



# Mainstreaming the Minimum Economic Recovery Standards for Improved Market-Based Programming

**The webinar will start soon.**



# MARKETLINKS

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February 19, 2020



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### Facilitator

Laura Meissner, USAID/OFDA

### Contractor

### Speakers

Sonya Salanti, The SEEP Network

Ellen Lee, UNHCR

Karri Goeldner Byrne, Sr. Market Systems Advisor

Saad Barood, Bonyan NGO

# Agenda

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1. The case for Standards
2. About the MERS
3. Mainstreaming MERS in Practice
  - UNHCR: A Global Effort
  - Bonyan NGO: A Local Approach
4. Lessons Learned and Key Takeaways
5. Q&A

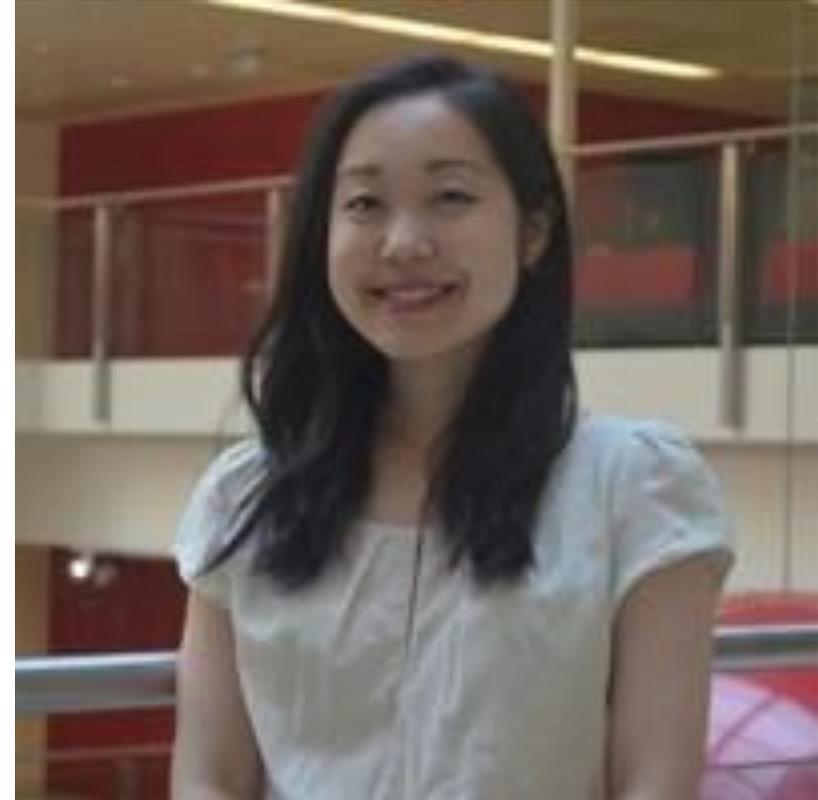
# Sonya Salanti

Sonya Salanti leads the SEEP Network's Resilient Markets thematic area. Her work with SEEP focuses on design and implementation of global capacity building initiatives that support organizations to build resilience of crises-affected populations through market-based approaches. Sonya's portfolio of programs includes the Minimum Economic Recovery Standards and the Markets-in-Crises Community of Practice, both of which serve as key resources for practitioners and organizations active in market-based programming.



# Elle Lee

Ellen Lee is part of UNHCR's Division of Resilience and Solutions based in Geneva HQ, where her role entails providing technical support to country operations on their livelihoods and economic inclusion programs through capacity building, guidance development and research, monitoring and evaluation. She has been working on MERS mainstreaming within UNHCR since her arrival in 2017.



# Karri Byrne

Karri Byrne brings over 25 years of leadership and management experience to humanitarian and development settings, overseeing large, complex programs in some of the world's most challenging environments. She has worked extensively on programming related to market facilitation and value chain development, job creation, access to finance, and entrepreneurship. Karri has been a core contributor the Minimum Economic Recovery Standards since their inception and was a lead facilitator for the Mainstreaming MERS.



