

Whole of Syria: Needs Identification Framework- (SIMAWG)

Concept Note: Endorsement by the ISCCG: 12 March 2015

1. Introduction

Syria remains the largest and most complex humanitarian emergency on the global stage. As the on-going conflict in Syria enters its fifth year, and with the absence of progress towards a viable sustained peace, humanitarian needs continue to grow by the day.

Keen efforts of humanitarian actors to improve coordination through the Whole of Syria approach resulted in a recent roll-out of strategic and operational coordination structures. To achieve the strategic objective of strengthened needs identification in 2015 as a basis for improved response, it is important to develop a strategy which establishes predictable information systems that cater for a wide range of actors and their information needs. Success of the humanitarian coordination system now relies heavily on providing the right information and analysis to the right people for informed decision making based on sound evidence.

In the past three years, humanitarian actors have worked to improve their understanding of needs and have significantly strengthened information management, needs assessment, monitoring and analysis, despite the constraints of the operational environment. However, there are areas which need immediate strengthening such as coordination, standardization and harmonization, if feasible, and focused work in areas of prioritization and vulnerability analysis.

2. Objective

The proposed targeted work provides an opportunity for humanitarian actors to take a step back; map and review existing and future data collection methodologies, tools and approaches, and finally agree on a framework that appropriately incorporates best practices and produces needs identification on a regular basis for the Syria crisis.

Identify and learn from needs identification methodologies, data collection, processing and analysis efforts taking place within the Whole of Syria (WoS) approach and develop timely interventions to improve decision-making and need-based response to populations affected within Syria by the current crisis prior to feed into the 2016 HNO.

3. Justification- Why This is Important

Clear deliverables are outlined in the WoS approach (Periodic Monitoring Report (PMR) and Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), which must incorporate identified needs of the Syrian population impacted by the current crisis as the foundation for a true gaps analysis to inform response. There have been great efforts to date to identify needs, with the Hubs/Sectors/Clusters implementing various methodologies and approaches to complete this work. **The proposed focus of this work will build on and enhance existing activities and will not impede ongoing or planned needs identification initiatives.** It will also identify gaps in current needs identification practices and consult on appropriate ways to fill them. The WoS approach creates an opportunity to examine these efforts, learn from them, harmonize where appropriate and rationalize them for a concerted effort across the region.

The following are major impact areas that will result from outputs of this work:

- 1) A **WoS Assessment Registry**, capturing and outlining all assessment activities, both completed and planned, across the region will be developed as part of this work. The registry will hold meta-data

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about assessment activities and, if approved by the source, access to information/data¹. **This will have an immediate impact on on-going operations and can be used to map areas covered by assessments and to identify gaps as well as feed into the PMR and HNO work as outlined in the Strategic Response Plan (SRP), while supporting Who is doing What Where and When (4w) and operational interventions based on identified needs.**

- 2) Given the challenging situation in Syria, **monitoring systems are often used to identify needs, which are then incorporated into needs identification analysis.** To understand this better and incorporate this work into the overarching Needs Identification Framework, monitoring systems, which have components of needs identification, will be identified for incorporation into the framework. **As with the assessment registry, this work will have an immediate impact on improved needs identification analysis and feed into PMR, HNO, 4W and operational interventions based on identified needs.**
- 3) This work will develop an **overarching WOS Needs Identification Framework.** The result will be guidance and practical steps, that will include suggested methodologies for management and estimation and tracking of the population in need. This will be based on assessing the various methodological approaches including collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of needs information and data across the region. **The process to develop the framework will directly impact ongoing and planned work as key practitioners are brought together. The sharing of knowledge, approaches and suggested standardization will be immediately incorporated into current work and improve future activities.**
- 4) As mentioned in the previous outputs for this work, **implementation will take throughout the process with marked impacts as the work progresses.** This work will identify approaches that enable needs and gap analysis on two levels: **strategic** (e.g. using multi-sector information) and **operational** (e.g. using sector-specific information) and adhere to agreements on analysis and sharing defined by the SIMAWG subgroup on Principles.

