

# LIVELIHOOD COPING STRATEGY INDEX (LCSI) REVISION

## Gaza Protection Consortium, Thematic Studies

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### Rationale

During previous years, because of various restrictions on questionnaires and limited coordination amongst agencies, each agency adapted the Livelihood Coping Strategy to meet their specific programme's needs. Ultimately, continuous, and progressive amendments resulted in agencies having a different set of questions, different answer options, and different calculation methods, which affected the comparability of the results. Thus, this led to a poorer overview of households' vulnerabilities, limited room to verify these information through triangulation of the results, and affected the broader understanding of the humanitarian landscape. Furthermore, none of the coping-strategies related indicators used in the Gaza Strip were strictly adhering to the recommended standards and its suggested phrasing for the most sensitive questions (e.g. "stop sending children to school to engage them in working for economic gain and/or productive household activities" was rephrased as "withdrawing children from formal education", which does not capture the same aspect of the original wording).

### Thematic Study on Coping Strategies

Taking on board the Cash Working Group (CWG) and ECHO's requests to address this problem, the Gaza protection Consortium (GPC) conducted a thematic study on the coping mechanisms used in the Gaza Strip. The Coping Strategy study, through literature review and data collection, mainly focused on gathering evidence on the formerly used CARE CSI and how to best adapt it based on the full of list of recommended indicators, context-based identified coping strategies, frequency of use, and protection related implications. This aimed to gather the first pieces of evidence to begin the revision process of the LCSI.

Data collection occurred between October 20<sup>th</sup> and November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The GPC team assessed 560 households across the five governorates of the Gaza Strip. Respondents were randomly sampled from the former beneficiaries' lists of the GPC, with a representative sampling of female-headed and male-headed households. Findings are representative at the GPC level and can be generalized to the broader Gaza population.

### Indicator methodology

According to the latest discussions with GPC's Protection Manager and the CWG's partner agencies, the new LCSI works through 14 weighted indicators based on the severity of the coping mechanism used and the perceived longer-term Protection impact. Out of the 14 indicators, ten were selected from the global recommended list, considering both frequency studies and further thematic quantitative evaluations, and four were added to reflect better the specificity of the Gaza Strip context upon discussions with national experts. Where available, literature about coping strategies and protection implications supported the decisions around the indicators selected.

Each of the 14 coping mechanisms selected was given a severity coefficient, ranging from one to ten (where the higher the coefficient, the more severe the implications of using the coping mechanism are, i.e., child marriage is weighted as a ten, while having additional household members seeking income sources is a one). Coefficients were jointly assessed and endorsed by the GPC Protection and Cash technical experts. The proposed set of indicators and coefficients was then discussed at the CWG level with its partner agencies over two meetings (December 2021 and one ad-hoc meeting in January 2022). During the discussion, coefficients were endorsed or amended according to the group's consensus. The complete set of indicators is presented in **Table 1**.

**Table 1: List of indicators and severity coefficient**

Indicators/Questions	Severity coefficient
At least one additional member seek employment or any income source, including daily labor, street vending, engaging in dangerous work practices (e.g., dangerous constructions, etc.) or any instance of moving away from home to seek work	1
Re-sharing the housing unit with other nuclear families (including with parents' house)	3
Relocating to a cheaper/smaller housing unit	3
Sold any not productive assets (e.g., jewelry, furniture, etc.)	4
Borrow/rely on help from friends, relatives, or neighbors for staple food or borrow money to spend on food or essential household needs	4
Raising livestock/poultry in the housing unit as a source of food for your family (e.g., in the living room)	5
Sold any productive assets (e.g., livestock, electronics, land, etc.)	6
Sold the entire house (e.g., moving to rental)	7
Engaging in socially unacceptable or degrading activities, such as begging	8
Delay seeking medical attention for critical health problems	9
Stop sending children to school to engage them in working for economic gain and/or productive household activities (to collect firewood/fetch water/work etc.)	10
Engaging in illegal activities (e.g., driving a taxi without a license, illegally selling in the streets without getting approval from municipalities, robberies, pick pocketing, etc.)	10
Marrying daughters earlier than otherwise planned (under 18yo)	10
Marrying sons earlier than otherwise planned (under 18yo)	10

Each indicator should be included in all baseline and post-distribution monitoring (PDM) surveys to effectively assess trends and changes in the use of coping mechanisms throughout the projects implementation. Five answer options should be factored for each of the indicators:

- Yes (i.e., the coping mechanism was indeed used in the 30 days prior to data collection);
- No (i.e., the coping mechanism was not used in the 30 days prior to data collection);
- Exhausted (i.e., the household used this coping mechanism in the past and has no longer the resources to use it); and
- Not applicable (i.e., the household never had the resources to use this coping mechanism).
- Prefer not to answer

For example, taking the indicator of “selling the house”, the respondent may say yes if they did sell the house over the last month, no if they didn’t, exhausted if they owned a house but they sold it long ago, or not applicable should they have never owned a house. These answer options again adhere to the global best practices recommended.

