**ACTION PLAN:**

**Initiating Linkages between Humanitarian Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) and**

**MoLSA’s Social Protection Network (SPN) in Iraq**

On 17-18 April 2018, a two day workshop was held in Baghdad aimed at strengthening linkages between Cash Working Group (CWG) humanitarian multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) and the Government of Iraq’s Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) Social Protection Network (SPN). The event occurred under the auspices of His Excellency Mohammed al-Sudani, Minister of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, was funded by DFID, and co-facilitated by UNHCR and the World Bank. Participants included members of the CWG, including UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, the Cash Consortium for Iraq (CCI), and REACH, along with donors (DFID, ECHO, OFDA/FFP), OCHA, and staff from relevant MoLSA directorates and governorate directorates (Ninewa, Anbar, and Salah Al Din).

The workshop served as an opportunity for MoLSA and humanitarian partners to present their programs and build a common understand of the tools, platforms and processes they use. The final session of the event provided an opportunity for in-depth group discussions on the key topics of: eligibility criteria, information management, and referrals. Possible ways to strengthen collaboration were identified, with a focus on short to medium term actions. The main discussion and action points presented by each group and agreed by participants are presented below, along with the highlighted need for enhanced coordination mechanisms to take actions forward in the future. Some recommended actions go beyond the mandates of the CWG/SPN participants but are included for broader engagement of other stakeholders. A longer-term Road Map or shared vision of direction and transition would be needed once progress is made on the below initial actions.

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| **Current situation, discussion points, and/or desired objective(s).** *Key summary of group discussion points which are related to actions.* | **Action Items / Activities***Specific, short-medium term action points.* | **Timeline***and responsible Focal Points*  |
| **COORDINATION** |
| * Participants, including a number of representatives of the CWG, recognised the added value of efforts to enhance mutual understanding and collaboration between humanitarian actors providing cash assistance and MoLSA, however, also felt further consultation with all members of the CWG and key donors is needed before being able to make a final decision on the proposed way forward. More time, and meeting opportunities, are also required to keep building mutual understanding and awareness of the approaches/reach/goals of both MoLSA and Humanitarian cash actors. This consultation will launch prior to the deadline of the first action point.
* Following up on Action Plan items and continued coordination between humanitarian actors and MoLSA is critical to achieve results. Focal point(s) are needed for coordination, with MoLSA playing a leadership role (Chair/Co-Chair). Governorate level coordination between MoLSA and CWG members will also be key to facilitate progress.
* In Iraq, GoI internally coordinates social protection efforts through the Social Protection Commission. However, engagement and coordination with external international community stakeholders (UN, NGOs, various Clusters, development partners, donors, etc.) is limited. The establishment of a Social Protection Forum structure, using best practices and experience in the MENA Region, would be useful to continue efforts towards a more comprehensive and coordinated system which also links into GOI’s Poverty Reduction Strategy’s planning processes. Multiple platforms may be needed (general, donor, etc.), as well as additional human resource capacity. It may be better to start imperfectly with all interested parties and adjust/prepare TORs as the forum progresses over time.
* Broader humanitarian/MoLSA coordination has also been identified on other topics MoLSA is working on (women’s empowerment, livelihoods, citizen feedback, child protection, etc.). More information is needed on MoLSA’s programmes and Departmental structure to understand overlaps.
 | **1. CWG Endorsement:** CWG members meet internally to review this Action Plan, and consider the formation of Task Force and/or Targeting and Vulnerability Task Force to guide these efforts.  | **By 25 July 2018***CWG (Francesca)***Completed** |
| **2. Social Protection Forum:** Hold an informal Social Protection Forum to brief wider international community on workshop outcomes and gauge interest in participation; Coordinate engagement between Government and humanitarian SP actors on monthly basis; Create platform TORs and consider funding opportunities to support implementation of Action Plan.  | **By 15 October 2018***World Bank (Ramzi) with MoLSA to initiate.*  |
| **3.** **Broader MoLSA/Cluster Linkages:** MoLSA to share its SPN and broader Ministerial organogram so others can be clear on its mandate and areas of focus; Social Protection Forum to discuss strategy to further engage additionally relevant MoLSA Departments and Clusters in coordination efforts while avoiding fragmentation. Recommended first step to consider is a half day meeting where MoLSA can present to the Inter Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) its work, and the ICCG can present also to MoLSA.  | **By 30 November 2018***Social Protection Forum to follow up with a plan.*  |
| **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA** |
| * The CWG and MoLSA both use proxy means testing (PMT) to determine programme eligibility – though each rely on a different set of factors and scoring approach. Strong similarities were identified between five eligibility criteria in the CWG’s current PMT and MoLSA’s. Participants agreed that it would be important to compare the two PMTs to understand the degree of synergy.