# Saad Barood

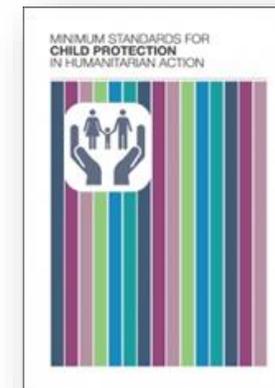
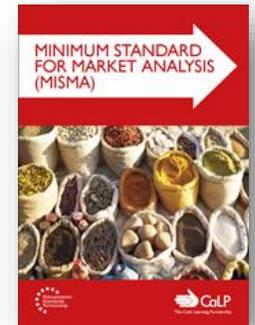
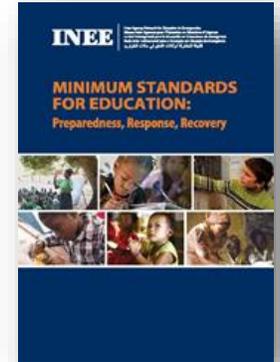
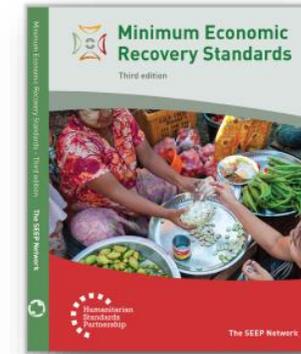
Saad has been working in the Humanitarian and Development Sector for five years as a partnership manager in Bonyan, a Syrian NGO based in Turkey, focusing on early recovery and livelihoods. Relying on his 8 years of experience in industrial manufacturing and trade sector, he participated in designing and implementing several economic empowerment projects in Syria including micro-finance and vocational training. Saad was introduced to the MERS by SEEP team visiting Gaziantep, Turkey in 2018. Noting the MERS applicability and effectiveness in improving humanitarian response, Saad worked within his institution to ensure MERS was adopted within Bonyan's programs.



# **MERS: A brief overview**

# MERS Background

- Developed, revised and disseminated over a thirteen-year period – now in the third edition
- Member of the Humanitarian Standards Partnership
- Adheres to the HSP mandate to promote quality, accountability and ensure complementarity between Standards
- Practitioner informed – MERS represents an industry consensus on best practices



# MERS Structure

**Standards** - The Standards are qualitative in nature: they are meant to be universal and applicable in any environment.

**Key Actions** - Are the tasks that may be done by practitioners in order to meet the minimum standards.

**Key Indicators** - Are 'signals' that show whether a minimum standard has been met.

**Guidance Notes** - Provide specific points to consider when applying the minimum standards, key actions, and key indicators in different situations.