4. Scope

The work proposed is to be **time limited (March-May 2015)**. The group will include technical and geographical representation, balancing inclusion with a light, technically focused, approach with clear deliverables under a defined timeline.

The data streams, processes, technical approaches and methodologies to identify needs, cut across many areas of on-going work. **The terminology *Needs Identification* includes a range of potential methodologies for the evaluation of needs of a population including; needs assessments, monitoring systems, proxy indicators and other creative approaches, which have been employed in the conflict environment of Syria.**

5. Activities

The focus of this time-limited work will be limited to the following activities:

- 1) Inventory or registry of needs identification activities within the WoS (work initiated under the SIMAWG sub-group)
- 2) Identification and review of needs identification methodologies (This includes monitoring and innovative techniques used in the region for the identification of needs)
- 3) Identification and review of population in need methodologies within needs identification approaches

¹ Meta-data in this case, is key information related to the needs assessment conducted or planned including, but not limited to, methodology, geographic target, type of assessment (sector/cluster, interagency), planned/implemented, etc. Examples can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/mdkq32w> and <http://tinyurl.com/llfgb2k>

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- 4) Identification of gaps in current needs identification practices and consultations on how to best fill them according to the need for information at (a) different levels and (b) different frequencies
- 5) Development of a single WOS needs identification framework feeding into the 2016 HNO, through a series of practical guidance, initiatives and standards

6. Challenges

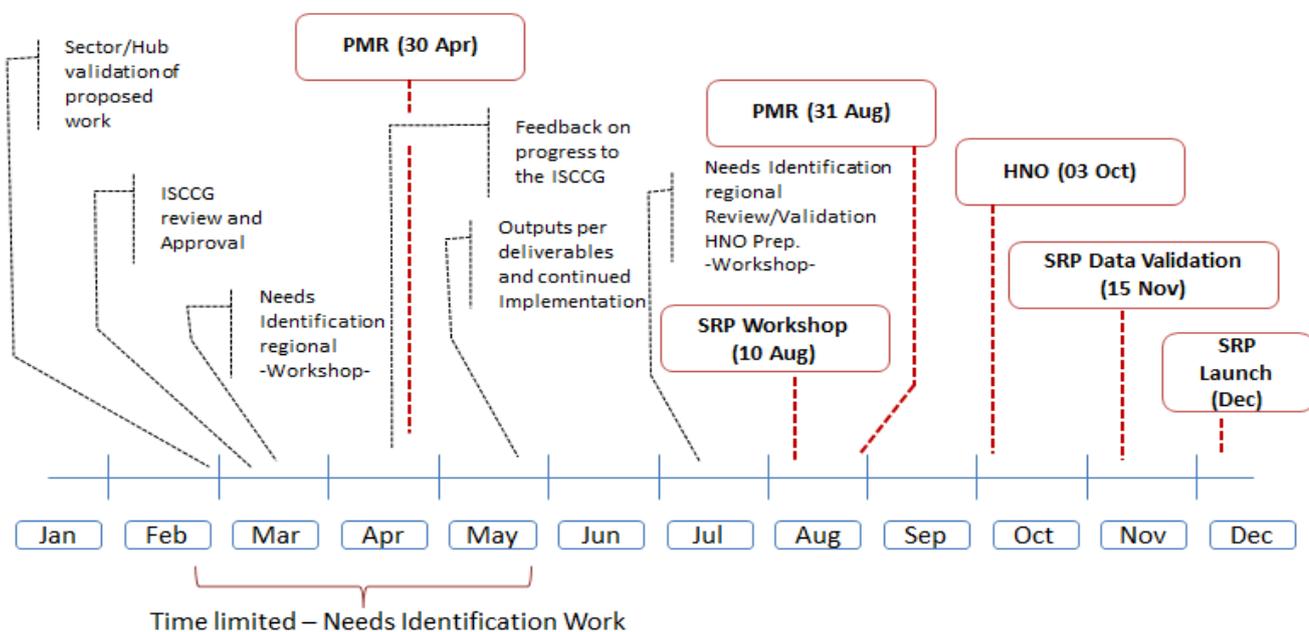
The complexity and competing priorities of the Syrian response will pose challenges in bringing together the work identified in this initiative. The group will feedback on progress and manage expectations throughout the process. Dependencies related to on-going needs identification work will impact this work and must be realistically considered across the region and time-lines adjusted accordingly. While the work will impact processes as it moves forward, adoption rates will vary across the region over time and a pragmatic approach per hub, cluster/sector must be considered.

