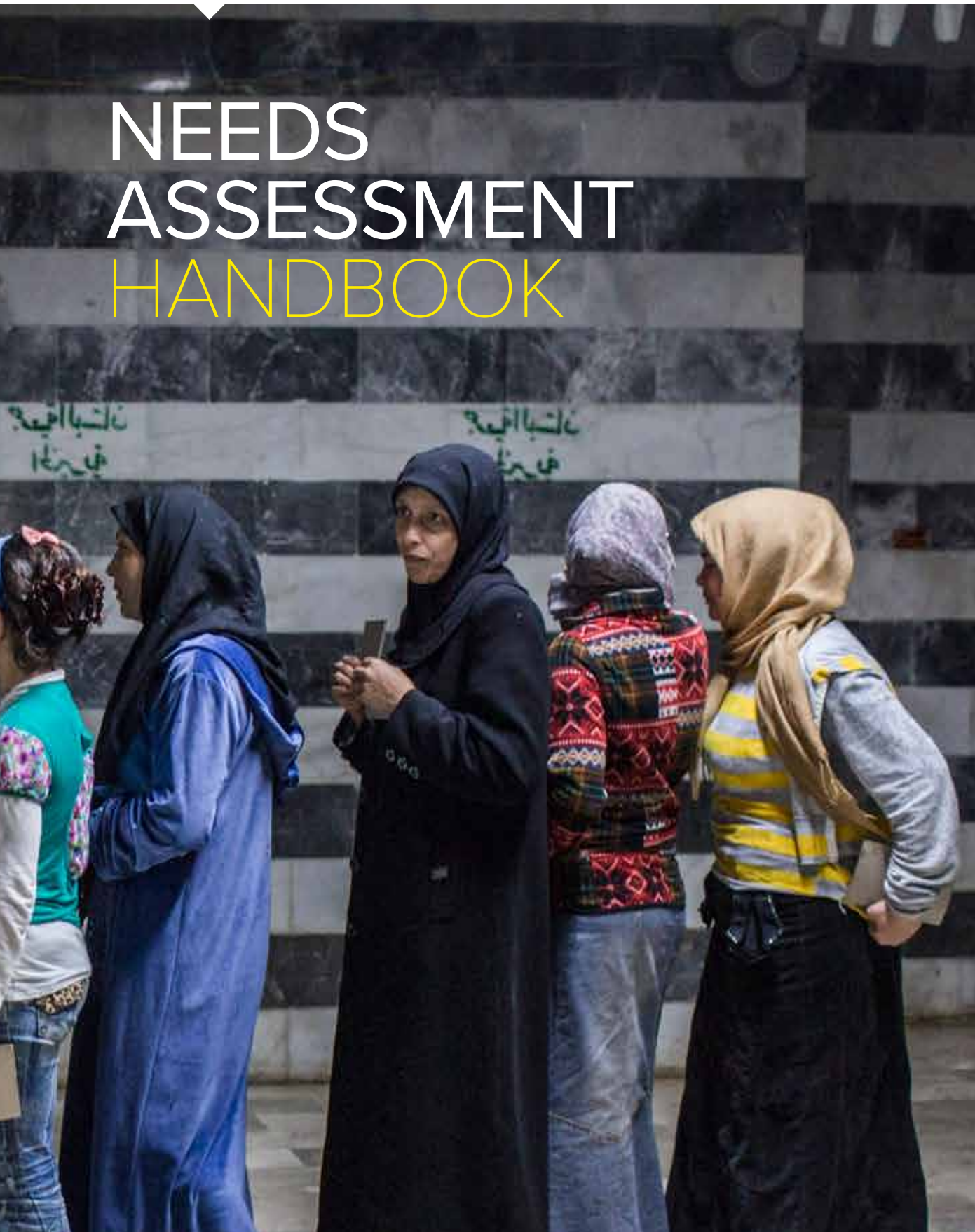
UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

NEEDS ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK



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Foreword: UNHCR's Strategic Approach to Needs Assessments

'We require needs assessments that are impartial, unbiased, comprehensive, context-sensitive, timely and up-to-date. Needs assessments must provide a sound evidence base for humanitarian response plans and prioritised appeals with due regard for specific accountabilities of mandated agencies [...] The needs assessment process must be coordinated, impartial, collaborative and fully transparent with a clear distinction between the analysis of data and the subsequent prioritisation and decision-making.' – *The Grand Bargain, World Humanitarian Summit (Turkey, 23 May 2016)* [1]

As a result of the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, the Grand Bargain established 10 commitments for aid organizations and donors to work together efficiently, transparently, and harmoniously in order to better deliver protection and assistance to the millions of people facing emergency needs. One of these commitments calls for the improvement of needs assessments, notably by:

1. *Providing a single, comprehensive, cross-sectoral, methodologically sound, and impartial overall assessment of needs for each crisis to inform strategic decisions;*

2. *Coordinating and streamlining data collection to ensure compatibility, quality and comparability, and avoid over-assessment and duplication;*

3. *Sharing needs assessment data in a timely manner, with the appropriate mitigation of protection and privacy risks; and*

4. *Prioritizing humanitarian response across sectors based on evidence established by the analysis.*[2]

Given that UNHCR is one of the signatories of the Grand Bargain, the agency's *Needs Assessment Handbook* and its accompanying online *Needs Assessment Toolkit* provide guidance on how to accomplish these objectives.

UNHCR operations have been conducting collaborative, protection-sensitive needs assessments for years. However, the rigour demanded by donors and formalized by

1 The Grand Bargain: A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need, Istanbul (Turkey), 23 May 2016.

2 With regard to needs assessments (Commitment 5), the Grand Bargain also stipulates that the signatories must 'dedicate resources and involve independent specialists within the clusters to strengthen data collection and analysis in a fully transparent, collaborative process'; 'commission independent reviews and evaluations of the quality of needs assessment findings and their use'; and, 'conduct risk and vulnerability analysis with development partners and local authorities'. Moreover, under Commitment 4 to 'Reduce duplication and management costs with periodic functional review', there is a commitment to 'reduce the costs and measure the gained efficiencies of delivering assistance with technology (including green) and innovation', for example by 'expanding the use of mobile technology for needs assessments/post-distribution monitoring'. These commitments will be dealt with through other UNHCR initiatives.

the cluster system to adequately address the needs and priorities of populations of concern now requires UNHCR to engage in more formal, methodologically sound, and transparent processes for joint assessments and joint analysis.

Joint and harmonized assessments lead to efficiencies, prevent the over-assessment of populations of concern, and help establish a common inter-agency understanding of a situation at the outset of a crisis and throughout the programme management cycle. Recognizing the importance of maintaining the link between needs assessments and monitoring, regular joint needs analysis provides an evidence base for medium- and long-term planning, including multi-year protection and solutions strategies. Similarly, to bridge the humanitarian and development gap, links are being strengthened with development frameworks and assessments such as UNDAF, Recovery and Peace-building Assessments (RPBA), and socio-economic research by actors such as the World Bank.

This Handbook represents the first guidance UNHCR has produced on needs assessment that applies to all sectors, situations, methods, and populations of concern. Although the Handbook should not be considered policy, it serves the similar purpose of committing the Office and its staff members to a set of global principles, objectives, standards, procedures, and working methods. As the culmination of years of research and broad consultations, it consolidates practices, standards, and guidance from across UNHCR and operationalizes the *IASC Operational Guidance on Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises*.