Scores will be applied exclusively to the “yes” answer option. Yet, the other three will still provide additional information on the Gaza context, patterns, and specific needs. In fact, for all indicators with a coefficient of ten (child labor, child marriage, and illegal activities), implementing partners will automatically refer households to Protection teams or partner agencies in the position of providing specialized support. For Protection assistance specifically, the answer options considered will be “yes”, which applies strictly to the 30 days prior data collection, and “exhausted”, which also covers the previous months.

In the case of the GPC, specialized protection assistance will be delivered by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Humanity & Inclusion (HI), Medicine du Monde (MdM), AISHA Association for Woman and Child Protection, and other relevant partners agencies based on their capacity and the project individual participants’ specific needs.

The total maximum score achievable is 90. Based on the score obtained, each household is then classified as either in “emergency”, “crisis”, “stress”, or “none”. These four categories respect the global guidelines and define households’ use of negative coping strategies as it follows in **Table 2**.



**Table 2: Definition of the each category based on the Gazan context.**

<b>None</b>	Households using mildly negative coping strategies that may not affect the overall household's resilience capacity in the longer term.
<b>Stress</b>	Households using a limited number of negative coping strategies that could potentially affect the household's resilience capacity.
<b>Crisis</b>	Households using negative coping strategies extensively, which may indeed affect their resilience capacity in the longer term.
<b>Emergency</b>	Households using the most severe coping strategies, which not only will affect their resilience capacity, but also their members' well-being.

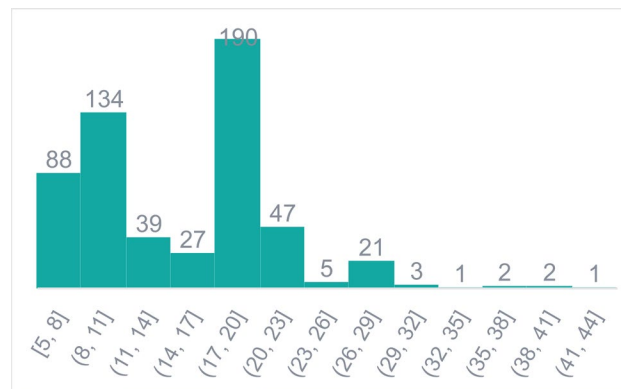
To date, the tentative thresholds to fall into a category are presented in **Table 3**, however there are not sufficient data to confirm whether the suggested thresholds are in fact grounded in the reality of the Gazan context. Thus, the indicator will be subjected to extensive testing over 2022 to best understand how households would be categorized. The first proper testing will occur between March and April 2022. Should baseline data highlight the suggested categorization thresholds are not giving an actual representation of the Gaza context, these will be amended accordingly at CWG level as a matter of priority.

**Table 3: Tentative categorization and related thresholds (to be tested).**

<b>None</b>	<b>0 to 10</b>
<b>Stress</b>	<b>11 to 30</b>
<b>Crisis</b>	<b>31 to 70</b>
<b>Emergency</b>	<b>71+</b>

Based on the available data collected during the thematic studies, which unfortunately did not cover the breadth of the new indicators in **Table 1**, it is possible to expect households to score on average between 15 and 20 at baseline as per the frequency chart presented below **Figure 1**. Yet, during testing phase this assumption needs to be examined.

**Figure 1: Distribution of LCSl scores in the Thematic studies**



It is also recommended to have indicators to cross-check information, particularly the most sensitive ones (e.g., income from child labor to cross-check with those who reported stopping sending children to school to engage them in working for economic gain and/or productive household activities). Indeed, the sensitivity of the questions and respondents' potential unwillingness to disclose some of these information should be factored.

### Next steps

The CWG will provide capacity building for enumerator team leaders and/or M&E staff, should organizations need it. This new LCSl will be piloted for no less than six months by the GPC and all other humanitarian actors interested in using it. All data will then be compiled and studied to define whether there are still flaws in the approach or gaps to be addressed.

### Limitations

While this indicator strictly follows global standard guidance and recommendations, it had to be adapted to the Gaza Strip environment. Should it need to be used for different contexts, it may have to be further amended or adapted.

## CONTACT

### TECHNICAL INQUIRIES

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