal points, collaborative outcomes have been more successful where UNHCR and WFP have decentralized coordination and collaboration with agency teams across a range of thematic areas. In addition to holding multi-functional meetings, which has relieved the stress on certain issues becoming bottlenecks, this has enabled direct technical collaboration across thematic areas. Collaboration at the technical level has over time become routine and natural, with each functional team taking responsibility for close coordination.

❖ **Early engagement and involvement**

Due to the current close working relationships between UNHCR and WFP technical teams, both agencies discuss and involve the other agency at the start of planning processes for several activities, such as for assessments, guidance, or a specific communication activity. While this has not always been the case, and does not happen across all activities, this early engagement - seeking input, feedback, and expertise - helps to increase the harmonization of approaches and implementation of joint activities.

ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

UNHCR and WFP Jordan offices have coordinated closely on assessments and analysis, including information exchange and consultation between technical counterparts on each agencies' plans, methodologies, questionnaires, and analysis. The two agencies have collaborated with UNICEF on several joint assessments regarding Syrian refugees in Jordan, working closely with the Government of Jordan. Notable examples include:

- The January 2014 UNHCR-UNICEF-WFP Joint Assessment Review of the Syrian Refugee Response in Jordan, and
- The May 2020 UNHCR-UNICEF-WFP Multi-sectoral Rapid Needs Assessment in Response to COVID-19

In these exercises several good practices have been noted, particularly on the close collaboration throughout the assessment process, and these lessons have informed the collaboration between the two agencies in Jordan, with lessons and experiences also informing UNHCR-WFP collaboration in other country contexts.

It has been noted by both UNHCR and WFP team members that there could have been greater collaboration and the leveraging of expertise and efficiencies on assessments which have mainly been conducted separately by each agency, partly due to different objectives and planning cycles. These include the following:

	Assessment name	Scope	Population
WFP	Comprehensive food security assessment	Provide a thorough and complete understanding of the food security and vulnerability situation	Jordanians and Syrian and non-Syrian refugees
UNHCR	Vulnerability assessment framework (VAF) population survey	Explores different types of vulnerability dimensions across multiple sectors.	Syrian and non-Syrian refugees (urban and camp)
UNICEF	Geographic Multidimensional Vulnerability Analysis	Socio-economic vulnerability multidimensional mapping covering 13 sectors	Jordanians and Syrian and non-Syrian refugees

UNHCR and WFP have worked closely in support of each other's assessments, including through:

WFP use of UNHCR proGres data and UNHCR basic needs home visits for analysis and sampling	WFP support to UNHCR on the verification of proGres data	Consultations and technical support on the development of methodology and survey questionnaires	Consultations and technical support in the analysis of data

"We (WFP) rely a lot on the data sets collected by and managed by UNHCR, both urban and in the camps. There have been assessments solely led by WFP, but also some joint assessments."

UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP

MULTI-SECTORAL RAPID NEEDS ASSESSMENT – COVID 19

JORDAN - MAY 2020

SHARED GOALS

Since the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Jordan in March 2020, UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP in Jordan have mobilized to ensure that the essential basic needs of vulnerable households across the Kingdom are met despite the complex and quickly changing environment.
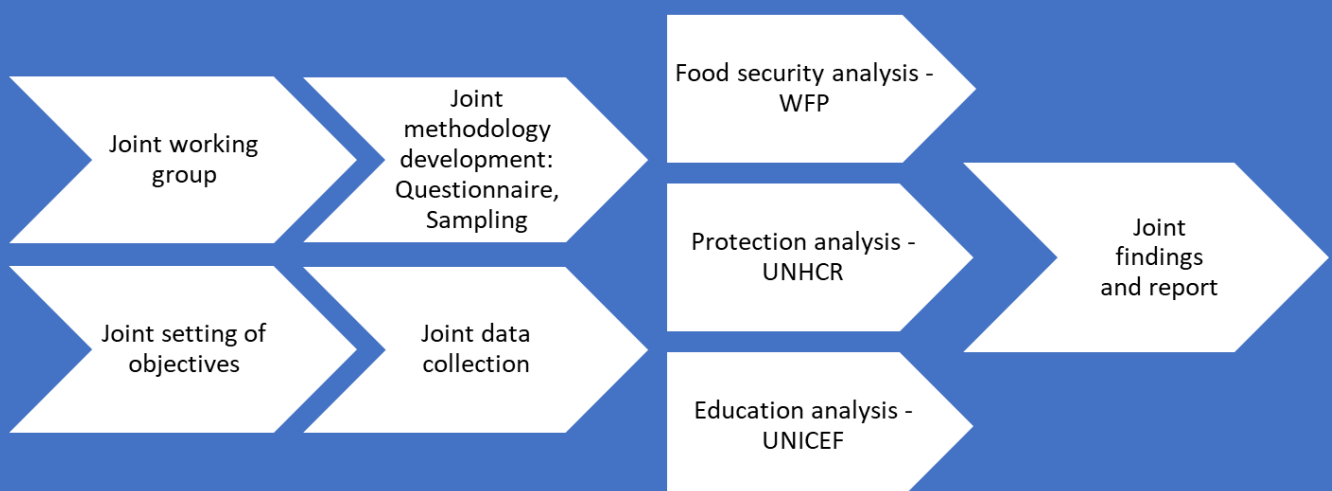
As part of the COVID-19 response efforts and as part of an intentional shift towards collaboration and sharing of resources across the UN System, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP undertook an inter-agency rapid needs assessment (RNA) to generate evidence on the impacts of the emergency on household-level basic needs.