With this Handbook, UNHCR seeks to build on its strengths and core mandate to ensure that the centrality of protection is mainstreamed in all needs assessments. For a humanitarian response to be protection-oriented, it is essential to understand and seek to prevent, mitigate, and/or end actual and potential risks. This requires a continuous analysis of the needs, risks, threats, vulnerabilities, and capacities of affected persons on the one hand, and of the commitment and capacities of duty bearers to address risk factors on the other. Such an analysis provides the evidence base for programming, advocacy, and other activities that aim to change behaviours and policies in support of a more favourable protection environment and better protection outcomes.[3]

Needs assessment activities are characterized as any exercise conducted to understand the various needs of a population. In practice there are different assessment tools and methods that can be used. It is good practice to establish a comprehensive assessment strategy that employs various assessment tools to meet the needs of each sector, based on the level and types of operational data required to achieve the identified purpose. See Annex 7 for more details on common assessments terms and relationships.[4]

3 IASC, Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2016.

4 Note that there is sometimes confusion between needs assessments, the UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessments, and participatory approaches. All needs assessments must adhere to the principles and practices of participatory approaches. While the scope and activities of participation may depend on the specific context of each situation, participatory and community-based approaches are 'the way UNHCR does business.' Needs assessment activities, on the other hand, are characterized as an exercise conducted at a single point in time to understand the various needs of a population. In practice there are many different assessment approaches and tools that can be used to undertake needs assessments, including highly qualitative approaches such as the UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessments and/or a more quantitative assessment approach such as IDP profiling (i.e. a household level, representative survey). Both methods are types of assessments within the broader protection information management category of Needs Assessments, but they employ different data collection techniques, which alter how operations can use the resulting data.

Regardless of the type of assessment chosen, participatory approaches must apply and guide all aspects of assessment activities. While the scope of participation may depend on the specific context of each situation, continuous participatory approaches are standard UNHCR practice.

The Handbook is structured in two parts. The first, which is recommended for all audiences, defines need assessments and their different types; describes coordination modalities; outlines the roles and responsibilities of different actors in refugee situations, IDP situations, and mixed situations; provides an overview of the steps to conduct needs assessments and the principles that should guide them; and explains the relationship between needs assessments and other information systems. The second part of the Handbook provides detailed practical guidance on how to conduct needs assessments in the field. It can be used as a reference text, with readers referring to specific steps and sections as needed based on their role in the operation or the needs assessment, and the type of situation.

In addition to the Handbook and supporting Toolkit, there is an e-learning programme that is open to all interested staff members and UNHCR partners. The e-learning component is complimentary to the Handbook and provides further guidance on how to operationalize assessments. The programme illustrates case studies, field practices, and lessons learned from needs assessments within UNHCR operations.[5]

We recognize that needs assessment practices and requirements evolve over time as new operational environments emerge and new policies are introduced. For example, the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) will amplify refugee host population voices in needs assessments. New innovations and strengthened humanitarian partnerships will continue to drive the need for and emergence of new techniques and standards. In order to respond to and capture those changes, UNHCR will regularly update the Needs Assessment Toolkit and has a dedicated email address available to receive feedback on an ongoing basis (HQNA@unhcr.org). This is part of our wider commitment to continue to professionalize needs assessment practices in order to improve protection outcomes for the populations we serve.

5 The Needs Assessment E-learning modules can be found on Learn and Connect. There is also an introductory Needs Assessment module within the Operational Data Management Learning Programme, ODMLP, (Module 25).

Acknowledgement

This Handbook was written under the supervision of Kimberly Roberson with assistance from Shelley Gornall, Robert Heyn, Lynnette Larsen, Gregg McDonald, Rachelle Cloutier, Kelly Ryan, and Cecilia Utas. The Needs Assessment Handbook is the product of close consultation and collaboration among UNHCR staff with key contributions from the Bureaux; Division of International Protection; Division of Emergency, Security and Supply; Division of Programme Support and Management; Innovation; and many dedicated UNHCR field colleagues.

The Handbook is based on existing UNHCR guidance and practice on needs assessment that have been consolidated into a single reference source. It also reflects inter-agency guidance and tools on needs assessments, including guidance from the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) and the IASC Needs Assessment Task Force.

Purpose

The purpose of the UNHCR Needs Assessment Handbook is twofold:

- To delineate UNHCR's role in the coordination of humanitarian needs assessments; and
- To offer practical advice on how to appropriately design and conduct needs assessments and needs analyses for informed decision-making and needs-based response planning.[6]

The Handbook provides an assessment framework for UNHCR in a variety of contexts.

Scope

This Handbook is designed for use by all UNHCR staff and partners involved in needs assessments. This includes those responsible for overseeing an assessment and those directly undertaking, managing, or coordinating such a process, whether specialists or generalists.

The Handbook will apply in all UNHCR operations[7] and phases, from preparedness to emergency response to protracted situations, in four distinct planning and coordination models:

- UNHCR Operations Management Cycle;
- UNHCR-led response in refugee situations;
- UNHCR as cluster lead and cluster member in IDP situations and other non-refugee humanitarian crises; and
- UNHCR in mixed situations with refugees and IDPs.[8]

Note that, as a general matter, UNHCR does not provide in-kind humanitarian assistance to stateless populations nor conduct regular needs assessments with regard to stateless populations. UNHCR implements its statelessness mandate to identify and protect

6 UNHCR, *Programme Manual* (Chapter 4), 2016.

7 This Handbook provides technical guidance that applies to all types of settings and groups of persons of concern to UNHCR, though approaches for assessments might differ and render a need for customized guidance and tools, such as for stateless. References to available and relevant resources feature in the Needs Assessment Toolkit.

8 Note that while there are only three distinct planning models, in practice UNHCR often has to coordinate in a fourth situation: mixed. A mixed situation is one where the humanitarian community must respond to both refugees and IDPs.

stateless persons and to prevent and reduce statelessness primarily through advocacy with governments and others, and without humanitarian needs assessments. While needs assessments generally are not conducted in statelessness situations, many of the general information management and protection principles outlined in this Handbook will apply to statelessness responses, too. For more information on UNHCR's approach to statelessness, refer to: Statelessness: *An Analytical Framework for Prevention, Reduction and Protection* (UNHCR, 2008).

Part 1 of this Handbook is particularly relevant for those responsible for deciding whether to undertake a needs assessment and for ensuring the use of needs analysis in the programme cycle. Part 1 builds upon the *UNHCR Programme Manual* (Chapter 4), Part II: Assessments.

Part 2 is especially relevant for practitioners involved in the practicalities of undertaking needs assessments in field operations. It describes the methodology and design requirements for a successful needs assessment and refers to standardized support tools and best practices for UNHCR operations, which are available in an online toolbox.[9] Part 2 also refers to general external guidelines on good assessment practices; as there are numerous specific assessment tools that change frequently, the main ones are presented in Annex 3 and are available in the toolbox.

9 UNHCR, *Needs Assessement Toolkit*.

UNHCR and the wider humanitarian community undertake needs assessments to inform a broad spectrum of decisions. Put simply, if humanitarian actors do not know what the needs are, how can they respond to them effectively?

PART 1
Needs Assessment In UNHCR Operations

Needs Assessment Overview

Definition and Purpose of Needs Assessments

Needs assessments involve systematically gathering and analysing information relating to the needs, conditions, and capacities of persons of concern – diverse women, men, girls, and boys of all ages, including those with specific needs – in order to determine gaps between a current situation and agreed standards. It must be conducted with the active involvement of persons of concern.