* Without collecting any additional information or sharing data between partners, a proposed first step is for CWG members to compare findings for inclusion and exclusion through a desk review. Results will not be exact, but will give an indication of which humanitarian beneficiaries would be likely to qualify for MoLSA SSN, to help inform next steps.
* Depending on the results of the desk review, partners may decide to compare the overlap of the actual criteria either through a pilot with new joint CWG/MoLSA PMT household assessments or through existing household data.

 * If there is a high degree of overlap, the case for humanitarian referral to MoLSA will be stronger and mechanism for registration, referral and information sharing will need to be further considered, particularly with respect to MoLSA’s assessment of their absorption capacity. Any referrals could be enabled by humanitarian actors providing support to households who wish to register and would involve minimal information sharing, specifically basic identification data such as names and contact information, and require consent. MoLSA social workers would thereafter conduct their own assessment before deciding on whether to deem the household eligible.
* Outcomes of working groups covering Referrals and Information Management/Sharing will help address a number of the concerns around confidentiality and consent that were raised during the workshop and this group’s discussions.
 | 1. **Targeting and Vulnerability Task Force (TVTF) Work Plan:** TVTF to meetand develop a work plan for theanalysis on complementarity of eligibility criteria.
 | **By 15 Aug 2018** *CWG members in TVTF* |
| **2. “Pseudo MoLSA PMT Formula” Development:** World Bank to compare the process and data sets used to develop both scoring models with the common variables and weight. World Bank to share a “pseudo MoLSA PMT” for TVTF to carry out their desk review and analysis.  | **By 10 Sept 2018***World Bank (Matthew)*  |
| **3. Desk Review:** TVTF to initiate desk review applying PMT on MPCA assessment data and determine complementarity. | **By 30 Sept 2018***TVTF*  |
| **4. Review MPCA Vulnerability Assessment Tool**: TVTF to review MPCA scoring and indicators and analysis on feasibility to introduce some of the MoLSA PMT indicators into the CWG vulnerability assessment tool. | **By 15 Oct 2018***TVTF* |
| **5. Eligibility Criteria Review Workshop:** CWG to facilitate a workshop with MoLSA to present the results of the desk review including the complementarity of criteria and estimated MPCA caseload that may qualify for SPN assistance.  | **By 15 Nov 2018***CWG partners, with* *MoLSA, MoP, and World Bank.*  |
| **6.** **Joint Assessment Pilot** *(TBC depending on finalisation of the new CWG assessment and scoring tool)***:** MoLSA and CWG to carryout joint assessment of a sample population.  | **Nov/Dec TBC***TVTF & MoLSA* |
| **INFORMATION MANAGEMENT** |
| * Improving information management systems has the potential to improve coordination to strengthen capabilities provided collectively, including helping avoid duplication of beneficiaries and assistance received, improving referral pathways between organisations, while reducing time and effort spent manually cross-checking data. A Data Sharing Governance Structure would be needed to bring different organisations together.
* More understanding of each stakeholder’s business processes (and associated databases) is required to initiate technical conversations, such as clarifying which “Unique Identifiers” (civil ID number, PDS number, name, etc.) and their format or syntax are currently being used. Some IDPs or returnees might not have the correct documents needed to verify their identity.