# A Quick Guide to the MERS

## Core Standards

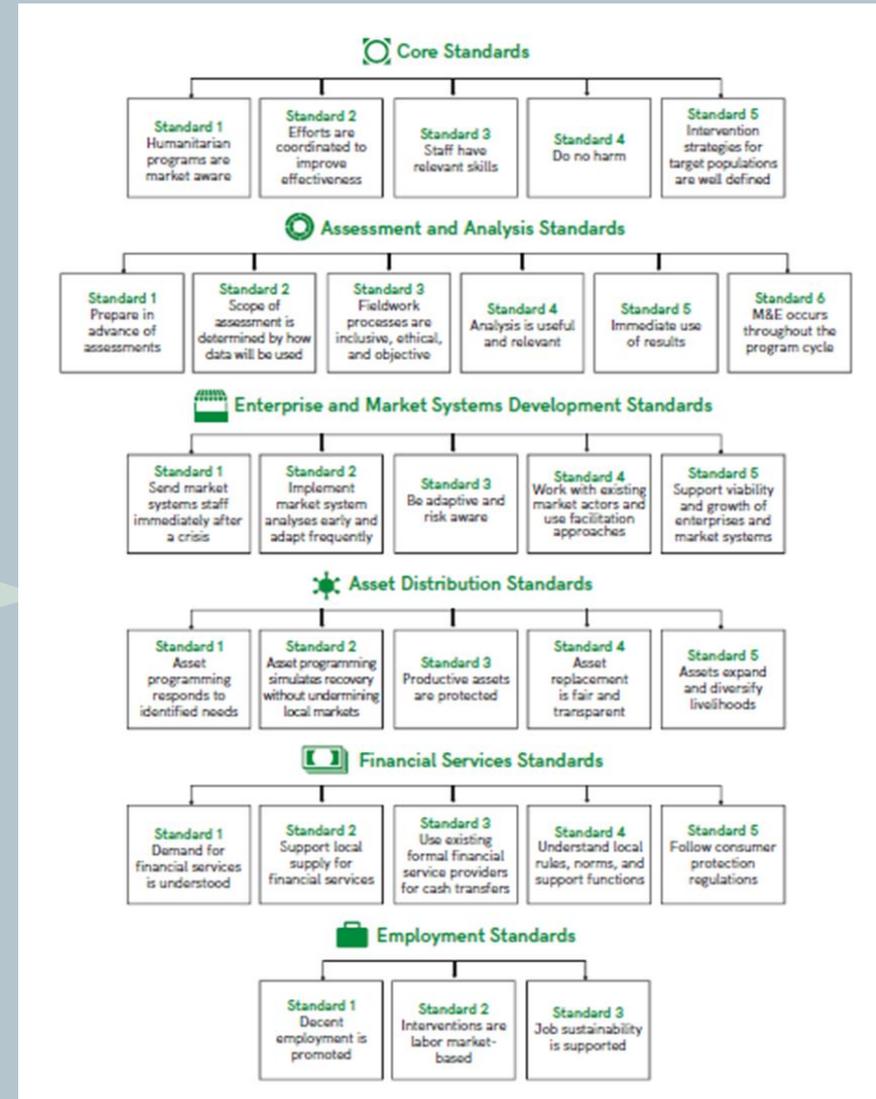
## Assessment and Analysis Standards

## Enterprise and Market Systems Development Standards

## Asset Distribution Standards

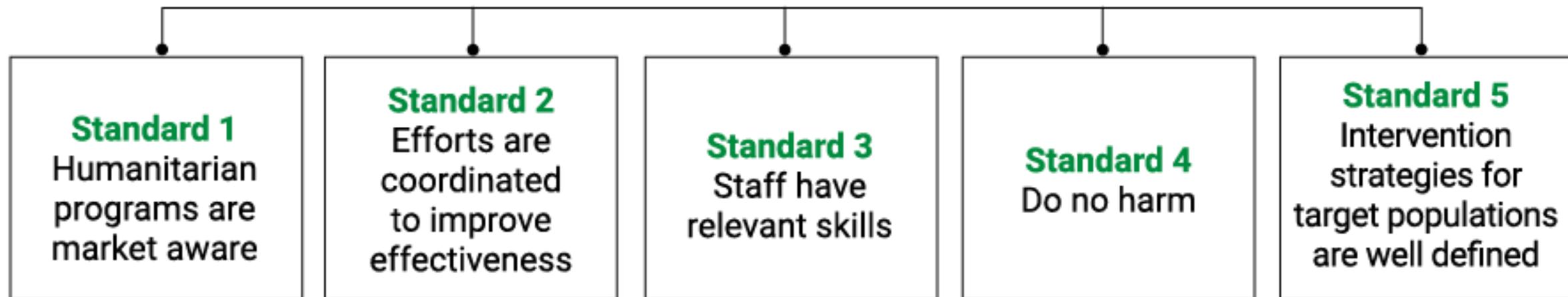
## Financial Services Standards

## Employment Standards





## Core Standards





## Assessment and Analysis Standards

### Standard 1

Prepare in advance of assessments

### Standard 2

Scope of assessment is determined by how data will be used

### Standard 3

Fieldwork processes are inclusive, ethical, and objective

### Standard 4

Analysis is useful and relevant

### Standard 5

Immediate use of results

### Standard 6

M&E occurs throughout the program cycle

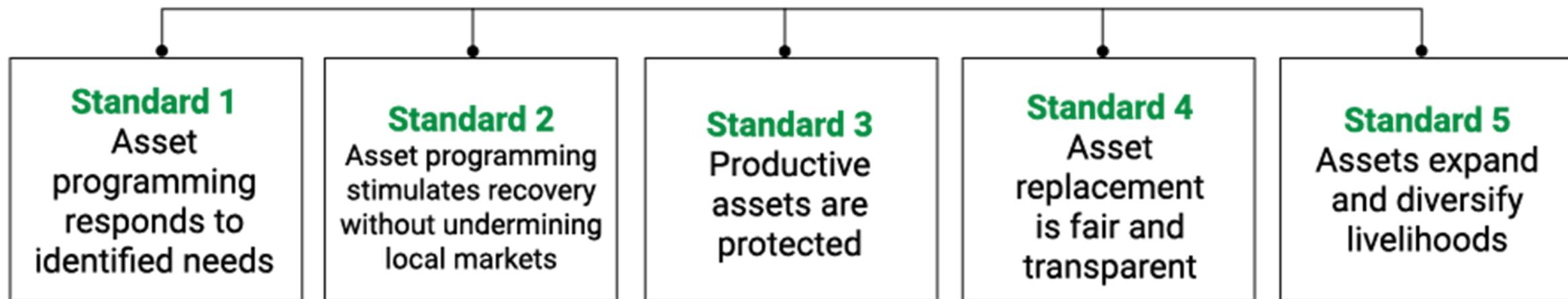


## Enterprise and Market Systems Development Standards





## Asset Distribution Standards





## Financial Services Standards

**Standard 1**  
Demand for financial services is understood