> A needs assessment is defined as a data collection exercise usually conducted at a single point in time to gain an understanding of the protection issues, availability of resources, sources of problems and their impact on the affected population. (Protection Information Management [PIM] matrix, 2016) [10]

A needs assessment is triggered by a need to better understand a particular situation and the conditions faced by populations of concern, whether in the context of a response to a sudden crisis or an ongoing planning effort during a protracted crisis.[11] A needs assessment seeks to do some or all of the following:

- Identify the different protection needs and risks of diverse women, men, girls, and boys of concern, and establish priorities.
- Estimate the severity of conditions faced by diverse women, men, girls, and boys of concern, and establish priorities.
- Create a common understanding of differences in needs and reflect the diversity of conditions faced by relevant groups of persons of concern, including older women and men; persons with disabilities; persons belonging to minority groups; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons (LGBTI); and others.
- Identify existing capacities and resources of persons of concern, including positive and negative coping mechanisms, as well as partners and governments.
- Inform emergency or longer-term/multi-year programme responses to close gaps between an affected population's current status and the desired state.

10 The PIM Matrix can be found here.

11 Planning could refer to a humanitarian or refugee response plan or to long-term planning such as a multi-year, multi-partner protection and solutions strategy.

- Support operational and strategic decision-making, including targeting.[12]
- Avoid causing harm with humanitarian interventions.
- Inform the design of further assessments based in identified information gaps.

A well planned and executed needs assessment – ideally conducted jointly or in collaboration with partners – provides stakeholders (UN agencies, governments, partners, persons of concern, etc.) with a common understanding of the situation, humanitarian needs, and capacities. It assists in designing appropriate and proportionate programmes and activities by enabling evidence-based and transparent decision-making. Needs assessments can help provide the information required to make difficult prioritization decisions in light of constraints in resource allocation. An inability to prioritize humanitarian assistance and protection can lead to unnecessary suffering and even loss of life.

The centrality of protection should be considered throughout the assessment and be participatory, aiming to include the full spectrum of age, gender, and diversity of persons of concern. The level of participation will vary with the accessibility of the groups of persons of concern, size of the assessment, type of crisis, sectors to be assessed, and objectives.

Needs assessments are critical to ensure core humanitarian principles are upheld, including the following:

- **Humanitarian assistance and protection is both rights-based and needs-based:** Persons of concern should be involved in the identification of their priority needs, and receive assistance and protection relevant to and appropriate for their needs and in full respect of their rights.
- **Humanitarian assistance and protection promotes and does not undermine safe local coping mechanisms and capacities:** Affected populations are resilient and on their own will develop ways to cope with risks in order to fulfil their needs.
- **The respective needs of different population groups are identified and understood:** Not all affected groups will have the same needs. Not only will humanitarian needs differ for people of different sexes, ages, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, sexual orientation, and disabilities but also based on factors that might increase the risk of protection incidents, on socio-economic factors, and on other issues.
- **Decisions regarding humanitarian assistance and protection are based on verifiable information:** In order to explain the provision of assistance and ensure protection to populations – for instance, type of intervention, amount of assistance and protection, or the populations targeted – the humanitarian community needs verifiable information that provides both transparency and evidence for the decision-making process.

Decisions that need to be taken when conducting a needs assessment include the following:

- What information is needed to provide the necessary evidence base?
- Will the assessment serve multiple sectors or thematic areas?
- Will the assessment be a joint or harmonized assessment?

12 While needs assessments can play a role in operational and strategic decision-making, frequently more in-depth information is needed for selecting target populations.

- Which geographic areas and populations will the assessment cover?
- What type of assessment is needed given the situation: initial, rapid, or in-depth?
- What is the host state's capacity to lead and coordinate the needs assessment, and how can UNHCR and other partners support this leadership of the process?

Some needs assessments focus on only one sector (e.g. shelter) or issue (e.g. sexual and gender-based violence), while others such as the Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) focus on several sectors (e.g. shelter, CCCM). In general, multi-sectoral assessments aim to compare needs, severity, and priorities across sectors of interest and at a single point in time. Since the breadth of the assessment is as large as the number of sectors covered, the depth of information collected is generally reduced. Multi-sectoral assessments are preferably used at the beginning of a crisis, after a substantial change in a situation, or at well-identified points during the year (e.g. to support the Humanitarian Needs Overview or the Refugee Response Plan) to provide a comprehensive overview of the situation and to inform overall response strategies.

Sector-specific assessments allow for more in-depth understanding of key issues, risks, and capacities within sectors. These tend to be better adapted to support specific cluster or sector strategies, programmes, and operations.

Coordination Modalities for Needs Assessments

Coordination mechanisms around humanitarian needs assessments have changed in the past decade due to the broader humanitarian reform process. Under this model, a UNHCR office may coordinate a multi-agency joint needs assessment in a refugee emergency, participate in a multi-cluster joint assessment in an IDP context coordinated by OCHA, coordinate a cluster-specific needs assessment as a cluster lead, or take on a lead role within a sector or multi-sector assessment in a mixed displacement situation. Additionally, in-depth needs assessments are fundamental for robust medium- and long-term (i.e. multi-year) planning in protracted situations and for laying the foundation for durable solutions in contexts of both refugees and IDPs.

UNHCR follows the *IASC Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises*[13] to ensure effective coordination, produce comparable data, and promote a shared vision of needs and situations. Coordinated assessments should be planned and carried out through partnerships with government (where feasible), humanitarian actors, national civil society, and development actors with the participation of persons of concern. The results should be analysed and subsequently shared with the broader humanitarian and development communities. In addition to saving time and resources, coordinating assessments ensures complementarity in data coverage and avoids duplication of efforts.

13 IASC, *Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessment in Humanitarian Crises*, 2012.

There are different degrees of coordination for assessments:

Uncoordinated assessments are conducted without the knowledge of or without consideration for other ongoing initiatives. They often result in multiple assessments, the use of different methodologies, and the production of various reports on similar issues, situations, or persons of concern. The results often are neither shared nor interoperable, and cannot be used to inform a joint analysis and common understanding of a situation. A lack of coordination of assessments also can cause harm to populations of concern, who may be asked multiple times about their needs by different actors, including about potentially sensitive or traumatic issues.

Coordinated assessments are planned and carried out in partnership, with results shared with the broader humanitarian and development communities, as well as with persons of concern, to identify the needs, conditions, priorities, and capacities of affected populations. Such assessments range from inter- and intra-cluster/thematic joint assessments to harmonized single-agency assessments. The two types of coordinated assessments are:

- **Joint needs assessments** occur when multiple organizations have an interest in using similar data collection methodologies to conduct an assessment in specific geographic locations, or when organizations have an interest in the same thematic area. Data collection, processing, and analysis take place as a single process among agencies within and between clusters/thematic areas, and lead to the production of a jointly owned output (i.e. single report).

- **Harmonized needs assessments** are conducted by a single agency and provide an alternative to joint assessments in situations where there is a compelling reason to do separate assessments, due to operational considerations, protection concerns, or the need for specialist data collectors or different methodologies. Harmonized needs assessments must adhere to agreed standards in order to facilitate cross-analysis, including but not limited to geographic data standards and agreed thematic indicators.

The critical aspect of a coordinated assessment approach is ensuring the participation of key stakeholders in all steps of the process to promote common understanding of the objectives, data collection and analysis methodologies, findings, and priority issues. Table 1 summarizes the different types of coordinated approaches.