The 2020 UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP Multi-sectoral Rapid Needs Assessment in Response to COVID-19 was an example of a genuinely joint assessment between the three agencies which involved close planning on all stages of the assessment.

"We had a working group, planning was done together, we looked at the tool together, and the sampling together. But the analysis was broken up between the three agencies, to make sure that we met deadlines for the target of analysis. This split was based on the specialization, food security for WFP, education UNICEF, protection, livelihoods and income to UNHCR. Then reporting was then done together (discussing results and reporting on the findings)."

This collaborative process ensured that there was joint development of the methodology, including the sampling methodology, with the analysis then split by area/ agency, with the agencies then coming back together for the writing of the report.

THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

- Joint working group
- Joint methodology development: Questionnaire, Sampling
- Food security analysis - WFP
- Protection analysis - UNHCR
- Joint findings and report

- Joint setting of objectives
- Joint data collection
- Education analysis - UNICEF

THE APPROACH

The assessment was a phone-based survey, targeting vulnerable populations: Syrian and non-Syrian refugee households living outside of camps, non-Jordanians and migrant workers living in Informal Tented Settlements (ITS) and Jordanian households. For Syrian and non-Syrian refugee households living outside of camps, the sample was drawn from UNHCR's ProGres registration database using a systematic random sampling approach.

The rapid needs assessment was conducted as a multi-sectoral assessment covering a broad array of sectors including health, food security, livelihoods, education, water, sanitation and hygiene, and protection.

THE OUTCOMES

The Multi-Sectoral Rapid Needs Assessment – COVID19 was the product of a concerted effort among the Jordan Country Offices of UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP to work together to collect and analyze data towards a common analysis and understanding of the needs of vulnerable populations in Jordan in the context of the COVID19 pandemic and the associated measures applied in the country to minimize the health and economic impacts of the outbreak.

The assessment informed UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP and other agencies' COVID-19 emergency response, while establishing a common understanding and agreement on the effect that the pandemic was having on refugees and other persons of concern in Jordan.

This assessment was reported to have worked very well and to be an excellent platform for further collaboration. This also led to greater exchange of expertise and learning between the agencies, with the added benefit of integrating multiple perspectives into the analysis, generating a more holistic approach to the assessment and its outcomes.

*"The biggest benefit from my perspective is that **developing the tools with other specialists** (such as in areas like education and protection), we had questions based on our background, but **having their experiences enriched my way of thinking** in terms of developing the tools."*

*"The other **advantage is in the discussions**; people would look at findings differently, coming from different perspectives. Because it involved other agencies, the costs put some limitations, but you need to be aware that you **need to be considerate of the other agency**."*

UNHCR-UNICEF-WFP COLLABORATION ON INCLUDING REFUGEES IN THE NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE AND INCOME SURVEY OF JORDAN

First conceptualized in 2018, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP have been working closely with the Government of Jordan on conducting a joint comprehensive vulnerability assessment (JCVA). The three agencies are supporting the Jordanian Government's **Household Income and Expenditure Survey** (HIES), including through the provision of financial support to the sampling of approximately 7,000 refugee households in the survey methodology.

The study will trace vulnerability over time and create a **harmonized and standardized tool** that will support an in-depth understanding of vulnerability and poverty in Jordan, at the household level, regardless of status or nationality.

The rationale for this combined approach is based on the premise that the three agencies have similar needs in terms of having a comprehensive overview of needs and vulnerabilities, and a willingness to adjust questionnaires and indicators, and for additional sampling to cover each agency needs in terms of population coverage, with UNICEF and WFP also including Jordanian nationals.

The methodology primarily follows that of the inter-agency Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF), covering eight sectors; including basic needs, education, food security, health, shelter, WASH, social protection, and livelihoods.

Delayed in part due to COVID-19, the three agencies have been working closely on this exercise for several years, working closely with the Government of Jordan on the approach.