**Standard 2**  
Support local supply for financial services

**Standard 3**  
Use existing formal financial service providers for cash transfers

**Standard 4**  
Understand local rules, norms, and support functions

**Standard 5**  
Follow consumer protection regulations

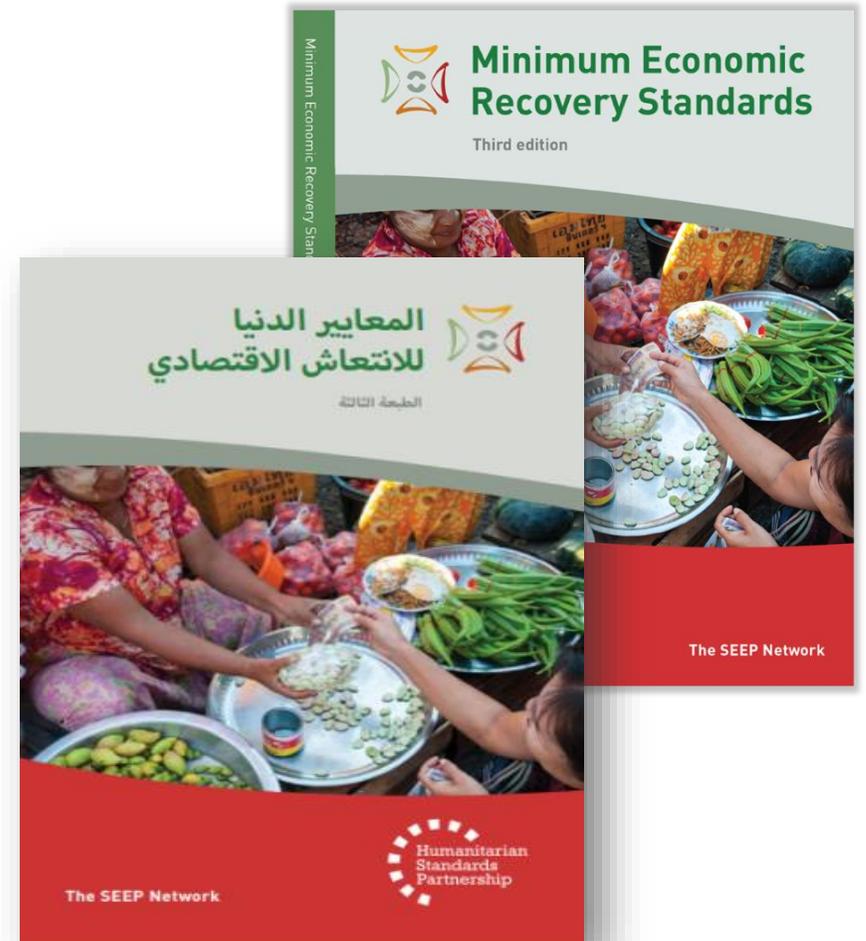


## Employment Standards



# The MERS are accessible!

- ✓ Access the handbook in multiple formats including translations in English, Arabic, French, Spanish
- ✓ MERS Learning Hub
  - Microlearning videos
  - Webinars on demand
  - Case studies
- ✓ Training materials for different audiences
  - Download a **FREE** copy handbook, purchase a hardcopy or get the App at:
    - [www.mershandbook.org](http://www.mershandbook.org)



# Mainstreaming MERS



Problem: Uptake and application of MERS requires behavior change at the practitioner level and the institutional level.