Table 1 Coordinated assessment modalities

Type	Definition	Output	Implementation
Joint Needs Assessment JOINT ✓Single assessment form ✓Single methodology ✓Single report 	Data collection, processing, and analysis form a single process among agencies. All agencies and organizations involved in planning and design follow the same methodology and use the same tools.	A single report representing the agreed interpretation and analysis of needs by several agencies or organizations.	• Establish a multi-organization coalition through which to pool resources to support the assessment. • Agree with partners on common methodologies and data collection tools including internationally recognized best practices for researching, documenting, and monitoring protection concerns. • Conduct a joint analysis to agree on the interpretation of findings
Harmonized Needs Assessment HARMONIZED ✓Multiple assessments with common indicators ✓Standardized approach ✓Joint analysis 	Data collection, processing, and analysis are conducted separately, adhering to shared standards such as the use of key indicators and common operational datasets, including geographical standards.	Multiple needs assessments reports or databases that can be cross-analysed, aggregated, and used for a shared or joint analysis.	• Agree with partners on which population classifications and indicators will be used across multiple needs assessments. • Use the IASC Common Operational Datasets[14] and UNHCR data standards. • Share needs assessments to cross-analyse results.
Uncoordinated Assessments UNCOORDINATED ✓Multiple Assessments ✓Multiple Methodologies ✓Multiple Reports 	Datasets are not interoperable, and results cannot be used to inform the overall analysis.	'Over-assessment' leads to risks and harms that outweigh benefits for individuals and communities. Avoid this situation using one of the two techniques outlined above.	• Multiple disconnected assessment reports that may or may not be available for distribution. Duplicated or redundant needs assessments. Thematic or geographic gaps in needs assessment information.

Types of Needs Assessments

Different types of assessments are commonly used during humanitarian emergencies. Each is designed for responding to specific information needs and often corresponds to a particular point in the course of an emergency or programme cycle.

Needs assessment types vary in depth, research method, time frame, and cost. Table 2 outlines the three most common assessment types and distinguishes between them based on several criteria.

14 Common operational datasets (CODs) are predictable, core sets of data that are standardized among the humanitarian community and serve to support operations. Fundamental operational datasets (FODs) are datasets that are required to support multiple cluster/sector operations and that complement the CODs. UNHCR has a responsibility both to update and to use the IASC CODs and FODs in its information systems. The datasets are available at: http://cod.humanitarianresponse.info/country-region.

Table 2 Types of needs assessment

Criteria	Initial Assessment	Rapid Assessment	In-depth Assessment
Objectives	• Define scale and severity of the crisis. • Estimate women, men, girls, and boys in need. • Identify and locate affected populations and groups considering age, gender, and diversity. • Establish key priorities. • Define access constraints.	• Define impact of crisis. • Estimate women, men, girls, and boys in need by population groups of concern. • Assess severity of needs of affected groups and areas. • Capture views of different groups of affected populations through consultation. • Establish key priorities with affected populations. • Identify information gaps.	• Envision comprehensive, durable solutions that inform needs assessment. • Define and quantify needs including more in-depth sectoral and operational information. • Provide detailed and statistically representative data. • Capture representative views of affected populations through joint consultation with them. • Establish baseline for needs and response monitoring.
Type of decisions to inform	• Initial response decisions. • Rapid assessment design. • Emergency funding appeals.	• Initial planning of humanitarian response. • Define focus for subsequent in-depth assessments. • Provide recommendations for strategic planning.	• Inform detailed planning and scope of humanitarian relief, early recovery, and durable solutions. • Adjust ongoing response. • Provide recommendations for programme and operational planning.
Timeframe	3-5 days	2-4 weeks	1-4 months
Design	• Secondary data analysis only. • Small number of field visits, if feasible.	• Secondary and primary data analysis. • Primary data is gathered at the community level. • Qualitative research methods.	• Secondary and primary data analysis. • Primary data is gathered at the community, institution, household, or individual level. • Quantitative and qualitative research methods.
Sampling strategy	Convenience/ purposive sampling	Purposive sampling	Representative sampling
Data collection techniques	Flyover, direct observations, key informant interviews. *Field tool:* Checklist	Community group discussion, key informant interviews, direct observation, focus group discussion (in some instances). *Field tool:* Semi-structured questionnaire	Household/individual interviews, highly stratified focus group discussions, direct observation. *Field tool:* Structured questionnaire
Unit of measurement	Province, district, or sub-district; community or village	Community or institution	Community, household, individual
Resources	Very limited time and resources	Limited time and resources	Sufficient time and resources
Cost	$	$$	$$$
Outputs	Secondary data review report. Emergency call or appeal.	Sector/multi-overview reports. Prioritization of needs and responses, geographic locations, and population sub-groups.	Detailed thematic/multi-thematic assessment reports

Needs assessments should be differentiated from monitoring systems, which tend to continuously collect information on affected areas and population groups in order to track changes and trends over time. Because monitoring systems generate information on protection risks and trends as well as on programme performance, they can be used

as an early warning system to trigger needs assessments if conditions deteriorate. Conversely, needs assessments can highlight the need for ongoing monitoring of particular issues, population groups, geographic areas, or programmes. In quickly changing situations, monitoring systems may have an increased frequency of reporting. In slow-onset emergencies, numerous monitoring systems may already be in place before a new crisis occurs. Finally, needs assessments can simply assist in filling information gaps that remain despite existing monitoring systems.

As an important factor, the unit of measurement[15] needs to be considered early on, as it will change depending on the level of detail sought. Typically, rapid assessments examine communities (e.g. camps, villages, etc.), while in-depth assessments look at individual conditions. The unit of measurement chosen will have a significant impact on the amount of data that needs to be collected, processed, and analysed. Community-level assessments generally will have less data volume than a household-level assessment.

Deciding which type of assessment to use will depend largely on the type or level of decision that needs to be made (i.e. at the strategic vs. operational level), the time frame given for informing decision-making, and the resources available.

When to Conduct a Needs Assessment

Needs assessments help to inform a broad range of decisions and is a step in UNHCR's Operations Management Cycle (Figure 1). The degree and pace of the cycle varies according to the scope and nature of an individual operation. This is true whether the cycle encompasses, for instance, regular programmes in protracted or stable situations, emergency responses, or dynamic population movement patterns.

In practice, several processes within the Operations Management Cycle may occur at the same time. For example, one programme may be under evaluation while another is being implemented and yet another is being re-designed. Some processes may be repeated several times if programme monitoring reveals the need for modifications. This is of particular importance in emergencies and dynamic or complex situations. Monitoring and evaluation undertaken as part of the programme management cycle should feed into any needs assessment. Using existing information from these sources will assist in the design of any needs assessment and avoid duplication of work.

Fig. 1 UNHCR Operations Management Cycle

15 The unit of measurement is the quantity used as a standard of measure in the data collection phase of an assessment. Typical units of measurement include individuals, households, affected groups, communities, camps, facilities, etc. Units of measurement can be aggregated to greater units of analysis, but not the reverse. Smaller units of measurement result in greater data volume than larger units of measurement. Selecting the right unit of measurement during the planning and design phase is thus important.

In a refugee crisis, a needs assessment or needs analysis is used to inform a Refugee Response Plan (RRP). Similarly, in a cluster context, these might be needed to complete a Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) or to inform a Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), a cluster strategy, or a Flash Appeal.

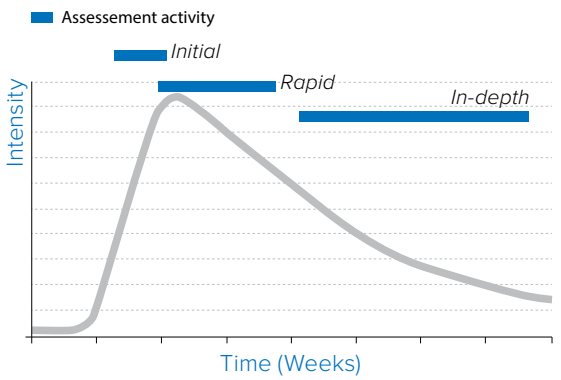
Regardless of annual or multi-year planning, regular requirements, or the setting, it is the operation that will decide whether to conduct an assessment (see Table 3).

