ActivityInfo

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

Case Study

Response to the Syrian Crisis:

The use of ActivityInfo in the

Response to the Syrian Crisis

by UNHCR Jordan

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

SYRIAN CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

LEBANON CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN

HRP FOR IDP, RETURNEES, HOST COMMUNITIES

HELMET SAFETY PROGRAM MONITORING

WASH CLUSTER

PROTECTION CASE TRACKING & CASE MANAGEMENT

RAPID RESPONSE MECHANISM

PROTECTION & NFI CLUSTERS

REFUGEE AND MIGRANT RESPONSE PLAN

EBOLA RESPONSE MONITORING

BUDGET TRANSPARENCY

CYCLONE PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

Executive Summary

UNHCR in Jordan was the first UNHCR field office to adopt ActivityInfo as a monitoring tool for the progress of the activities of the partners. ActivityInfo is being used up until today to track the progress of the activities and the objectives of each sector and each partner.

UNHCR has a lasting presence in Jordan. Today, with around 670,000 registered refugees in the country - result of the impact of the Syrian Crisis - and with almost 100.000 registered refugees of other nationalities, the organization collaborates with the government and other organizations in the Refugee Response Plan.

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By linking the tool to other systems, UNHCR in Jordan creates information products that facilitate the coordination between partners and is able to track the funding received by each partner in relation to the progress of each activity.

The organization has also collaborated with the team of ActivityInfo multiple times to create new features and to adjust the tool to the needs of the program.

Firas Alsagban, working as Associate Information Management Officer with UNHCR in Jordan, part of the interagency coordination unit since 2016 and working with UNHCR since 2008, facilitated the creation of this Case Study by offering his insights on how the tool is being used by the field office.

Murad Alsamhouri, Associate Information Management Officer in UNHCR in Jordan, working with UNHCR since 2013, has also contributed in the creation of this Case Study by providing information on how the tool was used in the first years and by explaining the technical side of connecting ActivityInfo to external systems.

Table of Contents

Jordan is part of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) for the Syrian Crisis, which was created for the Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis and has served since 2013 as the coordinating framework for all partner organizations and countries participating in it.

UNHCR has had a lasting presence in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan providing for refugees of the Iraqi war in 2003 and for a few thousands refugees from the Middle-East or Africa before that.

Since the beginning of the Syrian Crisis in 2011, the organization has registered more than 670,000 Syrian refugees. The country also hosts refugees of other nationalities (Yemenis, Somalis, Sudanese, etc.), reaching a total of 760,000 refugees as of September 2018.

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The country's operation plan is called Jordan Response Plan (JRP) and is the comprehensive Plan for the Syrian Crisis in Jordan. It is a multi-year plan and consists of two components; the Refugee and the Resilience component.

The Refugee component is mainly targeting the Syrian refugees in the country and the Resilience component is targeting the host communities of Jordanians living with the refugees and also affected by the crisis .

Once the country plan for the year is released, UNHCR in Jordan along with the government, donors and other organizations participate in the yearly planning for the activities that need to be done for each sector and set the objectives and the indicators to track.

Using ActivityInfo for the Response to the Syrian Crisis in Jordan

UNHCR in Jordan started using ActivityInfo towards the end of 2013 for collecting information from its partners regarding the 3RP projects and the progress in every location. It was the first UNHCR field office to adopt the tool.

ActivityInfo was selected as part of the solution for the need of an online system for partners to report on their activities on a monthly or yearly basis.

"**We used the system, we created our Database in the ActivityInfo system and we trained the partners, we showed them how to report and how to submit their information about their targeted population, where they are going to implement the project, the total number of beneficiaries receiving this assistance**", recalls Murad Alsamhouri, Associate Information Management Officer, in UNHCR in Jordan.

Today, ActivityInfo is part of the planning and the monitoring phase related to the 3RP activities. More specifically, it is used to track the planned projects for all partners by sector, as agreed during the planning phase. The planning phase usually takes place in the last couple of months of the year, following the release of the country plan, the Jordan Response Plan (JRP). During the planning phase UNHCR, the partners and the government of Jordan agree

> Today, ActivityInfo is part of the planning and the monitoring phase related to the 3RP activities. It is used to track the planned projects for all partners by sector, as agreed during the planning phase. UNHCR in Jordan has 76 partners and more than 200 users using ActivityInfo.

on the activities to be done during the upcoming year. The activities are divided by sector and by objective and specific sector indicators are set.

These indicators need to be tracked throughout the year to check the progress towards them. So the team in UNHCR in Jordan creates a database in ActivityInfo where they enter the planning figures.

"**This is known as the planning phase and it usually happens during the last couple of months of each year when we know about the country plan.**

For 2019, we created a Database within ActivityInfo. We got the 2019 plan and in that Database, we enter the planning figures and what each sector, each partner, each actor got approved or is planning to do during the year, and that's all

depending on the funding side", explains Firas Alsagban, Information Management Officer, in UNHCR in Jordan.

When the new year begins the planning figures become the indicators against which UNHCR will track the progress of the activities per sector and per objective according to the partners' submitted data.

"**When the year starts we will create what we call the monitoring Database, which is the translation of these plans and the progress of these activities, that is per sector and per objective throughout the year. So we can track these activities**", adds Firas.

Also, by linking the information gathered in ActivityInfo with the inhouse financial tracking system, UNHCR in Jordan manages to have the full picture of the contributions and the activities. This means that the team of UNHCR in Jordan tracks the funding received by each partner each year and connects it to what is actually happening in the field based on the indicators for each sector tracked in ActivityInfo.

