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

The webinar will start soon.
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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

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 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
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

1. **Standard 1**
   - Humanitarian programs are market aware

2. **Standard 2**
   - Efforts are coordinated to improve effectiveness

3. **Standard 3**
   - Staff have relevant skills

4. **Standard 4**
   - Do no harm

5. **Standard 5**
   - Intervention strategies for target populations are well defined
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

Standard 1
Send market systems staff immediately after a crisis

Standard 2
Implement market system analyses early and adapt frequently

Standard 3
Be adaptive and risk aware

Standard 4
Work with existing market actors and use facilitation approaches

Standard 5
Support viability and growth of enterprises and market systems
Asset Distribution Standards

1. **Standard 1**
   Asset programming responds to identified needs

2. **Standard 2**
   Asset programming stimulates recovery without undermining local markets

3. **Standard 3**
   Productive assets are protected

4. **Standard 4**
   Asset replacement is fair and transparent

5. **Standard 5**
   Assets expand and diversify livelihoods
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

- Standard 1: Decent employment is promoted
- Standard 2: Interventions are labor market-based
- Standard 3: Job sustainability is supported
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
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

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policies and Standards of Practice</td>
<td>• MERS integrated in policies, standards of practice or operational guidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staffing Plans</td>
<td>• Staff time and expertise allocated to support/promote MERS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Development and Strategy</td>
<td>• MERS included in proposals and business development strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capacity Building and Professional Development</td>
<td>• MERS training and resources are components of professional development programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Planning</td>
<td>• Financial resources are allocated to support MERS initiatives (directly or indirectly)</td>
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adapted from UNDP’s Gender Mainstreaming approach
# Mainstreaming with Peer Networks

**A focus on peer-to-peer influence**

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<tr>
<th>Outreach to Crosscutting Groups</th>
<th>• Working groups, Clusters, Coordinating Mechanisms, Donor Committees</th>
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<td>Encourage Early Adopters</td>
<td>• Early adopters champion the MERS and promote uptake of MERS internally and externally</td>
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<td>Peer to Peer Influence</td>
<td>• MERS champions build awareness with peers, local partners and donors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>• MERS become integrated into proposals, M&amp;E plans and organizational strategy (institutional and donor level)</td>
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Mainstreaming MERS: Program Case Stories
Mainstreaming MERS with a Global Team

Economic Inclusion Unit

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency
UNHCR - Mainstreaming MERS

2018 - now

- MERS Opportunity Assessment
- Customized Training and Coaching
- Recognition, Follow Up and Follow On
Mainstreaming Results

Policies and Standards of Practice

From:
Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods Programming (informed by MERS)

To:
Economic Inclusion Guidance Note (integrates MERS)
Mainstreaming Results

- 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
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

2. ER Cluster members
   ER cluster members refer to MERS during strategies development

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

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
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

✓ Reach out: Schedule a MERS information session

✓ Stay tuned: MERS Focal Point program is underway; Regional outreach and training events coming soon!