Table 3 Appropriateness of conducting a needs assessment

Needs assessments are appropriate and recommended when:	**Needs assessments are inappropriate and not recommended when:**
• A new crisis has emerged. • A sudden and/or substantial change happens in an existing crisis. • Additional information about a specific situation or for decision-making (e.g., medium- and long-term strategies) is required. • Contingency planning is undertaken. • A change of policy provides new opportunities. • New funding requires the identification of needs and prioritization of resource allocation.	• Programmatic decisions have already been made, and the assessment results will have no operational relevance. • Additional information is not required. • Conducting an assessment will put data collectors, respondents or community members in harm's way. • An assessment's results will be incorrect or extremely biased, or its effectiveness will be limited due to known factors. • The negative impact of raised expectations outweighs the benefits of data collection. • An affected population has reported that it feels over-assessed or will be negatively affected by a further assessment.

It is important to understand how these specific situations may require adapted strategies to meet all the information needs.

Fig. 2 Assessment strategy for **sudden-onset emergencies**



Sudden-onset emergencies

In the case of a new sudden-onset emergency or a sudden substantial change in an existing crisis, information is needed urgently to inform emergency actions. In this case, an initial and/or a rapid assessment will be required to inform emergency decisions and priorities (i.e. in the Initial and Revised Flash Appeals). The information will be less detailed and precise in order to quickly obtain a preliminary snapshot of the situation. Later assessments may be staggered and/or linked to inform each other and provide regular updates on the conditions of affected populations, using more robust and quantitative methods as needed.

For sudden-onset emergencies, it is also good practice to regularly carry out safety audits and service mappings to support identification of SGBV immediate risks and mitigating factors. Based on observation, safety audits assess risks related to camp layout, WASH, resource availability, and the provision of humanitarian services and assistance.

Service mapping consists of gathering via interview with services providers (and maintaining up-to-date) information about service provision.[16]

Slow-onset crises

In a slow-onset crisis such as a relatively small-scale and steady influx of refugees (Figure 3) or repetitive droughts (Figure 4), the progression of the crisis is slower, more predictable, and does not change frequently.

Fig. 3 Assessment strategy for **slow-onset crises**

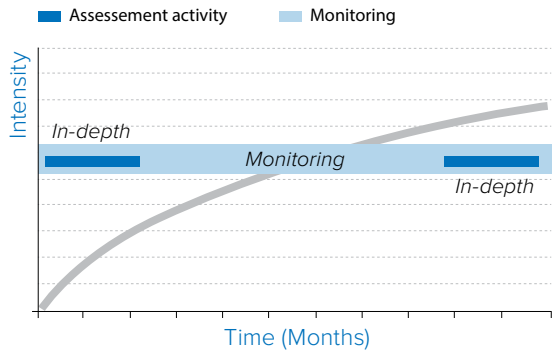
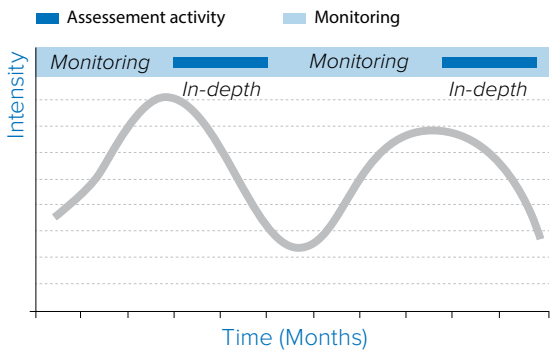


Fig. 4 Assessment strategy for **cyclical crises**



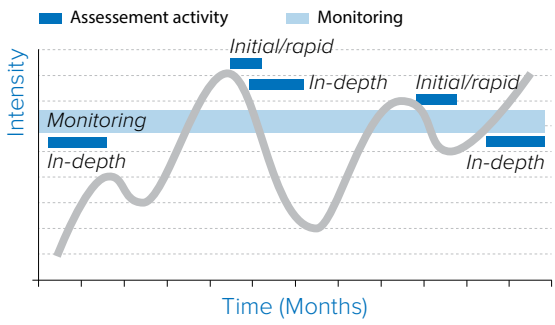
The decision-making and planning time frames – which the needs assessments are to inform – are well-identified (i.e. it is easier to plan for in-depth assessments accordingly). In this case, multi-sectoral or sectoral in-depth needs assessments are recommended to support medium- and long-term planning, and will be implemented at regular and strategic intervals (i.e. to inform HNOs, Comprehensive Needs Assessments, multi-year solutions strategies, etc.). The methodology used should be comparable to allow for trends analysis from one assessment cycle to the next. A key component should be a secondary data review that can be jointly analysed by partners.

Complex emergencies

In unpredictable complex emergencies, multiple cycles of violence or escalations of crisis may regularly occur, and instability and stability might coexist depending on time and geographical area. In such situations, regular analysis of situational monitoring data can help identify potential trends that may trigger further needs assessments.

Stability and safety are the main factors that determine which type of assessment to use and the sequencing. In a relatively accessible and

Fig. 5 Assessment strategy for unpredictable conflict or **complex emergencies**



16 See: Template for safety audit and service mapping resources, available at: http://gbvresponders.org.

stable context, any type of assessment may be appropriate. In an unstable situation, initial and rapid assessments may be the only options available to obtain the minimal information required to inform strategic planning and programme activities.

When considering an in-depth assessment in unstable areas, the validity over time of the collected information needs to be reviewed against expected changes in the context. Secondary data should always be reviewed and jointly analysed to inform needs assessment findings. If access is difficult, secondary data might be the resource to rely on.

More details on types of crises and how the focus, methods, and tools of needs assessments might differ are presented in Part 2 of this Handbook.

Assessment Strategy

Varying contexts call for different assessment approaches. UNHCR operations, sectors, and clusters should develop an assessment strategy that is clearly linked to decision-making processes and other existing information systems (i.e. protection monitoring systems and population data management systems). Different types of emergencies as well as longer-term and multi-year planning in different contexts will require an assessment strategy. By linking various types of assessments within one assessment strategy, UNHCR can significantly improve response activities and, ultimately, our operational relevance.

Preparedness

Experience from past crises shows that preparing for needs assessments at the operations level prior to a crisis considerably improves their quality and timeliness when emergencies occur. Assessment preparedness activities involve:

- Maintaining an updated assessment registry;
- Selecting and designing assessment methodologies and tools for different types of scenarios in coordination with national authorities' disaster response mechanisms and/or refugee /IDP/returnee protection state structures, depending on context;
- Agreeing on Standard Operating Procedures, including coordination modalities and triggers for assessments;
- Compiling baseline data and risk profiles;
- Training assessment teams, including on data protection policy and standards (confidentiality, informed consent), assessments tools (interview skills, focus groups techniques), and piloting assessment tools;
- Agreeing on reporting templates and types of analysis;

- Identifying focal points within each participating organization; and
- For remotely monitored areas, establishing and building the capacity of a network of data collectors who can execute a needs assessment.

Roles and Responsibilities for Needs Assessments

UNHCR's role in needs assessments will vary by context, but within every UNHCR operation, clear responsibilities should be outlined. This Handbook focuses on needs assessments in four distinct planning and coordination models. These roles are summarized in Table 6.