7. Validation and Approval

The proposed work is an approach which will seek endorsement by the ISCCG. The SIMAWG sub-group on Needs (led by OCHA) will coordinate the work in partnership with specialized technical partners, WoS Cluster Coordinators and will involve the wider humanitarian community to achieve the identified outputs of the work. The humanitarian community aims to establish systems with a long term vision, investing the right resources and expertise that are suitable to the final roll-out and integration into operations.

8. Timeline

The graphic below outlines key events related to the needs identification work as well as the Strategic Response Plan for context.



The table below expands in more detail on the events outlined for the proposed work as well as the time periods of specific activities.

Timeline	Consultation forum	Type and description
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25 Feb – 3 rd March 2015	SIMA WG Amman STIMA WG Turkey Damascus Meeting SIMAWG	Hubs validation: Concept note shared with wider humanitarian community for review and validation.
Second week of March	Inter-Sector/Cluster Coordination Group	ISCCG validation: Work is presented to ISCCG for comments and approval.
Between 15 March -19 March	Needs Identification Kick-off Workshop	Consultation Workshop: Technical team work with broader humanitarian community to develop different components, review existing ideas and finalise work plan.
Between 12 April– 2 May	SIMA WG Amman STIMA WG Turkey SIMAWG	Various consultation and meetings: Meetings to share information and review components of the work with the broader humanitarian community.
First week of May	Inter-Sector/Cluster Coordination Group	ISCCG progress review: ISCCG reviews progress of Needs Identification components
Between 22-25 May	WoS Consultation	Consultation Workshop: Technical team will present components work completed. Review and validation of broader humanitarian community.
Between 1-4 June	Inter-Sector/Cluster Coordination Group	ISCCG approval: Work is presented to ISCCG for comments. Feedback incorporated SIMAWG for future work.

9. Process Management and Group Composition

The work will be managed by the SIMAWG sub-group on Needs, who will report to Inter-Sector/Cluster Coordination Group (ISCCG) through the SIMAWG. The ISCCG Chair from time to time will attend the Technical group meeting to keep track of progress, delivery and to keep the group focused.

The technical group's main function will be to develop different components of a Needs Identification Framework and share with the humanitarian community for consultation and validation through hub coordination structures and conduct two WoS technical workshops and send final outputs to ISCCG for approval and roll-out.

Members of the technical group include members of the sub-group on Needs with additional technical staff identified by the co-chairs of this group through appropriate consultation with stakeholders. The inclusion of other SIMAWG sub-groups technical staff will be considered to ensure linkages to the work in these groups (Principals, Data/Standards).

Identified members of the group will have functional representation and will have the latitude to identify other technical staff as appropriate to the work being considered as the initiative progresses.

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*Organizations in blue make up the current Needs Sub-group

Technical Group functions	Organization	Number of members	Role
Chair / Convener	OCHA	1 (supported by two staff secretariat)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairs the meetings • Review progress and components • Resolve disputes • Reports to ISCCG • Replicate progress and share information with IM groups in hubs • Provide advice on Coordination • Able to write reports and follow-up on communications
Information Management and GIS	TBD HABITAT	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical advice on the subject • Able to produce technical documentation and review progress • Able to hold consultations on the subject and conduct trainings if required
Social Statistics	TBD	1	
Needs Assessment	iMMap CASS REACH ACAPS TBD	5	
Monitoring	TBD TBD	2	
ISCCG Technical Representation	Cluster – Sectors with technical capacity to contribute	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to provide inter-sectoral review of components • Technically involved in similar processes and able to produce technical documents and review technical components