The joint comprehensive vulnerability assessment aims to have a **shared methodology**, **joint sampling**, a **comprehensive joint report**, with smaller separate reports according to thematic and sectoral areas to meet specific sector and agency needs. The methodology includes a governorate-level representative sample for the quantitative survey that includes Jordanians and other non-Jordanian populations living throughout the Kingdom, with the sample frame provided by the Jordanian Department of Statistics and UNHCR's proGres database (for refugees).

Key outputs of the Joint Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees

Unified approach to vulnerability assessments refugees and Jordanians

Comprehensive vulnerability data for all sectors

Shared cross-sectoral analysis and findings

Informing the Jordan Response Plan and Regional Response Plan for Syrian Refugees

Sharing of agency expertise and learning

TARGETING APPROACHES

MONTHLY CASH ASSISTANCE FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES*

UNHCR

Cash for basic needs
(includes shelter, WASH and NFI components)
**Based on Minimum Expenditure Basket
(Minus food and education)**

Between 80 and 155 JOD per **household**
depending on household size

Delivery through the **Common Cash Facility**
agreement – payment through Cairo Amman
Bank or U Wallet and through NRC in camps
(transition to refugee owned accounts in out
of camp and camp)

Approximately **33,000 household** recipients

Self targeting approach using PMT
-
Analysis of subset of population
(Approximately 65% of Syrian refugees
residing out of camps) based on **household
visits conducted every two years** (unless
change in household)
-
Creates a multi-sectoral vulnerability score
that is updated on a weekly basis and
calculated using proGres and basic needs
home visits (includes protection concerns)

Monitored through UNHCR's Post-
Distribution Monitoring Survey

WFP

Cash for food needs

**Food security component of Minimum
Expenditure Basket**

15 JOD or 23 JOD per **person** – depending
on vulnerability category

Delivery through **OneCard platform** with
Jordan Ahli Bank and **Middle East Payment
Services** and **blockchain technology**

Approximately **105,000 household** recipients

Covid-Responsive (CORE) Targeting Model
-
Analysis of all Syrian refugee households
registered in **UNHCR's proGres database**
-
**Based on observable criteria from proGres
data**
-
Four vulnerability categories:
Two extremely vulnerable and vulnerable
are eligible for assistance.

Monitoring through WFP's quarterly food
security monitoring exercises

*In addition to the above monthly Cash-Based transfers, UNHCR and WFP implement several other
Cash-Based interventions, most notably the recent COVID-19 emergency cash distributions and other
transfers such as cash for specific protection interventions, and cash for winterization.*

TARGETING

WFP food assistance targeting during the Syria Crisis in Jordan

WFP supports approximately 105,000 Syrian refugee households through cash transfers for food assistance. A total of 20 percent of WFP's beneficiaries are in camps, while the rest live in urban areas. WFP provides two levels of assistance of JOD 15 or 23 per person per month, depending on the determined level of vulnerability.

Outside of camps, WFP delivers cash assistance through prepaid cards (Mastercard), which can be used to withdraw assistance as cash at ATMs or be redeemed at WFP-contracted shops, or both. In camps, WFP uses biometric e-vouchers redeemable at WFP-contracted shops and based on blockchain technology.

At the beginning of the Syria crisis, WFP started with blanket food distribution for all Syrian refugees, conducted with annual validation exercises (verifying continued presence), moving to voucher and eventually cash transfers as modalities. WFP conducted a targeting exercise in 2016 and a targeting review in 2017 which looked at four different scenarios. In 2017 UNHCR offered to conduct the targeting of food assistance for refugees on behalf of WFP, which was not seen as optimal by WFP, wishing to retain some control over the analysis and processing of data. The proposal involved UNHCR running WFP's formulas on UNHCR proGres data, but without WFP having access to this data.

In 2018 WFP planned a retargeting exercise based on the previously developed SDV (socio-demographic vulnerability) model, receiving approval from the government of Jordan in 2019 for the exercise to be conducted in 2020 which was then delayed by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. WFP are moved to a socio-demographic vulnerability model in July 2021 that depends entirely on UNHCR proGres data.

The analysis is a type of substantiation of proGres data, looking at observable household characteristics, with the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) used by WFP to triangulate the data. The importance of proGres data accuracy was highlighted to ensure low exclusion errors.

UNHCR were not directly involved in developing the models and variables for this targeting approach but were consulted during the process, and some of the UNHCR feedback led so adjustments in the prioritization approach.