Operations Management Cycle: All UNHCR Operations

The Operations Management Cycle is the process by which a UNHCR office organizes its programming (see Figure 1). While conceptually the cycle operates in a sequential fashion – assessment ➔ planning ➔ implementation ➔ monitoring ➔ reporting ➔ audit ➔ evaluation – in reality certain phases often take place simultaneously (e.g. assessment and implementation) or repeatedly (e.g. monitoring throughout the year, reporting at mid-year and year-end), depending on the situation and operational realities. The Operations Management Cycle should be dynamic and include constant adjustments to programming, reflecting the variable nature of the environments in which UNHCR works.

Although UNHCR generally engages with persons of concern over several years, the Operations Management Cycle takes place on an annual basis, in alignment with the formal approval of UNHCR's programme and associated budget on a yearly basis (1 January to 31 December). While a formal assessment exercise must take place annually (normally in the January-to-March period), assessment should be a constant activity that feeds regular adjustments to programme design and resource allocation.

An assessment is mandatory before the preparation of the annual planning exercise. The Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) is the basis for the operations plan submitted by each UNHCR office for approval by the High Commissioner. The CNA often consists of secondary data sources, ongoing monitoring data, and assessment data, both quantitative and qualitative (i.e. the Participatory Assessment Tool). In a multi-year plan setting, the results will inform the multi-year strategy and in case of major changes in results relative to previous years, trigger revision of the multi-year strategy.

Effective programme design depends on building an accurate understanding of protection risks and gaps, as well as the capacities of persons of concern, through assessment. That process also must document the gap between the current situation of persons of concern and agreed standards, and identify the underlying causes of challenges faced by persons of concern, which UNHCR programming will then seek to address. In addition, assessment provides the elements required by the Multi-Functional Team (MFT)

to make difficult prioritization decisions in light of resource-allocation constraints. At all times, assessment data is complemented by continuous monitoring.

A critical preparatory step in the planning process is to ensure that all of this information is then consolidated and reviewed. Ultimately, the aim here is to identify the total needs for the following year in the CNA, on which UNHCR's response (the operations plan) will be based. This step normally takes place in January, before the preparation of the operations plan.

The problems of persons of concern identified during assessments inform and guide the planning and design processes. Planning is the process by which the findings from assessments are translated into the design of the response, taking into account the local context as well as global and regional priorities. This phase involves an important resource allocation element as operations formulate comprehensive budgets (OP), based on total needs identified and an analysis of implementation capacities, and prioritized budgets (OL), based on projected income available.

Planning serves to establish UNHCR's vision for an operation, design the actions that will be taken to meet the identified objectives, reach agreement on indicators and targets to measure progress, and develop the budget needed to achieve expected results. Planning is the key moment in the Operations Management Cycle to ensure that evidence generated through assessments, monitoring, and reporting is used to make programming and resource allocation decisions. Moreover, planning provides an opportunity to ensure a level of consistency among operations, focusing on global and regional priorities and the associated strategies.

The Global Needs Assessment (GNA) aggregates the CNAs and provides a comprehensive picture of the humanitarian needs of persons of concern to UNHCR. The GNA feeds into the determination of the agency's global budget needs.

Refugee Situations: UNHCR-led Response

In refugee situations, as per the *Refugee Coordination Model* (RCM),[17] UNHCR prepares for, leads (or co-leads with a government counterpart), and coordinates a multi-sector response in partnership with other agencies and government. In these roles, needs assessments are a starting point for prioritization, planning, and evolving programmatic design. As such, UNHCR is accountable for coordinating needs assessments, exhibiting appropriate sector leadership, establishing appropriate coordination mechanisms (e.g. sector coordination meetings, information management, and data sharing), and advocating on behalf of refugees.

To assume this responsibility, UNHCR commits to ensure that the necessary skills and resources to undertake needs assessments are available or provided to those involved in responding to a crisis as well as a protracted situation. The activities can be shared between humanitarian partners, but UNHCR must ensure that appropriate tools, skills, and leadership exist to facilitate coordinated needs assessments.

17 UNHCR, *Refugee Coordination Model*, 2015.

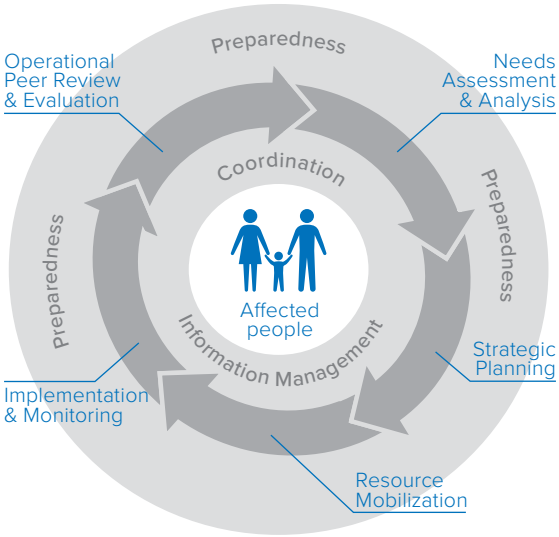
- In the first stages of a refugee emergency, UNHCR Representatives must take the lead in coordinating a joint multi-sector needs assessment.
- In any refugee situation, including protracted situations, UNHCR managers also must solicit needs assessment information from other organizations and disseminate results.
- Lists of planned and undertaken assessments by all actors in a refugee situation should be stored in an assessment registry, and needs assessment reports that are cleared for dissemination should be available on refugee situation web portals such as http://data.unhcr.org.
- UNHCR also should provide authoritative Common Operational Datasets, including master geographic datasets, for refugee situations.

Table 4 outlines some approaches designed to support UNHCR in this role.

Table 4 Main approaches designed for refugee situations

Joint Assessment Mission (JAM)	Needs Assessment For Refugee Emergencies (NARE)	Rapid Protection Assessment (RPA)
The purpose of a UNHCR/WFP joint assessment mission is to understand the situation, needs, risks, and vulnerabilities of refugees, returnees (and host populations) with regard to food security and nutrition. UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) have a long-standing agreement to share the roles and responsibilities for this joint food security and nutrition assessment. The objectives of a JAM are to: • Document the food security and nutritional situation of refugees and/or returnees; • Review the quality and appropriateness of ongoing food security and nutrition-related interventions; • Identify effective food security, nutrition, and/or livelihood interventions to protect and ensure the food security and nutritional status of refugees and/or returnees; • Identify timing, location, and duration for chosen interventions; and • Assemble data to enable UNHCR and WFP country offices to develop a Joint Plan of Action (JPA). The JAM process may take up to six months and requires timely forward planning in order to be successful. More information can be found in the JAM guidelines.	The Needs Assessment for Refugee Emergencies (NARE) is a highly customizable initial multi-sectoral needs assessment checklist for undertaking joint rapid assessments in refugee emergencies. The checklist is designed to help UNHCR operations implement multi-sector needs assessments when there has been a sudden and significant forced displacement across borders. The NARE can also be used when there is a sudden influx into an existing refugee operational environment or in an operation where previous assessments have been inadequate. • NARE highlights information that is derived from pre-crisis and post-crisis secondary data analysis, before the primary data collection begins. • For primary data collection, the NARE suggests data elements that can be derived from facility visits, observations, key informants, and focus group discussions. • It promotes the cross-analysis of information derived from multiple methodologies across multiple sectors to ensure a rapid, relatively complete picture. More information is available in the NARE guidelines.	The RPA helps protection staff, clusters, and other protection agencies collect relevant information to identify key protection concerns and information gaps following an emergency according to an agreed common methodology. An RPA will identify: • Key protection concerns in the emergency; • Who is affected, how many and where are they, which population groups are affected most severely; • Gaps in response and capacities, taking into account the coping strategies and preferences of affected populations. The objective is to assist protection teams to elaborate a strategic plan or an action plan containing: • Prioritized protection concerns on which the protection team will focus; • General strategic approach that the team will follow to address these concerns; • Projects and activities to be implemented, in a coordinated way, to take forward the strategic approach. More information is available in the Rapid Protection Assessment Toolkit.

