

Case Study

Lebanon Crisis Response Plan:

The use of ActivityInfo by UNICEF in Lebanon for the near real-time overview of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan



Executive Summary

ActivityInfo is used by the IMWG in Lebanon as a unified monitoring platform to control data collection and get an overview of activities in near real-time, UNICEF in Lebanon along with the partner organizations reduce the time needed for the synthesis of final reports and improve the accuracy of the data collected.

UNICEF has been protecting children's rights in Lebanon since 1948. Never before has UNICEF reached as many disadvantaged children as in 2016, or more than 1.5 million.

In 2014, the Information Management Working Group (IMWG) of Lebanon, at the inter-agency level, decided to use ActivityInfo for monitoring the indicators of the databases of the Humanitarian Refugee Response Plan (HRRP), up to 2016.

Since 2017, ActivityInfo has been used by UNICEF, for the Annual Work Plans, which compose the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan.

Using ActivityInfo as a unified monitoring platform to control data collection and get an overview of activities in near real-time, [UNICEF in Lebanon](#) along with the partner organizations reduced the time needed for the synthesis of the final reports and improved the accuracy of the data collected.

Mr. Rodolphe Ghossoub from UNICEF in Lebanon shared with ActivityInfo his insights on the use of ActivityInfo as a data monitoring tool and facilitated the creation of this Case Study.

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UNICEF in Lebanon

The conflict in Syria has had a huge impact on Lebanon. Since its onset in 2011, UNICEF's response has not only expanded year by year but also changed in nature, focusing on both refugees and the host population.

Created in 1946, UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.

UNICEF works closely with the Government of Lebanon, other UN agencies, international and local NGOs, universities, and more than 100 partners to meet the needs of disadvantaged children in Lebanon.

The conflict in Syria has had a huge impact on Lebanon. Since its onset in 2011, UNICEF's response has not only expanded year by year but also changed in nature, focusing on both refugees and the host population.

At the beginning of 2017, half of Syrian children are out of school and resources are depleted, forcing families to rely on harmful coping mechanisms. At the same time, the strain is increasingly felt by Lebanese families as the impact of the crisis pushes them into poverty.

The overall guiding framework for Lebanon is the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) at the inter-agency level.

The LCRP, a joint plan between the Government of Lebanon and its international and national partners, aims to respond to the Lebanon crisis challenges in a holistic,

comprehensive manner through longer-term, multi-year planning.

For the period of 2017-2020 UNICEF has developed the Country Programme Document (CPD) and develops Annual Work Plans for each year.

Large-scale projects face equally demanding challenges

In 2014, the coordination of data and the synthesis of final reports to which many partners contributed was a challenge to be addressed for the Information Management Working Group (IMWG) and more particularly for UNICEF in Lebanon.

The production of meaningful reports based on predetermined indicators could take up to a month due to missing reports from partners, missing information from reports, differences in formats and reporting time-lapse.

To harmonize and synthesize all these data required time and perseverance. This resulted in delays and a fragmented picture of the overall situation of the programme. Consequently, strategies, programming and planning could be affected too.

Mr. Rodolphe Ghossoub, from UNICEF in Lebanon, describes the situation some years ago:

“I worked on this and I used a software for receiving reports in different formats and different times to compile all these reports and come back with a trigger that is needed for intervention. It usually took me a month of compilation of reports and follow up with emails with people and organisations to give me their reports, their figures, their achievements.”

Missing reports from partners, missing information from reports, differences in formats and reporting time-lapse were reasons for delays in producing meaningful reports from the data collected.

Unifying reporting and monitoring data collection with ActivityInfo

ActivityInfo comes in as the tool that is used by all users to monitor the indicators of the databases of the programmes. It is used as the system that validates the data and the figures gathered in Lebanon giving the chance to Information Managers to have an overview of all activities and data in near real-time.

The Information Management Working Group (IMWG) in Lebanon started using ActivityInfo in 2014 for monitoring the Annual Plans at the interagency level.

Up to 2016 ActivityInfo was used as a unified reporting platform for the Humanitarian Refugee Response Plan (HRRP) in Lebanon.

Starting in 2017, ActivityInfo has been used for the Annual Work Plans composing the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan.

Since then, several indicators are being monitored providing an overview of the work delivered to over a million of beneficiaries throughout the year.