UNHCR basic needs assistance to Syrian refugees in Jordan

UNHCR provides monthly basic needs cash assistance based on a minimum expenditure basket to approximately 30,000 of registered Syrian refugee families and 3,000 non-Syrian families outside of Camps, using a self-targeting approach as a first step, a refugee family can request a home visit, that involves a household verification and provides a VAF score that is used to determine eligibility. The transfer value consists of the portion of the minimum expenditure basket (MEB) that does not include food or education, which UNICEF and WFP are engaged in.

Various organisations including ICRC and IOM and other NGO's implement basic needs cash assistance aligned with the UNHCR model and covering part of the basic needs caseload independently.

The Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF)

The VAF is an interagency tool for humanitarian partners to conduct multi-sectoral vulnerability analysis to inform assistance targeting, which over 40 organizations have access to and which informs the eligibility determination for several basic needs programmes in Jordan. UNHCR is the main agency supporting the VAF, with the VAF Coordinator sitting in the UNHCR Inter-Agency Unit. Many smaller organizations use the VAF tool independently.

Based on home-visits, including a survey and observations, and backed by proGres data, the VAF creates a multi-sector vulnerability profile, including expenditure predictions, that can then be analyzed to inform different programmatic targeting that is updated weekly. Those wishing to focus on specific sectoral interventions can conduct analysis on some of the specific sectoral areas of the VAF to inform targeting. Below is a list of the key information areas covered in the VAF.

The VAF multi-sectoral vulnerability profile

POVERTY

DOCUMENTATION

COPING STRATEGIES

DEPENDENCY

BASIC NEEDS

EDUCATION

FOOD SECURITY

HEALTH

SHELTER

WASH

Basic needs household visits are conducted every two years by UNHCR and partners. VAF welfare scores are used by WFP for non-Syrian refugees, but not by WFP for the regular targeting of food assistance for Syrian refugees, although WFP have used the VAF for emergency cash assistance for Syrian refugees during the COVID-19 pandemic. ACF, Care, DRC, NRC, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women and WFP are advisory board members of the VAF.

While acknowledging the rigor and comprehensiveness of VAF data, and it's use as a secondary data source in WFP analysis for the targeting of assistance to Syrian refugees, WFP noted some concerns on the sustainability of the VAF in previous decisions on whether to utilize this approach for assistance to Syrian refugees, listed below.

Noted WFP concerns on the utilization of the VAF for food assistance for Syrian refugees

Has been perceived by some WFP colleagues as a UNHCR tool, rather than an interagency tool

Current VAF coverage of Syrian refugees felt to be too small a percentage of population

Concerns on resource intensive nature of home visits with financial and HR implications

Concerns with limited frequency/ updating of home visits

Confidence in comprehensiveness of UNHCR proGres data (if kept up to date)

FUTURE JOINT TARGETING FOR ASSISTANCE TO SYRIAN REFUGEES

Ideally, WFP would wish to conduct joint vulnerability assessments to inform joint targeting models for the assistance of Syrian refugees with UNHCR, with a common approach, and a model to limit inclusion and exclusion errors. Reference was made to the possibility to build on the global UNHCR-WFP Joint Targeting Guidelines and to the high overlap in caseloads in Jordan (94% estimate).

This proposal would include a revision of the VAF and involve a comparison between the CORE model of WFP with the VAF (looking at exclusion / inclusion error rates, and associated costs).

The VAF is seen by UNHCR as an effective and well-established model that gives a detailed profile of vulnerability allowing for the identification of the most vulnerable leading to the lowest inclusion and exclusion errors for targeting for basic needs assistance, and a platform for other agencies. UNHCR applies the VAP welfare score to target cash assistance.

UNHCR also expressed the opinion that joint targeting between UNHCR and WFP would not be feasible, due to the different programmatic objectives and types of analysis, with an acknowledgement that there is an overlap, but this is not the same, with UNHCR looking holistically at basic needs, while WFP have a narrower analysis on food security.
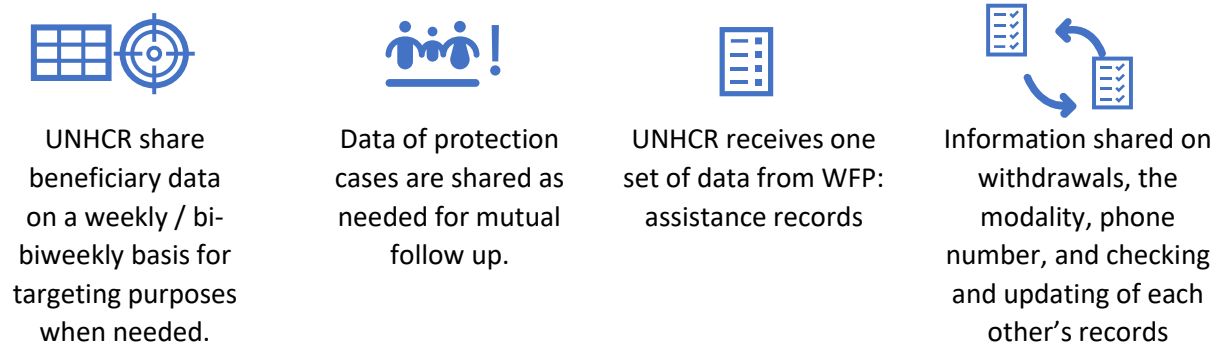
WFP have collaborated in some areas related to the VAF, such as the development of VAF indicators around food security and participation on the VAF advisory board, while collaboration in other areas such as targeting and surveys have been more limited. In addition, WFP will use the new VAF welfare score for the targeting of assistance for non-Syrian refugees.