Fig. 6 The Humanitarian Programme Cycle (IASC)



IDP and Non-refugee Situations

UNHCR as cluster lead

In an IDP situation or in other non-refugee humanitarian crises, the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator leads the implementation of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC),[18] which was established as a result of the Transformative Agenda initiated by IASC in 2011. Much like UNHCR's Operational Management Cycle described above, the HPC is a single strategic process that runs through the cycle of inter-agency coordination in IDP/non-refugee emergency responses. Many of the phases have outputs that humanitarian partners, including UNHCR, come together to produce, such as a Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). As with the UNHCR cycle, needs assessment is a critical stage in the programme cycle – indeed, one on which subsequent stages depend.

Supported by OCHA or another designated agency, the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator may lead a Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) at the start of an emergency or facilitate inter-cluster joint needs analysis for a Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) during more protracted crises (see Table 5 for more details).

Table 5 Multi-cluster approaches designed for IDP situations

Multi Sector/Cluster Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA)	Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO)
Carried out by key stakeholders during the first weeks following a sudden-onset crisis, the MIRA aims to provide basic information on the needs of affected populations and to support the identification of strategic humanitarian priorities, considering specific needs, respective age, gender, and diversity. It facilitates all participating humanitarian actors to reach, from the outset, a common understanding of the situation and its likely evolution, and to agree immediately on priorities. The MIRA should be carried out under the auspices of the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator and, wherever possible, should be led by the government. The process underpinning the MIRA aims to be sufficiently explicit to prevent misinterpretation but flexible enough to be adapted to the specific context of each crisis while minimizing delays in the assessment schedule. More information is available in the MIRA guidance.	The HNO promotes a shared understanding of the impact and evolution of a crisis within the Humanitarian Country Team and informs strategic response planning. This ensures that credible evidence and a joint analysis of needs underpin an effective and targeted humanitarian response. The HNO document describes the impact of the humanitarian crisis, provides strong protection analysis that draws on meaningful engagement with affected populations, and explains an estimate of which population groups have been affected and where. It also analyses their situation; identifies their diverse perspectives, risks, capacities, and vulnerabilities; and gives an overview of the operational environment. More information is available in the HNO Guidance and IASC (EDG), Preliminary Guidance Note: Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle.

18 IASC, *Reference Module for the Implementation of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle*, 2015.

The IASC Protection Policy defines the centrality of protection in humanitarian action as well as the process for its implementation at the country level. This includes a focus on developing an HCT protection strategy and the need to implement this across the HPC.[19]

As lead of the Protection Cluster and co-lead of the Shelter Cluster and the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster,[20] UNHCR is expected to play a key role and take responsibility in supporting coordinated needs assessment processes. Often this means representing the agency's clusters in joint needs assessment coordination fora chaired by OCHA or the Humanitarian Country Team. UNHCR also takes a leadership role in promoting protection-sensitive assessment methodologies and practice.

As a cluster lead, UNHCR is also responsible for coordinating assessments within its clusters, including organizing a joint in-depth sector/cluster-specific needs assessment in which cluster members can participate. The agency also is responsible for tracking needs assessments undertaken by its cluster members in an assessment registry and assisting in disseminating the results. UNHCR should promote the use of standard CODs used in needs assessments, including geographic and population data, among its cluster members.

UNHCR as cluster member

In addition to its cluster responsibilities, UNHCR has responsibilities as an operational agency. For instance, it is expected to participate as a member in relevant clusters, collaborate in contingency planning, make available current stockpiles of relief items, and support any local capacity enhancement. Such responsibilities also include sharing information on assessments already undertaken by UNHCR and participating in joint assessments and analysis at the cluster level, as well as monitoring, tracking, and reporting. The agency also is expected to participate in other relevant clusters.

Mixed Situations

Refugees and IDPs

In some cases, the humanitarian community faces situations of displacement that include the presence of both refugees and IDPs, either in the same geographic area or in separate areas within a country. The Refugee Coordination Model is designed to adapt to a situation where cluster structures also exist, in order to harmonize approaches and reduce duplication.

Regardless of what form the model takes, UNHCR's mandate, responsibilities, and accountabilities remain unchanged. The agency will lead specific strategic planning exercises and coordinate or play a leading role in any inter-agency needs assessment activities relevant to IDPs and other affected populations.[21]

19 IASC, *Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action*, 2016.

20 The Shelter and CCCM clusters are led by UNHCR in conflict-induced displacements.

21 Further guidance on policy and operations in mixed responses is outlined in the UNHCR-OCHA Joint Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice, 2014.

Refugees and migrants

To assist government and others with incorporating protection considerations, UNHCR has developed the 10-Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration.[22]

Table 6 Responsibilities in different coordination settings

	All UNHCR Operations	UNHCR-led coordination in refugee situations
Description	Needs assessments are conducted throughout the year to maintain an up-to-date understanding of needs protection risks, and capacities of persons of concern, feeding into individual programmes through the required steps of the Operations Management Cycle.	In refugee contexts, UNHCR coordinates a multi-sector response guided by an overarching protection and durable solutions strategy (e.g. RRF, multi-year, multi-partner Protection and Solutions Strategy). This role includes leading a coordinated needs assessment approach.
Role	Programme design, budget prioritization, and protection response and advocacy.	Lead coordinated needs assessments including a joint assessment and needs analysis.
Detailed responsibilities	• Establish an assessment strategy, including an analytical framework based on information needs and decisions to be informed. • Gather and maintain data on core situation and needs indicators. • Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment annually, including a participatory assessment.	• Establish an assessment strategy, including an analytical framework based on information needs and decisions to be informed. • Gather and maintain data on core situation and needs indicators. • Lead a coordinated needs assessment approach (joint and harmonized assessments) considering specific needs respective age, gender, and diversity (AGD). • Lead an assessment coordination forum, i.e. Assessment Working Group (AWG) or Assessment and Refugee Information Management Working Group (ARIMWG). • Maintain a refugee assessment registry for UNHCR and partners. • Lead and undertake protection assessment. • Establish and promote SOPs/protocols for data collection and sharing including data protection considerations. • Promote minimum standards for age, gender, and diversity • Lead on joint multi-sector assessment when applicable. • Facilitate joint multi-sector needs analysis on a regular basis for response planning.
Main tools	Focus Needs Assessment in Refugee Emergencies Checklist (NARE) Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) Participatory Assessment Tool Joint Assessment Missions (JAM)	NARE Assessment registry Sector-specific assessments Participatory Assessment Tool UNHCR data portal (http://data.unhcr.org)

Resourcing Assessments

It is crucial that appropriate resources be made available for the needs assessment and analysis process, including financial resources, human resources, technical expertise, and logistics support. Dedicated and qualified resources are required for undertaking data collection and analysis in a transparent and collaborative manner in UNHCR operations and within the clusters the agency leads.

