

## Education Cluster Meeting

24 March 2009

Ramallah

### Meeting Minutes

#### 1. Participant organizations :

MOEHE (2), UNICEF (3), Islamic Relief (1), Save the Children Alliance (1), SOIR (1), People in Need (1), Handicap International (1) (representing the Disability sub cluster), representatives from the Gender needs assessment Task Force (2), Welfare Association (i).

#### 2. Agenda:

- Welcome and introductions
- Review of the minutes of the March 5<sup>th</sup> meeting (action points)
- Update from Cluster leads
- MOEHE Update
- Update from partner organizations
- Briefing on GRAD/ 3W
- Briefing on the Gender needs assessment
- AOB

All the agenda items have been adequately covered by the discussions although not necessarily in the order listed above; the minutes try to structure the content of the discussion as per the agenda items.

#### 3. Review of the minutes of the March 5<sup>th</sup> meeting

**Assessments:** the position which seems to prevail within the Gaza Education Cluster not to resort to engage further assessment work has been largely discussed. Two main factors that give some legitimacy to this option have been highlighted as follows: (i) the impression of “over assessment” although not necessarily in the Education Sector; (ii) the need to give priority to action rather than “wasting” more time on assessments and other activities that don’t rapidly and clearly contribute to improving the welfare of the affected population. In parallel, opposing arguments have also been presented (i) if assessments have been undertaken in Gaza on the education sector, except for 2, their results are not visible/available in addition, they don’t necessarily converge, (ii) these assessments concentrated on the infrastructural aspects leaving out other more qualitative aspects, therefore information on the quality of teaching/learning, availability of teaching aids and on students/teacher relationship and communication is rather sketchy, (iii) this is also to a large extent the case for psychosocial needs of children and their wellbeing.

The discussion showed that the views and perspectives of the two clusters don’t necessarily converge but this should be an asset for the large group. This precise point has led the group to discuss the issue of relationship between the two clusters and to how to ensure better implementation and follow up of action points.

**Coordination between the two education clusters:** the discussion raised a number of somewhat negative points that need to be addressed: (i) the sense of urgency that prevailed few weeks ago seems to have faded away, this probably explains the absence of some key partners at the meeting, (ii) coordination and communication between the 2 clusters seem to be insufficient, (iii) implementation and follow up on action points of meetings is not consistently done, (iv) there seems to be un-clarity about the terms of reference of the

Jerusalem/Ramallah group or on ways of operationalizing them, (v) turnover and the resulting lack of continuity do not help. The need for greater harmonization between the 2 clusters has been stressed, several solutions have been proposed:

- Frequent contacts and exchanges should be maintained between sector leads in Gaza and J/R;
- Individual cluster members in J/R should be in close contact with their colleagues from the same agency working in Gaza and attending the Ed. cluster meetings there;
- The Education cluster should be re-structured as one body with two legs one in Gaza and the other in J/R, this means that member organizations should ensure the active participation of one staff member in each of the two segments along with frequent and regular flow of information between the two; Ly. Larsen said that the present membership of the two clusters does not fully correspond to this option as many organization are represented in one cluster and not in the other, this is particularly the case for universities and for Palestinian NGOs; Lynnette will prepare a new template for cluster membership;
- J/R cluster can focus more on medium term planning by anticipating future needs on the basis of a clear understanding of the present situation on the ground;
- All action points will be explicitly assigned to individual cluster members or to partner organization this will clearly identify the accountabilities;
- Direct contact will be made with some of the organizations that have shown less commitment to participation to cluster meetings to encourage them to attend the next meeting;
- Propose that Gaza cluster puts an automatic agenda item for its meeting to discuss support needed from the J/R cluster;
- Propose that J/R cluster organizes its meetings two days after Gaza cluster meetings to allow time to obtain update/input from Gaza.

#### **4. Update from cluster leads:**

The update has not been presented all at once but all along the meeting, the two cluster leads and the information management focal point at UNICEF have provided information and data to the rest of the group focusing on the following:

- Membership of the Ed Cluster in Gaza, its facilitation, frequency of its meetings, its coordination with other clusters...
- Establishment of an Education and PSS sub group –with no unanimity on appropriateness of this group reporting to the education cluster-, objectives of the sub group, facilitation of work, its recent activities particularly the elaboration of an action plan to launch a training programme for teachers and counselors on PSS skills...
- Participation of cluster leads to the meetings of the cluster leads on March 11<sup>th</sup> and to the Early Recovery cluster meeting on March 18<sup>th</sup>. An update was given on the activities of the ER cluster in terms of preparing a mapping exercise that will prepare the design of the ER Response plan; this will be done in the context of a workshop to be organized early April in Gaza. It is important that all partners fill in the relevant data of their projects in the 3W/GRAD database as this material will serve as the basis of the mapping exercise. The cluster agreed that Alia Shaar will be the liaison person between the Education and the ER clusters. The survey of surveys being prepared by OCHA has also been mentioned. Itaf Hammad representing the MOEHE is also ready to attend meetings if the cluster lead agencies can help secure a special permit for her (meetings are held in Jerusalem).