DATA SHARING

WFP uses UNHCR proGres and RAIS (Refugee Assistance Information System) data on Syrian refugees to inform assessments, analysis, and the targeting of assistance. In general, WFP colleagues have emphasized the high level of appreciation for this "data goldmine" that allows WFP to have detailed information on Syrian refugees.

Similarly, UNHCR colleagues have been very appreciative of WFP's help in providing feedback to update proGres data. For example, WFP were very supportive during the 2019 move from using proGres V3 to the newer proGres V4. During this time WFP helped by supporting the analysis and comparison of lists for accuracy of data, and in the identification of protection cases. It was noted by UNHCR that support from WFP was positive, helpful and solutions oriented and greatly appreciated by all.

Data sharing practices between the two agencies is positive and improved markedly following the country specific data sharing agreement signed in 2018. The two agencies regularly share the following types of data:

UNHCR share beneficiary data on a weekly / bi-biweekly basis for targeting purposes when needed.	Data of protection cases are shared as needed for mutual follow up.	UNHCR receives one set of data from WFP: assistance records	Information shared on withdrawals, the modality, phone number, and checking and updating of each other's records

UNHCR's proGres database is a web-based registration and case management system used for a wide range of functions from assistance to protection case management. UNHCR invests heavily in updating available data, with significant resources dedicated to registration activities.

There is an appreciation by WFP for the depth and quality of proGres and VAF data that is provided by UNHCR, such as operational updates that include case, location, numbers, family size, and movement, and that UNHCR is putting efforts in guaranteeing an updated proGres database. Specifically, UNHCR shares 19 and 27 data points on beneficiaries and to support targeting as well as several VAF scores.

As WFP relies heavily on this data in Jordan to underpin assistance provision to Syrian refugees, through running targeting models on proGres data at UNHCR offices, expectations on the quality and timeliness of the data are high and some frustrations exist in relation to the accuracy of data and ease of data access.

Significant efforts to verify this data (updating of individual registration records and collection of additional information, as necessary) through crosschecking of assistance lists, and household visits and phone calls, have been undertaken by both agencies. However, keeping records up to date is a costly endeavor and inevitably there will be issues with data accuracy.

UNHCR-WFP DATA SHARING AGREEMENT IN JORDAN

The current strong technical working relationship and sharing of data between the two agencies was built on the foundations of a long partnership in the Syrian refugee response in Jordan and, most significantly, the **signing of the 2018 Data Sharing Agreement between UNHCR and WFP in Jordan.** It was noted by colleagues that this was a **momentous milestone in relations between UNHCR and WFP in Jordan**, with the elimination of many issues that had been divisive in the preceding years.

The negotiation of the Data Sharing Agreement itself was noted as particularly challenging and **took over one year to complete**. There were specific challenges in technical areas of the agreement, such as on the provision of data on the expiry of asylum seeker certificates, and of persons who were 'active' only. The process also involved the building of trust between the two agencies.

Jordan was one of the first country offices to have such an extensive agreement, informed by the drafting of the UNHCR-WFP Global Data Sharing Addendum and by regular consultations with UNHCR and WFP colleagues in headquarters and at the regional level.

It was noted the agreement "cleared the air" between the two agencies, enabling **staff to focus on technical collaboration and support** instead of having to dedicate resources to the negotiation of the particularities of the agreement.

Some factors mentioned in the establishment of this agreement related to changes in personnel and a push from senior management, "**once this was given top priority and simply had to be done, things moved significantly faster**." In addition, following what is reported as a tense period in-country between agency teams, exacerbated by questions on the future of cash assistance programming in Jordan, it was noted by colleagues on both sides that there was a determination to build a better working relationship.

MONITORING

UNHCR and WFP collaboration on programme monitoring on assistance to Syrian refugees has been largely limited to the sharing of reports and information gathered from both agencies' separate monitoring activities.

The two agencies have collaborated on the development of questionnaires, seeking and offering support in different technical areas. The agencies regularly share monitoring plans, data relating to monitoring, and monitoring reports.