# Mainstreaming MERS in Organizations

## Institutionalizing Behavior Change

### Policies and Standards of Practice

- *MERS integrated in policies, standards of practice or operational guidance*

### Staffing Plans

- *Staff time and expertise allocated to support/promote MERS*

### Business Development and Strategy

- *MERS included in proposals and business development strategies*

### Capacity Building and Professional Development

- *MERS training and resources are components of professional development programs*

### Financial Planning

- *Financial resources are allocated to support MERS initiatives (directly or indirectly)*

# Mainstreaming with Peer Networks

A focus on peer-to-peer influence

## Outreach to Crosscutting Groups

- *Working groups, Clusters, Coordinating Mechanisms, Donor Committees*

## Encourage Early Adopters

- *Early adopters champion the MERS and promote uptake of MERS internally and externally*

## Peer to Peer Influence

- *MERS champions build awareness with peers, local partners and donors*

## Application

- *MERS become integrated into proposals, M&E plans and organizational strategy (institutional and donor level)*

# Mainstreaming MERS: Program Case Stories



# Mainstreaming MERS with a Global Team



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

**Economic Inclusion Unit**

# UNHCR - Mainstreaming MERS

2018 - now



## Mainstreaming Results

### Policies and Standards of Practice

From:

*Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods Programming (informed by MERS)*

To:

*Economic Inclusion Guidance Note (integrates MERS)*

## Refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion

2019-2023 Global Strategy Concept Note

**Engage in advocacy to enhance the enabling environment** such that refugees have legal and de facto access to decent work (such as through rights to work, own a business, access financial services, land/property ownership, and freedom of mobility).

**Partner with and convene expert entities to facilitate inclusion of refugees into existing programmes/services.**

- Conduct consultations with different types of stakeholders, such as:
  - Financial and Business Development Service Providers
  - Private Sector (companies, chambers of commerce, employment agencies, business associations)
  - Training Institutes (public and private)
  - Development Actors
  - NGOs
  - Governments
  - UN Agencies
  - Academia and Research Institutions
- Complete an institutional mapping exercise to see if inclusion is viable, considering:
  - Whether actors have relevant services for refugees;
  - Capacity, incentives and influence of actors to include all targeted refugees; and
  - Expertise of entities and quality of market-based interventions.



**As a last choice, implement interventions to fill a gap in service only when:**

- There is limited or no presence of expert entities who can include refugees; or
- The engagement of other stakeholders is not possible or still insufficient to meet the needs of refugees.

In cases of implementation, operations are recommended to apply the **Minimum Economic Recovery Standards**, which were initially a great contributor to the development of the Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods Programming.

# Mainstreaming Results

## Capacity Building

- *Workshop for Regional Livelihoods Officers*
- *Co-hosting MERS workshops with country offices*
- *Integration of MERS training materials into country level trainings*
- *Virtual instructor led training for country level staff*
- *MERS Case Studies*