 * The importance of the protection of data of vulnerable families is paramount and informed consent of beneficiaries should be obtained to allow any data sharing between organisations or referrals. Security, privacy and protection standards should be embedded in Data Sharing Procedures and adhered to, with only the minimum amount of data shared that is needed. Consenting to share data for referrals will not impact eligibility for humanitarian assistance.
* Different Ministries (MoLSA, MoMD, MoT, and MoI) are all currently pursing independent tracks to improve their databases and automate processes, including adding biometric identity features, with external support (respectively by WB, UNHCR, WFP, and Germany, to name a few). This work risks duplication of efforts, inefficiency, not being interoperable, nor achieving its maximum potential. Strengthening each Ministry’s Management Information Systems (MIS) is a necessary pre-requisite for a future Unified Registry for Social Protection and should be encouraged and aligned with ongoing activities that also involve Ministries of Interior, Finance, Trade, and Planning. Internal business processes will vary from one Ministry to another and therefore the need for MIS that respond to specific Ministry needs, but designed in a way that will enable exchange of data between Ministries via conformance to pre-defined standards. The group recommends starting inter-ministerial coordination as soon as possible.
* MoLSA is currently using manual mechanism (CDs, email, USBs) to cross-check and share data with other Ministries. Better and more secure automated data sharing services exist and humanitarians can assist in exploring appropriate options available.
* Actual referrals and data sharing between humanitarians and MoLSA should start only once MoLSA’s absorption capacity for new beneficiaries is increased/opened.
* Once referrals are established a feedback mechanism needs to be incorporated so humanitarian actors/MoLSA are informed which individuals/HHs were assisted and what form of support they received. A corresponding action to develop an appropriate feedback mechanism should be developed ahead of any future referral processes.
 | **1. Unique Identifiers:** Hold a half day meeting with technical business process experts to compare each organisation’s Unique Identifiers to enable shared standards and syntax for range of identifiers for duplication checks and future referrals; Outcome to provide overview of current situation and recommended options for alignment moving forward.  | **By 30 Sept 2018***WFP (Kennedy) to arrange, with business process experts (IT/ database focal points) from MoLSA, WFP, UNHCR, CCI & other NGOs to participate.* *Note: consider inviting PDS/MoT + MoMD.*  |
| **2. Groundwork for Informed Consent:** MoLSA to clarify and provide an mapping what beneficiary data collected by MoLSA is accessible (or shared directly) with which other GoI Ministries and institutions, as well as share social worker scripts or existing consent language used. Using results, CCI to lead on drafting appropriate consent language that could be used by CWG members to facilitate future data sharing opportunities and feed into agreements, as determined below in Point 3. TVTF to ensure that the revised Vulnerability Assessment Tool (Point 4 above) includes referral triggers and informed consent statements.  | **By 25 Sept 2018***MoLSA (Mr. Jamal) – mapping***By 10 Oct 2018***CCI – lead on consent statement drafting***By 15 Oct 2018***TVTF – adjust tool*  |
| **3.**  **Data Sharing Governance Structure and Procedures:** WFP and World Bank to initiate conversations with MoLSA on establishing a technical working group on data sharing with UN/NGOs across policy and technical levels. Outcome 1: WFP to lead development of working group TORs and scope of initial work with group membership; Outcome 2: Working group to develop a shared understanding of requirements for Data Sharing Governance Structure; Outcome 3: Working Group to develop a Data Sharing Agreement framework for interested stakeholders.  | **By 31 Oct 2018***WFP (Kennedy) to lead establishing Working Group with open invite to CWG and MoLSA.* *Note: Deadlines for Outcomes to be determined by the Working Group once established.*  |
| **4. Inter-Ministerial IM Coordination:** Investigate details with possible actions and prepare a letter to the Poverty Reduction High Committee advocating to open dialogue on critical data sharing topics across relevant line ministries; Request the Council of Ministers to clarify the governance model for the coordination of efforts by assigning a lead Ministry. | **By 30 Nov 2018***World Bank (Ramzi) with MoLSA to lead on drafting and submission. DFID (Heidi), UNHCR (Annika), and WFP (Kennedy) to support information collection.*  |
| **5.** **Automated Data Sharing Service:** Through a series of engagements with CWG and GoI partners and lessons learned, and ongoing PDS proof of concept processes, define requirements for a possible automated data sharing service. If positive, identify an entity to build the service and run a proof of concept pilot. | **By 31 Jan 2019***WFP (Kennedy) to coordinate with CWG.* |
| **REFERRALS** |
| * As noted above, humanitarians and MoLSA have a number of ongoing programmes, in addition to MPCA and SPN, that could provide additional needed assistance to households, including particularly vulnerable ones with specific gender, age, or disability related concens. The ERRSP, SFD, and RRP are such examples of flagship poverty and recovery programmes which are under development. More information and exchange is required about these programmes and partners to understand availability and eligibility criteria for different services and their locations.