Closer collaboration in this area has not been a priority for either agency. Post-distribution monitoring is not done jointly, in part because the agencies are looking at different sectoral outcomes, and because there are questions over population coverage and sampling with WFP covering a significantly larger population group than UNHCR.

- UNHCR currently do their own post-distribution monitoring of their assistance programmes to refugees, including cash assistance – through a standardized PDM survey tool supported by qualitative analysis.

WFP conduct quarterly food security monitoring exercises (by different strata, including control groups). Since the 2018 Common Cash Statement, many countries are currently pursuing joint PDM's. However, in Jordan there are different views between the two agencies on how collaborative monitoring should be.

- WFP see the potential to conduct joint post-distribution monitoring for cash assistance.

- While UNHCR include some food security questions in their post-distribution monitoring, UNHCR Jordan does not believe that it makes sense to combine the two post-distribution monitoring questionnaires due to different sectoral outputs being measured, and differences in assistance coverage. However, in 2020 and 2019, over 80% of respondents in the PDM reported having used the UNHCR cash-for-basic-needs on food.

Challenges and opportunities for joint UNHCR-WFP post-distribution monitoring

In principle, the two agencies are looking at different assistance coverage: food security, and shelter/ WASH/ NFI.

Inclusion of broader basic needs analysis for WFP and more thorough food security analysis for UNHCR could help inform more holistic planning and assessment / targeting exercises.

Many AAP related questions are similar in both surveys

AAP questions related to the cash service provider differs for each agency

Questions relating to complaints and feedback require differentiation for each agency as they do not use the same channels (although some channels are shared, such as WhatsApp groups)

There are potential challenges relating to the sampling approach, as WFP has much broader coverage, including Jordanians.
- UNHCR 30,000 families
- WFP 105,000 families
- WFP also include sampling of those not assisted

Would require significant investment from both agencies in working out common approaches to methodology, including indicators, questionnaire, sampling, and the analysis.

Could draw on global efforts to harmonize UNHCR-WFP monitoring approaches.

*"We don't really coordinate on PDM, we look at different sectors, but we do share findings and reports. Together this could give a holistic picture. **If we are going together on the assessment side, then why not on the monitoring side?** If caseloads are still 94% overlap."*

ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED PEOPLE

There is a strong working collaboration and dynamic between the two AAP/ protection departments in Jordan.

There is regular collaboration and **strong referrals in place between agencies' feedback mechanisms**. This includes guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), although some specific challenges were also highlighted.

Some notable examples of good practices on collaboration and support with regards to AAP include **UNHCR support to WFP on their appeals process**, with technical support on FAQ documents, triage, and **support to helpdesk centers on messaging**.

> *"I was really happy with the support they (UNHCR) provided on the appeals process. FAQ's documents and triage approach. In different phases they were supportive in reviewing each document and advising how to do it. The community protection department also offered support to use their helpdesk centers to help with communications support and messaging with targeting and eligibility material and with reviewing communications materials beforehand."*

UNHCR and WFP collaborate closely on communicating with communities, notable examples include:

- Joint advocacy on mobile wallets before piloting (for UNHCR)
- WFP use of UNHCR's WhatsApp groups during COVID 19
- UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP joint WhatsApp platform to send unified messages (and counter false messaging) – including work on inclusivity
- Briefing by WFP staff to UNHCR Helpline before any major programmatic change (verification, retargeting, etc.)
- Joint live sessions on social media answering questions and collecting feedback around targeting and appeal process.
- Joint mobile help desks missions in Mafraq

UNHCR-WFP CALL CENTERS

Initially, UNHCR provided support to WFP through hosting some colleagues at their call center, and there were discussions on a joint UNICEF-UNHCR-WFP call center in Jordan. This proposed joint initiative was halted due to strategic disagreements and issues between the two agencies, although it was noted that there were no issues at the technical level. UNHCR did express worries on the confidentiality of data if a joint call center was to be established.

Currently it would be difficult to merge the existing separate call centers due to the different ways in which these have now been established. For example, the UNHCR call center staff have access to the Refugee Assistance Information System (RAIS) and they also have access to proGres data. They are therefore able to answer questions not only on assistance, but also on protection, resettlement, community services, deaths, and births and many more. WFP has a separate call center answering beneficiaries' requests related to WFP assistance. The call center staff uses WFP's corporate ticketing tools, has access to RAIS as well as the system of the contracted bank, enabling WFP staff to address directly issues around payments among other requests.

REFERALS AND ADRESSING URGENT CASES

One specific proposal from AAP colleagues for improvements in the collaboration between UNHCR and WFP was to establish case management guidance to have a unified approach on databases relating to referrals and appeals, in dealing with urgent cases.