## Mainstreaming Results

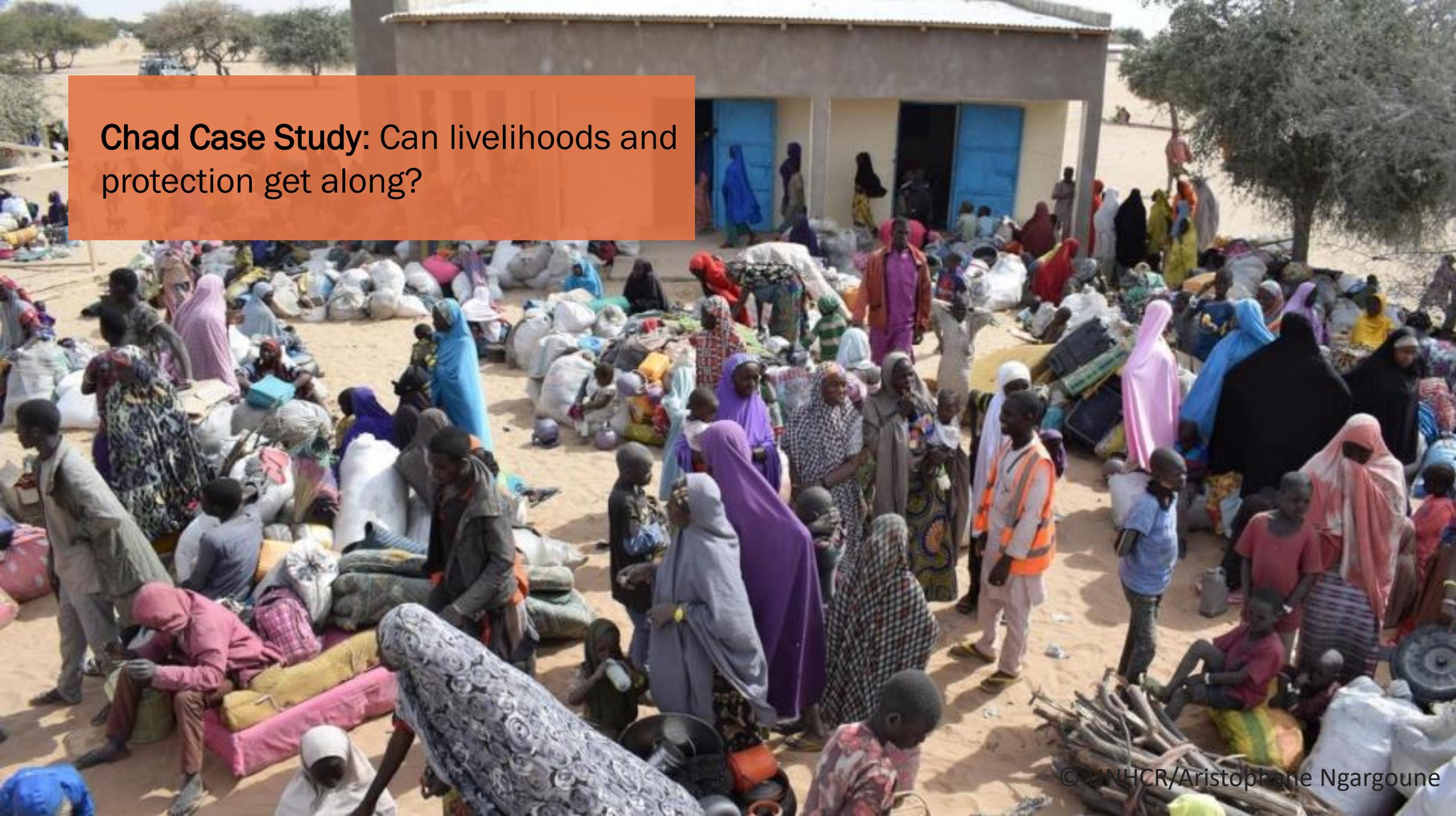
### Staffing Plans

*UNHCR staff with MERS expertise embedded at HQ and country level*

*Ongoing activities to increase the number of internal MERS experts*



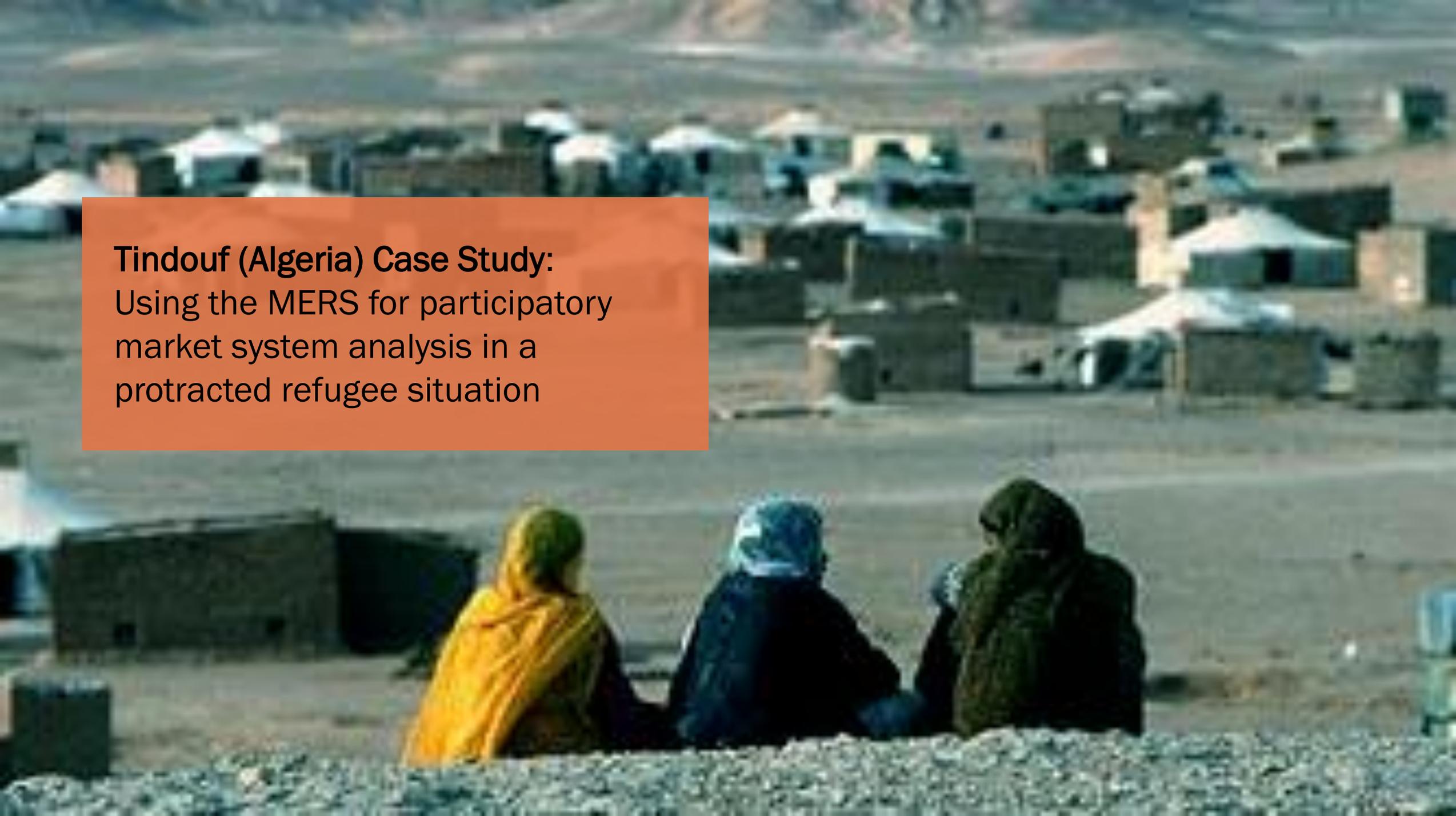
## Chad Case Study: Can livelihoods and protection get along?



# Chad Case Study: Key Findings

Author: Elena Ferrari

- Livelihoods programming can help address protection issues, but the right data and good planning are essential
- Working through the MERS Standards helped her team find clarity on overall program objectives, and therefore what really needed to be monitored (as opposed to data gathering)
- MERS provided a ‘pathway’ or a focus for discussion, so the team could work through issues and become more collaborative

A photograph of a refugee camp in Tindouf, Algeria. In the foreground, three people are sitting on a mound of gravel, looking towards the camp. The person on the left is wearing a yellow headscarf, the middle person is wearing a blue headscarf, and the person on the right is wearing a dark green headscarf. The camp itself is a dense collection of small, simple buildings with flat roofs, some of which are made of mud-brick. The background shows a vast, open landscape under a clear sky.