With more than 45 partners, UNICEF in Lebanon delivers various trainings to a couple of hundreds of their users, once a year.

The technical part of the training is about ActivityInfo and there are more general trainings on the indicators that need to be monitored.

Thanks to the user-friendliness of the platform, UNICEF in Lebanon saves time and dedicates most of the training time explaining the challenging nature of indicators.

“Usually the technical part is easy

because ActivityInfo is easy. What takes time is understanding the indicator. ActivityInfo is a very user-friendly platform but what people miss is the understanding of the indicators, that we input in the system. If the data is wrong, it is because people didn't understand the meaning of the indicators. So the bulk of the training is to make people really understand the indicators and have a clear picture of them”, explains Mr. Rodolphe Ghossoub, from UNICEF in Lebanon.

With the use of these explicit trainings and with ActivityInfo as a monitoring tool, UNICEF in Lebanon tackles the challenge of scattered information and inadequate reporting.

More specifically, ActivityInfo comes in as the tool that is used by all users to monitor the indicators of the databases of the programmes.

It is used as the system that validates the data and the figures gathered in Lebanon.

ActivityInfo allows all users to report at the same time, on the same indicators giving the chance to Information Managers to have an overview of all activities and data in near real-time.

“To have everyone reporting on one platform on the same time, on the same indicators would be impossible without ActivityInfo and what I have just stated is huge actually. It affects strategies, programing, planning, it affects everything”, states Mr. Ghossoub.

To ensure that there will be no edits in the data collected after the reporting phase is finished, the Information Management Working Group (IMWG) decided to lock the data in ActivityInfo every month. So whenever users need to make corrections on the data submitted, they have to get in touch directly with them to explain the changes.

This makes sure that the work done on ActivityInfo is monitored efficiently and results in gathering consistent data throughout the year.

The annual figures are then used to serve various purposes such as for example setting the baseline for the Annual Work Plan. Mr. Ghossoub explains,

“We take the values of ActivityInfo and we estimate what is the baseline and what is the target for the next year.

And when you know the baseline and target, you can do your programing properly, the

budget and finance will work. Everything will work correctly. So we rely on ActivityInfo a lot for our work here.”

In addition, UNICEF in Lebanon uses ActivityInfo to extract data easily to create reports connecting it to other platforms and leverages the possibility for customized assistance from the ActivityInfo support team.

“ActivityInfo is easy, so it is an easy platform to work on. You are a very good team so the support from your side is interesting. So you have helped us a lot in this crisis and thanks to you things are evolving and you are responsive whenever we have feedback on the platform.

The data on ActivityInfo is easily extracted so we can have our own data and work on the data outside the system which is very good as well. Connecting the system on another platform is interesting, as well”, comments Mr. Ghossoub.

“To have everyone reporting on one platform on the same time, on the same indicators would be impossible without ActivityInfo. It affects strategies, programing, planning, it affects everything.”

Conclusion

“With Activityinfo you can with just a click, in a second, have a report about activities taking place in an area with a list of partners that are delivering the service in this specific area. From a month of inaccurate results to a couple of minutes of accurate results on one single dashboard.”

Comparing data monitoring before and after 2014, the Information Management Working Group (IMWG) and more specifically UNICEF in Lebanon has managed to create a much smoother and quicker procedure for data validation. They also manage to gather more consistent and accurate data regarding the activities of the partner organizations

Today, the PME Officers can have near real-time insights on their activities with the data gathered at any given moment saving valuable time that would otherwise be wasted in harmonizing and compiling documents and Excel sheets.

Data validation and full control on data entry and users permissions result in consistent high quality data collection regardless of the size of the programme and the number of the stakeholders involved.

“ActivityInfo changed the reporting mechanism at the beginning of the refugee crisis in the Middle East from aggregating reporting to a unique reporting system.

With Activityinfo you can with just a click, in a second, have a report about activities taking place in an area with a list of partners that are delivering the service in this specific area. From a month of inaccurate results to a couple of

minutes of accurate results on one single dashboard”, concludes Mr. Rodolphe Ghossoub, from UNICEF in Lebanon.

What is ActivityInfo?



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 hundreds of organizations working in humanitarian relief, reconstruction, and development assistance worldwide.

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<https://www.activityinfo.org/signUp>

If you want to invite more than 10 users and get personal support, you can subscribe to one of our plans by sending us an email at: info@activityinfo.org