> *"There should be better collaboration between registration department and WFP Cash Based Transfers and business analysis unit. Especially with dealing with urgent cases that have to be addressed by 48 hours, and often it is a data thing. The document will hopefully trigger further discussions with registration."*

WFP expressed some specific challenges on the referral of cases. One example given was in the referral of legal protection cases from WFP to UNHCR and outstanding feedback for WFP to be able to close the loop. There was a proposal from WFP to review SOPs to explore what is feasible while also being considerate of practicalities regarding data protection and confidentiality.

UNHCR-WFP INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING

One additional area identified for potential further collaboration relates to joint and inclusive approaches to programming, including joint UNHCR-WFP approaches on disability. WFP and UNHCR each have specific guidance and approaches to ensure inclusion is taken into consideration, which could be addressed jointly between WFP and UNHCR protection teams.

WFP Jordan Hotline

COORDINATION

While not a primary area of analysis for this report, this section deals briefly with the coordination aspects of the collaboration on assistance to Syrian Refugees in Jordan, in part because this has had a profound effect on technical collaboration across thematic areas.

In general, there has been **close technical and operational collaboration** across both agencies at all levels. Both agencies are **closely involved and consulted in planning at the early stages**. There has also been close collaboration on communications with communities, for example, in past food distributions before moving to cash assistance, UNHCR would be present to check lists.

The agencies coordinate regularly, for example, there are **bi-weekly meetings cross functional calls**. The agencies ensure that this informs and enhances programmatic approaches and work closely on troubleshooting.

In the past it was noted that both agencies were able to devote more staff time to supporting each other, but due to funding cuts and staff reductions this has reduced. For example, previously UNHCR would offer staff to help on activities, such as when WFP had funding cuts and had to conduct a prioritization exercise where UNHCR organized consultations with refugees to hear their feedback on WFP assistance cuts.

UNHCR AS REFUGEE RESPONSE COORDINATOR

Alongside the Government of Jordan, UNHCR exercises its leadership and coordination responsibility in Jordan's refugee response in line with the Refugee Coordination Model, which is applied in Jordan and manifested in the Inter Sector Working Group, chaired by UNHCR. Currently eight sectors provide support within the Jordan refugee response. UNHCR co-chairs several sector working and sub-working groups that provide information, advice, and advocacy to high-level decision-making bodies in Jordan.

In addition to the recording and management of proGres data that is made available to humanitarian partners, UNHCR set up and manages several inter-agency services in Jordan that are utilized by UN agencies and NGO's, some of which have already been discussed in this report. Notably, these include the following:

VAF	CCF	RAIS
The Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF)	The Common Cash Facility	The Refugee Assistance Information System

Each of these services have been developed to support the humanitarian community in delivering and tracking assistance to vulnerable persons of concern in Jordan.

However, there have been notable past tensions between the two agencies on the utilization of these services. For cash delivery, WFP had already invested in developing their own global platform suitable to their needs. WFP regularly use VAF data and home visit scores, and RAIS for deduplication efforts.

CASH AND COLLABORATIVE MODELS

Both UNHCR and WFP Jordan offices were amongst the first to pioneer the use of large-scale humanitarian cash transfers due to the benefits for refugees in enhancing dignity, allowing refugees greater choice to address their own needs, and in supporting economic inclusion. Being at the forefront of this seismic change in the nature of the delivery of humanitarian assistance, both offices faced some notable challenges. This was exacerbated in part due to the single transfer for basic needs model that was put forward by some donors, prior to the release of the OCHA-UNICEF-UNHCR-WFP Common Cash Statement in December 2018.

UNHCR, alongside other partners, established the Common Cash Facility, a cash delivery platform that through collective bargaining can negotiate for low fees with a financial service provider as one, and can ensure deduplication and standardization of cash transfer modalities. The Common Cash Facility was an example of a collaborative platform that could counter the narrative of having a single transfer addressing needs across sectors. It allows humanitarian organisations to deliver cash assistance using ATMs which can be accessed through Iris scan or ATM cards, with mobile money wallets made available as a payment option in August 2018. By the end of 2020, the the Common Cash facility consisted of 40 members.

For several years, UNHCR tried to include WFP in the Common Cash Facility. UNHCR felt that this would counter the single transfer for basic needs narrative, create a more cohesive approach to cash assistance in Jordan, and help to lower bank transaction fees even further. WFP has regularly declined the offer as it was not felt to be the optimal solution, with an already established working relationship with their existing financial service provider OneCard platform. In addition, WFP already had such large costs savings based on its financial transactions that they did not consider that collective bargaining would lower costs.