**Tindouf (Algeria) Case Study:**  
Using the MERS for participatory  
market system analysis in a  
protracted refugee situation

# Tindouf Case Study: Key Findings

Author: Nada Omeira

- CS1—Humanitarian programs are market aware: market studies have focused on macro level; data is not sufficiently local
- CS2—Efforts coordinated to improve effectiveness: coordination structures are in place, but this work will strengthen the voice of the refugee community
- EMS2—Implement analyses early and adapt frequently: this will be used to support risk mitigation planning

# UNHCR Mainstreaming: Top take-aways

## **1** Using the Standards immediately (during training) is essential to learning

The greatest understanding came when staff applied MERS standards to their daily work, especially when it didn't go as expected.

## **2** Timing is critical

Don't schedule MERS courses when field staff is pressured by internal budget or planning deadlines.

## **3** Including a mix of contexts, experience, and seniority is useful

Training participants benefited from hearing how others used and understood different standards.

# Mainstreaming MERS at the Local Level



## A Peer to Peer Approach in Southern Turkey



**Context:  
Displacement and  
early recovery in Syria  
and Turkey**

# Challenges to Economic Recovery and Market Based Approaches

## Gaziantep Context: Displacement and Early Recovery for Syrians

- Market distortion – familiar issue of direct delivery disrupting local markets
- Aid dependency
- Prioritization of emergency relief projects
- Business development services and market development require different approaches

# Challenges to Economic Recovery and Market Based Approaches

## Gaziantep Context: Displacement and Early Recovery for Syrians

- Staff at all levels not aware of/familiar with MSD approaches
- Need for good market assessment to inform interventions
- Programs have been designed based on copying from successful experiences in other contexts



# Our Mistakes Before MERS

- Causing increase in prices due to irregular increase of demand, causing harm (competition) to the local population.
- Donors flag many concerns during program design – due to the lack of a standard approach, in comparison to the relief projects.
- Lack of Market Based Approach in the interventions.

# MERS: Addressing Barriers to Economic Recovery

- Asset programming responds to identified needs
  - (1) Needs assessment
  - (2) Appropriateness
  - (3) Valuing the co-investment



# MERS: Addressing Barriers to Economic Recovery

- Asset programming stimulates recovery without undermining local markets

*(1) Effects on local markets*

- Assets expand and diversify livelihoods

*(3) New technologies*



# MERS: Addressing Barriers to Economic Recovery



- Understand local rules, norms, and support functions
  - (1) Local laws, regulations, and customs
- Intervention strategies for target populations are well defined
  - (3) Direct and indirect strategies

# Mainstreaming Activities

## A focus on local, peer-to-peer outreach

- Spearheaded retrospective assessment and integration of MERS into select Bonyan Organization program for piloting to build buy-in the organization;
- Localization: Translation of materials into Arabic; local context examples
- Collaborative knowledge sharing sessions (English and Arabic) with peers externally – generating interest in mainstreaming MERS within organizations regionally.
  - *Co-funded by GIZ: 40 participants across multiple organizations including donors previously unaware of the MERS.*

# Results/Impact

## 1 Improve Bonyan's Interventions

MERS is utilized during projects design

## 3 MERS mainstreaming

In recent OCHA capacity building program for Quality & Accountability; MERS has been indicated within the standard package

## 2 ER Cluster members

ER cluster members refer to MERS during strategies development

## 4 Yet ! Donors

More efforts are required for educating the donors about the MERS

## Take Action: Donor Community

- ✓ Build awareness of MERS through internal/external training and professional development
- ✓ Integrate the MERS into RFPs/RFAs
- ✓ Use MERS to review and evaluate proposals
- ✓ Use MERS as guidance for ensuring program quality

## KEY TAKE-AWAY

### Take Action: Humanitarian and Development Implementers

- ✓ Use the MERS in proposal development, implementation plans, and as a monitoring and evaluation tool.
- ✓ Use MERS to benchmark your programming and guide strategy.
- ✓ Use MERS as an advocacy tool with donors, government and multilateral partners.

# Learn More!

- ✓ Visit: [www.mershandbook.org](http://www.mershandbook.org)
- ✓ Reach out: Schedule a MERS information session
- ✓ Stay tuned: MERS Focal Point program is underway;  
Regional outreach and training events coming soon!



# MARKETLINKS



## Q&A

The SEEP Network

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@UNRefugeeAgency

The UN Refugee Agency

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