* Referral of individuals and households to services has the potential to work in both directions (MoLSA to humanitarian and humanitarian to MoLSA). In emergency cases specifically, there may be the potential for MoLSA to refer cases to humanitarian actors for assessment, in addition to humanitarian community’s existing caseload, whilst government response capacity improves in challenging areas. In both directions, ensuring the protection of data and consent of beneficiaries for referral is essential (explored further in IM section).
* Different service and beneficiary lists already exist, including the SPN, unemployment, and upcoming cash for work (MoLSA), PDS (MoT), and IDPs (MoMD).
* The current SPN registration process is closed and it is unclear when it will open again in the future. The first step is an online e-Application registration process that is open across the country, though details of this form and process have not yet been shared with humanitarians. While this is widely publicised in the media, humanitarians remain concerned that vulnerable and remote communities may not be aware or able to access the online application form. They may be able to assist in outreach and support the next time it the registration system is opened.
* Even if the SPN registration process remains closed, referrals can continue to other services. Those already registered and receiving benefits, those on waiting list, those not on MoLSA SPN list, but on humanitarian lists could all be considered further.
* Eligibility for many GoI services requires various forms of civil documentation, which many vulnerable households are lacking. The humanitarian community provides legal assistance to assist vulnerable households to obtain civil documentation, particularly in recently retaken areas. While the right to civil documentation should be free from discrimination or undue barriers, households continue to face numerous obstacles.
* In order to facilitate referrals an updated mapping of the coverage locations, eligibility criteria, and assessments of both humanitarian and MoLSA’s current and future work required. While the area of cash grants is currently being explored, other areas that participants identified of potential overlap with MoLSA include: social welfare services, vocational training, microfinance, cash for work, psychosocial and mental health support, support for different vulnerable groups (children, women, elderly, people with disabilities). Any other areas of focused would need to be determined with other actors responsible for them, including other humanitarian Clusters and development partners. Principles should include promotion of communication with communities and enhancing communication with and across the humanitarian community, including through information campaigns. Humanitarians could also contribute to enhancingsocial accountability to support MOLSA’s responsiveness towards its beneficiaries, including feedback and grievances.
* The number and capacity of SPN social workers in liberated areas is limited and negatively impacts MoLSA’s ability to refer beneficiaries for non-SSN services. Capacity building of social workers particularly related to psycho-social, child protection, SGBV and other key protection issues was identified as a need, but an in-depth capacity assessment is required to understand what is required and MoLSA’s priorities.
* Quality referrals and follow up require a case management approach to be utilised. The referral and case management capacity of MoLSA social workers needs to be enhanced. INGOs and UN Agencies and have experiences in Case Management and in newly liberated areas, while the World Bank also plans on strengthening MoLSA’s case management capacity in the coming year. Ensuring consent and confidentiality of information remain a key focus in referring vulnerable populations.
* The ability of social workers to refer to households to specialist protection and family services could be strengthened by a mapping of available humanitarian and government services, something that the Protection Cluster and other Clusters regularly undertake and update in some governorates. UNICEF is also supporting a service mapping pilot in Baghdad which could be built upon in other regions in the future.
* In order to provide better quality of services for households, MoLSA needs to reduce the number of households that each social worker is responsible for.