#### **5. Update by the MOEHE representative:**

The Ministry has stressed the fact that without strong pressure from the international community on the Israeli Government to allow easier access into Gaza of Education supplies and equipments, the room for maneuver of the Ministry is quite limited and all the meetings, assessments, or planning become meaningless. The Ministry seems to consider that this strong pressure is not there and that access restrictions continue both for supplies and

personnel and they date back to before the war and even before the Hamas take over of Gaza. Contacts at the technical level between the MoE in Ramallah and in Gaza are on going. The MOEHE support all projects proposed to be implemented in Gaza.

Lynette mentioned two initiatives related to improving access to Gaza for humanitarian goods. The WASH cluster is registering some positive signs that its focused advocacy efforts may be paying off. The Logistics cluster is developing an evidence based advocacy through very close monitoring and documentation of humanitarian cargo awaiting approval or rejected for transport to Gaza. The list of items and explanatory narrative documents are posted at the following link:

<http://www.logcluster.org/gaza09a/supply-chain/clearance-status-of-humanitarian-cargo>

The document is updated on a daily basis. All organizations are encouraged to submit information but only on cargo for which a clearance request has been submitted or denied. Information on rejected requests should include the reason for rejection.

**ACTION:** Cluster members with pending education-related humanitarian cargo to provide information to [gaza.logs@logcluster.org](mailto:gaza.logs@logcluster.org).

## **6. Agency update:**

**Islamic Relief** – tendering process for rehabilitation (minor repairs) of 50 schools in Gaza has been launched; the project is funded by DFID. IR has also another project proposed for the West Bank; it targets 4800 girls through schools building, rehabilitation of drinking water and sanitation facilities in Girls schools in 12 villages in 4 districts of the WB.

**People in Need** – Czech NGO based in Amman and presently active in Iraq and Jordan. PIN is exploring to implement a psycho-social support project in southern Gaza; they will work at identifying psychosocial needs of children in the area. The idea is to link primary health care centers, schools and civil-society organization to join effort to provide PSS to children; the project intends to mobilize Al-Quds university psychology students to develop curriculum and ultimately to work at improving capacity in Gaza to provide PS support to children. The project will be coordinated with the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme. PIN is looking for practical information on registration and permits, access, security, banking/ wire transfer...; a number of answers were provided including by the representative from SOIR who explained that due to the shortage of cash in Gaza, – only limited amounts of cash are allowed per withdrawal even if the account has a sufficient provision; this hinders some activities such as the local purchase of supplies.

**Swedish Organization for Individual Relief (SOIR):** Have programs targeting children and adolescents with intellectual/ mental disabilities particularly girls for whom psycho-social activities are organized along with other forms of PS/mental health support. Mothers are also targeted by the work of the organization. SOIR has distributed toys and teddy bears to children as they are locally purchased.

## **Action Points:**

### **7. Information Management Action Points:**

All agencies are again reminded to input their education activities into the Gaza Response Activity Database (GRAD), a “Who Does What Where” system established to support Cluster coordination. Agencies that have not yet received a username and password for access to the system should forward the name and contact details

of a focal point to Lynnette Larsen at UNICEF ([LyLarsen@unicef.org](mailto:LyLarsen@unicef.org)). OCHA, which maintains the system, will soon begin generating maps based on the information in the database so agencies need to input or update their information soon. In addition, the mapping will be the initial step in the design of the early recovery response plan.

**ACTION:** Agencies need to forward the name and contact details of a GRAD education focal point to Lynnette Larsen at UNICEF.

**ACTION:** All agencies to input or update their education activities in Gaza into the database as soon as possible.

**ACTION:** Agencies need to provide inputs to Cluster coordinators to allow the preparation of the Education cluster update to be transmitted to OCHA as input to the weekly sitrep; the focus should be on needs, response, constraints and gaps and major challenges. Deadline: Fridays at noon.

## **8. Briefing on Gender needs assessment**

A UN Gender Task force is conducting a Gender Needs Assessment (GNA). The need for this survey originates from the fact that most rapid needs assessments conducted over the past couple months in Gaza focused on infrastructure and hardly touched upon social and economic issues, in addition the gender dimension was practically absent. The GNA seeks to complement the analysis of each sector with regard to gender. It is based on a survey of over 1000 households complemented by focus group discussions with various profiles of people including students (but none with education/school personnel - education not being the main focus of the GNA survey-). A Desk review focused on the gaps in analysis on gender access to education due to the conflict (How to ensure that unequal access to education is addressed in future programming).

Study results & recommendations will be presented to HCT & UNCT. The task force expects to be sharing the draft report once the assessment is complete in approximately 3 weeks.

The MOEHE stressed the need that the study looks at how the impact of the conflict affects girls differently from boys; the UNIFEM colleague who presented on behalf of the task force clarified that the assessment is looking at access and analyzing impact from multiple perspectives including: increase in sexual harassment, greater frequency of early marriage...

## **9. Any other business**

- Cluster lead informed the members of a request received from OCHA that each cluster provides 3 to 4 indicators/benchmarks on measuring access difficulties for humanitarian supplies and personnel to Gaza Action Point: As the deadline has already passed, it has been agreed that cluster leads will identify possible indicators and transmit them to OCHA.

- Cluster lead informed the members that LACS (Local Aid Coordination Secretariat) has been requested to add the cluster leaders' names to the list of invitee of the Education Sector Coordination Group (ESCG).