This issue, which was not resolved, contributed to difficulties in collaborating in a range of technical areas and significantly impacted trust and levels of commitment to collaboration in Jordan. UNHCR did not understand the reticence of WFP to join the Common Cash Facility, while WFP did not understand UNHCR's unwillingness to respect its "red lines". WFP would prefer to collaborate across the programme cycle, but to still have separate payment delivery mechanisms if there is extensive collaboration on beneficiary targeting, data sharing, AAP, and other work streams.

One issue was concern over proprietary platforms, ownership, and a lack of trust. For example, there had been significant challenges when WFP introduced biometrics for vouchers in camps with support from UNHCR that left WFP reluctant to be overly reliant on another agency again. In 2019 UNHCR had concerns over WFP's planned roll-out of mobile money, which was cancelled by WFP in order to maintain an open dialogue.

Additional areas of potential collaboration relating to cash programming highlighted by staff include potential collaboration on financial inclusion, such as potential collaboration on the roll-out of mobile wallets that UNHCR is undertaking, and digital financial inclusion initiatives, in an effort to deliver assistance from several humanitarian and social protection agencies to beneficiary-owned accounts.

THE REFUGEE ASSISTANCE INFORMATION SYSTEM (RAIS)

Initially developed by UNHCR Jordan in 2009, the Refugee Assistance Information System (RAIS) is a secure web-based Inter-Agency tool for tracking assistance, referrals, and assessment information. Synchronized with proGres, and updated daily, RAIS enables UNHCR and partners to share assistance

records, cross-check beneficiary lists, and host different types of data to ensure effective tracking of assistance, enhanced accountability, and reduced duplication of efforts.

Implementing partners update RAIS as and when assistance is provided. Before providing assistance, users look into RAIS to ensure that the individual or case has not recently received the same assistance from another partner.

The service is now used in many refugee responses across the MENA region and is regularly used and updated by UNHCR and operational partners including WFP. While this tool is widely appreciated by partners and the broader humanitarian community, and seen as an essential coordination tool, it was noted as less useful for WFP.

Currently WFP use RAIS to upload an assistance log. The main challenges with this system for WFP relate to the fact that a user cannot run queries, for example to find out how many people have been assisted in a certain area. In addition, a user cannot extract or download certain types of data from RAIS.

WFP colleagues noted that at the inception they were not consulted on the functionality of RAIS, which may have been why some functions that they would have preferred were initially not available. For example, initially WFP could not upload assistance records in bulk – and it would take several days to upload assistance information to the platform. UNHCR makes regular updates to RAIS to address these functionality requests.

COORDINATION LESSONS

UNHCR and WFP align more closely in Jordan than in almost any other country context. This is due to a number of factors, including:

UNHCR-WFP alignment in Jordan

| UNHCR have a specialist VAF team that is similar in technical approach to WFP's VAM team | WFP and UNHCR collaborate very closely regarding AAP and protection. | The refugee caseload for WFP is high, and there is a high overlap of caseloads (estimated at 95%) | Both agencies have large cash-based interventions/ transfers based on Minimum Expenditure Baskets |

In the past there were **single focal points** between the two agencies who had the responsibility for coordination across a range of thematic areas. While this helped with maintaining oversight and a coherent approach to coordination, this also led to bottlenecks.

The current setup between the two agencies is now **decentralized, so collaboration can happen across different areas of work**. For example, UNHCR staff working on data will now approach WFP staff working on data and work with them directly. This has led to improvements in the way that both agencies are collaborating with technical cooperation working well, including amongst data managers or on fixing specific issues such as technological issues.

Without a central focal point, there is now **collaboration amongst multifunctional technical teams from both agencies in areas such as registration, cash, operational data management and AAP, CFM, and protection**. One colleague noted that this increased decentralization of cooperation has *"allowed us to see their systems compared to ours"* which has helped with a **better understanding of approaches**, **support to each other's work**, and in **planning for joint/ coordinated activities**.

In addition, having a more multi-functional approach, including multi-functional meetings, has broadened the **space for collaboration, helping to avoid the pitfall of getting stuck on specific issues**.

Other lessons include the importance of having "diplomats" on the team, willing to **listen and compromise**. In addition, there have been benefits to both agencies work that have come from the early involvement in the drafting of documents, and the **regular exchanges and back-and-forth between colleagues who give their time and support to each other's work**.

One notable example is on the WFP re-targeting exercise, where **UNHCR and WFP convened small joint working groups for three different thematic areas: public information, technical aspects and data sharing**. This enabled close collaboration across the three technical areas, and **a high level of engagement and support from both UNHCR and WFP colleagues**.

The level of regular coordination and collaboration **includes regular meetings and brainstorming on issues**. For example, both agencies worked closely on verification, retargeting and on information sharing.