* Discussions recognised that many actors outside of the CWG and SPN have relevant expertise and would benefit from inclusion in these discussions. Further exploration on the means to increase the referral capacity and case management capacity of social workers to specialist protection and family services and other services, including strengthening referrals between humanitarian protection services and MoLSA social welfare services would be ideal, but is beyond the commitment of the participants of the workshop.
 | **1. Supporting e-Application Process:** MoLSA to provide additional information on this e-Application online SPN registration process, including content (documentation with potential training) and when it will be open again to facilitate advanced planning for support from humanitarian actors. Humanitarian community to determine ways it could provide support to MoLSA to enable vulnerable households to access and complete the MoLSA e-Application. | **By 15 Dec 2018***MoLSA (TBC Focal Point) to lead with CWG (TBC Focal Point).**Note: consider inviting Communicating with Communities Task Force* |
| **2. Share MoLSA Services Eligibility Criteria:** MoLSA to organise a working meeting to compare, analyse, and share information on eligibility criteria for the range of different social welfare and employment services it has available, and the privacy/security risks for each service.  | **By 30 October 2018***MoLSA (Women’s Directorate?), with UNICEF (Farah) and UNHCR (Annika) support.*  |
| **3. Mapping of Existing Cash Services:** Additional information sharing will take place to facilitate a clear mapping of existing cash transfers/services ahead of any referrals taking place:1. CWG to conduct humanitarian vulnerability mapping across Iraq based on MPCA assessment data to be shared with WB and MoLSA.
2. Joint mapping of MoLSA SPN services and humanitarian cash programmes: locations, coverage, functionality and status of MoLSA registered families (payed, waiting list, potentially eligible).
 | **By 30 September 2018** *CWG* **By November 2018** *MoLSA (Mr. Jamal) & CWG (Eva, IMO)* |
| **4. Planning for Referrals to SPN:** 1. Joint planning between MoLSA and international actors on how and when humanitarian beneficiaries can be responsibly and appropriately linked to MoLSA services, where assistance is accessible and on the basis of consent.

Develop procedures for referrals by MoLSA to international actors for specialised support on an *ad hoc* basis. | **By 15 December 2018** *MoLSA (TBC), World Bank (CM Practice Lead) & CWG (Francesca)***By February 2018** *Social Protection Forum with ICCG input.* |
| **Below actions recommend to engage a wider range of actors in the humanitarian space and MoLSA departments, other than the CWG and SPN. Their interest and participation levels will be determined and followed up through the implementation of this plan and establishment of the Social Protection Forum.**  |
| **5. Access to Civil Documentation:** MoLSA to advocate for a harmonized process across different governorates to obtain civil documentation necessary to access MoLSA services, whilst supporting a mechanism to access documentation outside of place of origin for displaced people at risk. Humanitarians with legal documentation experience to provide assistance where needed.  | **By 30 Oct 2018***CCI (Lotti & protection partners) to lead discussion with Social Protection Forum.**Note: consider close coordination with Protection Cluster and HLP sub-cluster.* |
| **6**. **Capacity Building of Social Workers:** MoLSA and humanitarian partners to gain a greater understanding of the limitations of social workers, through a capacity needs assessment with more specific recommendations on capacity building options. Scope opportunities for the humanitarian community, including Protection Cluster and relevant sub-Clusters, to contribute to this outcome, particularly on key protection issues and input into case management and referral processes.  | **By 31 December 2018** *UNICEF (Farah) to lead in coordination with WB CM Practice.**Note: consider inviting UNFPA and Protection Cluster leads.* |
| **7. Advocate for increased linkages and referral processes beyond cash and SPN:** Share CWG and SPN experiences more broadly to advocate for connections between other parts of humanitarian assistance and protection services to the social welfare, health, public works, training and employment services of MoLSA. Use the Social Protection Forum and Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) as platforms for these discussions, as well as the UNCT Policy Engagement and Reform Working Group.  | ***By XX 2018*** *Social Protection Forum with ICCG input.* *Note: Invite Protection Cluster and Community Returns Centres (CRCs).* |