"**We track the funding received each year and then, in addition to ActivityInfo. We use these tools together to track the contributions and the activities based on that**", explains Firas.

UNHCR in Jordan has 76 partners and more than 200 users using ActivityInfo. All partners use the software to report on the sector indicators related to the 3RP.

The indicators are related to a variety of activities ranging from Social Protection to Basic Needs assistance and from Education opportunities to Cash-based interventions.

This allows the organization to have both a comprehensive overview of the progress of the activities as a whole and a view of the progress of the activities of each partner individually.

"**ActivityInfo is the tool that we use to track the progress and the achievement that has happened by each partner throughout the year. Then, we see how much progress there is at any point of the year and this is all in regards to the whole Plan**", comments Firas.

"**As I mentioned earlier, the purpose of using the system was to join the activities and the progress of project per sector. To have a unified tool where all partners can go and report their progress. So that was achieved thanks to ActivityInfo. It's important, we need it and this is done**", he adds.

Another way in which ActivityInfo assists UNHCR in Jordan in the

Response is by being a unifying source of information regarding the activities of the 3RP.

This means that UNHCR in Jordan uses the data collected in ActivityInfo to create reports, dashboards and other online tools for communication and coordination with partners. These products are the main source of information regarding the progress of the activities.

"**Also, it is the importance of having a unifying, I would say, data warehouse. To know the**

> "ActivityInfo is the tool that we use to track the progress and the achievement that has happened by each partner throughout the year."

information. We are talking about funding, we are talking about the planning phase here, so it's the way we know how much each organization has for budget, or is asking for funding, per sector.

And we actually use the data running

from ActivityInfo to produce several reports and several dashboards and several online tools for which Murad is better than me to talk about.

"**So these are the basics, the main source of information to know how much is spent, how much is spent every month, how much is spent per sector, how much is spent per agency or per partner at any point of the year**", explains Firas.

To create these reports, UNHCR in Jordan, leverages the capabilities of the ActivityInfo API. Murad Alsamhouri explains:

"**For the Jordan operation we use the ActivityInfo API just to extract the data and to store in the SQL database, in our own server. So from this server we customize and create our own dashboard.**

We have tested the API to use with Power BI and I think we have the technical experience to do that; we are planning to work on developing a new dashboard in 2019 by using the Power BI directly from the API coming from ActivityInfo."

Collaborating with the team of ActivityInfo

As mentioned earlier, UNHCR in Jordan was the first UNHCR field office to adopt ActivityInfo, back in 2013. The ActivityInfo team, being always open to the needs of the field, collaborated a lot of times with UNHCR in Jordan.

Since the very beginning, they have worked together to add features and to improve and adjust the system based on the needs of the organization.

"**As I can remember, ActivityInfo wasn't the same way as it is now. We worked with the developers on how to enhance it, how to add some features, to improve the system to better utilize it and to match it with our needs**", explains Murad.

Lately, following another feature request and a fruitful cooperation with the UNHCR field office in Jordan, the ActivityInfo team developed the Long Format Export, currently available to every ActivityInfo user.

The Long Format Export enables the extraction of all the information gathered in a Database in ActivityInfo to a single worksheet.

This allows the Information Management Officer to extract a large amount of data from ActivityInfo very quickly and easily.

"**So I think this [the extraction of data], is a great change and it has been very improved. Especially with the long format extraction which was customized for the Jordan operation**", points out Murad.

The ActivityInfo team, being always open to the needs of the field, collaborated a lot of times with UNHCR in Jordan to develop new features. The latest feature is the Long Format Export which enables the extraction of large amounts of data from ActivityInfo.

7

Conclusion

> "ActivtyInfo has completely moved the system from an online database to a very solid source of information."

UNHCR in Jordan was the first UNHCR field office to choose ActivityInfo to monitor the progress of the 3RP activities in response to the Syrian Crisis in 2013.

Since then, the field office has been contributing to the development of the tool and has been using it every year for planning and monitoring.

Today, UNHCR in Jordan uses ActivityInfo to track the progress of more than 70 partners and more than 200 users reporting on a variety of activities in each sector in Jordan.

With the information collected in the ActivityInfo databases, the organization manages to have a clear view of the overall developments.

By linking this information to external systems, UNHCR in Jordan produces meaningful information products such as Dashboards and Reports that facilitate the coordination and help better understand the effect of the contributions received.

On a concluding remark, talking about the progress the tool has made in the last couple of years, Firas Alsagban, notes, "**ActivityInfo has completely moved the system from an online database to a very solid source of information.**"

What is ActivityInfo?

BE DATA DRIVEN

ActivityInfo is a service provided by BeDataDriven B.V., a private company based in The Hague in the Netherlands.

It is a software application for data collection and reporting which is accessible over the internet.

Due to its design, it is particularly well-suited for reporting on activities which are geographically dispersed and which are performed by multiple partner organizations.

ActivityInfo builds on the company's 10 years of research and practical experience developing information management systems for humanitarian and development projects.

Originally developed for UNICEF's emergency programme in the eastern DRC, ActivityInfo has evolved into a mature project and is now used daily by hunderds of organizations working in humanitarian relief, reconstruction, and development assistance worldwide.

You can sign up and try ActivityInfo at:

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If you want to invite more than 10 users and get personal support, you can subscribe
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