22 UNHCR, 10-Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration (2016 Update), 2016.

Cluster system in IDP/non-refugee situations
In an IDP situation, OCHA will lead needs assessments and analysis in support of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle and a needs-based strategic planning process. UNHCR takes a key role in the clusters it is leading (normally Protection, CCCM, and Shelter).
Lead intra-cluster joint and coordinated assessments and analysis in Protection, CCCM, and Shelter clusters, and function as the cluster representative in inter-cluster joint and coordinated assessments and analysis. Be an active participant in non-UNHCR-led clusters that are relevant to UNHCR programming.
• Support a coordinated needs assessment approach. • Contribute meaningfully to relevant working groups (i.e. AWG). • Promote minimum standards for AGD and data protection. • Establish an analytical framework and analysis plan for UNHCR-led clusters. • Gather and maintain data on core situation and needs indicators. • Maintain an assessment registry for UNHCR-led clusters. • Contribute as a cluster representative to joint assessments (e.g. MIRA). • Lead on joint multi-agency cluster assessment in UNHCR-led clusters. • Follow SOPs/protocols for data collection and sharing. • Promote the use of agreed tools and relevant data standards for coordinated assessments at the inter-agency or cluster level. • Undertake joint needs analysis for UNHCR-led clusters and contribute to inter-cluster joint analysis.
Multi-cluster Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) Cluster detailed assessments (e.g., CCCM Needs Assessment toolkit) Rapid Protection Assessment Toolkit, RPAT) Participatory Assessment Tool Humanitarian Response Web Portal (https://www.humanitarianresponse.info)

Leading an assessment exercise includes a spectrum of responsibilities: setting objectives, identifying necessary technical expertise, coordinating data collection and analysis activities, sharing findings to inform response planning and programming, and reporting back to persons of concern. A person with assessment expertise will lead and coordinate planned needs assessments in a gender-balanced multifunctional team with sector experts and other relevant technical specialists with a good understanding of the local context.

Deciding to conduct a needs assessment that includes primary data collection in the field will have budgetary implications. Any related budget should include an estimate of supplies, personnel, training, transportation, communications, and security requirements. The costs of a needs assessment should be a reasonable investment and proportionate to the scale and scope of a crisis and expected benefits for the population of concern. If a joint needs assessment is planned, decisions will need to be taken on how best to pool resources from multiple agencies and organizations. Due consideration also should be given to the use of existing resources within communities of concern, and ensuring whenever possible that persons of concern be engaged in planning and implementing assessments.

Outsourcing a needs assessment to a third party is possible if UNHCR has the funds but cannot internally meet the personnel, expertise, or logistical requirements to undertake the process. However, if this is done, specific requirements should apply to ensure quality and the respect of protection principles.

Table 7 UNHCR roles and functions for needs assessments

UNHCR Role	Functions
UNHCR Representative	Assumes overall responsibility to ensure: • Assessment is conducted in a coordinated manner • A protection-centred and rights-based approach, including age, gender, and diversity criteria • Accountability to affected populations, such as ensuring consultations with them throughout the assessment process, and sharing results with them • Coordination with and endorsement of government, unless not possible due to context • Adequate financial and human resources are available
Programme Officers and where needed, a dedicated Assessment Coordinator	• Coordinate most needs assessments • Plan the assessment and advocate for appropriate resources • Lead the development of an analytical framework • Identify information gaps and establish a needs assessment plan • Ensure participation of relevant stakeholders, including coordinating sector leads in multi-sectoral refugee assessments • Link assessment results and findings to budget prioritization, response planning, and programming • Provide response and programme monitoring data for secondary data reviews in needs analysis • Lead joint needs assessment in refugee situations • Ensure protection and AGD-centred, rights-based approach
Protection Officers	• Advocate for the systematic inclusion of protection-related questions into needs assessments methodologies (as well as the inclusion of coping mechanisms and community capacities to mitigate SGBV risks as key areas of inquiry) • Lead certain assessments, including protection assessments in IDP and refugee settings and specific, protection-focused assessment exercises, including those relating to sensitive issues such as children protection, SGBV, and vulnerable data subjects • Identify what data and information is sensitive within the operation and take appropriate measures to adhere to protection information management and data protection principles • Train and sensitize data collectors and stakeholders on safe and ethical information management principles and good practices • Lead participatory assessment and engagement of affected populations in all assessments • Participate in joint assessment missions and field visits • Provide protection monitoring data for secondary data reviews in needs analysis and identify appropriate tools • Identify protection proxy indicators in other sectors' assessment data • Use needs assessment data in protection programme design and protection advocacy

•••

Technical specialists, sector leads, and/or cluster coordinators	Provide sector expertise to: • Lead sector/cluster assessments • Conduct regular sectoral needs analysis and contribute to multi-sectoral analysis • Contribute to general assessments and/or joint assessments • Advocate for appropriate resources • Participate in joint assessment missions and field visits • Consult protection stakeholders to ensure the integration of protection issues and mitigation of protection risks
Information Management Officers	Provide technical and information management support, particularly on how needs assessments should be undertaken. • Ensure technical standardization (i.e. promotion of CODs and data standards) • Ensure protection information management principles are adhered to with respect to all assessment activities • Support design of data collection tools, sampling frameworks, data storage systems, and analytical products • Train data collectors/enumerators • Support analysis • Generate data visualization products, including dashboards, infographics, and maps • Disseminate cleared needs assessment reports and products on email distribution lists, web portals, and other means • Coordinate with other agencies' or clusters' information management officers
Admin/finance /logistics	Ensure adequate human resources and logistical support for the operation and/or the UNHCR-led clusters

Principles in Conducting Needs Assessments

In order to ensure that appropriate attention is given to the diverse needs of persons of concern, UNHCR promotes key principles for needs assessments as well as participatory approaches and a protection-centred, rights-based approach.

Key Principles for Needs Assessment

All needs assessment activities in which UNHCR participates, as lead or supporting agency, are expected to adhere to key principles:

- **Do no harm:** Information sources should be protected by complying with best practices regarding privacy and confidentiality, and seeking informed consent. Always keep in mind the safety of those who ask for and provide information, and note that any recorded information will need to be safeguarded against illicit use and sharing. The assessment process should not have a negative impact on societal tensions or exploit any segment of the population visited or interviewed. All needs assessments should result in a cleaned data set, eliminating all household identifiers.

- **Relevance:** Always keep in mind the purpose of the assessment, and collect and analyse only the data that is required for the specified decision-making task. Existing information needs to be compiled and reviewed before any decision is made to collect new data.

- **Adequacy:** The scope of the assessment should reflect the extent and nature of the crisis. The costs of collecting data should not outweigh the benefits of having it.

- **Timeliness:** The need for accuracy, comprehensiveness, and detail should be weighed against the speed with which critical decisions need to be made. Findings and related analysis should be disseminated in time to support decision-making.

- **Validity:** Standardized and rigorous procedures for the collection and analysis of data should be used to ensure credible results and minimize bias. Evidence should be provided to support findings and conclusions.

- **Transparency:** Methodologies and approaches used during an assessment should be made available. This includes any assumptions made during the analysis or any potential limitations on either the accuracy of the data or the sources used.

- **Impartiality:** A predefined analysis plan will ensure a predictive and objective process, and will minimize bias.

- **Disaggregation:** Ensure that the data is always disaggregated by sex, age, and other relevant factors including geographic area and sector, and that adequate analysis is conducted so that the assessment accurately captures the needs, conditions, priorities, and capacities.

- **Coordination:** Ensure that all stakeholders know when and where assessments are carried out. Involving a broad set of actors will strengthen the quality and usability of findings and their impact on the humanitarian response.

- **Sharing:** Share findings with other actors, national authorities, and the affected population while adhering to data-sharing principles and agreed data-sharing protocols or agreements, as relevant.

- **Preparedness:** Assessments are best undertaken when preparedness measures have been implemented and agreed in advance among stakeholders. Modalities for assessments should be part of contingency planning.

- **Secondary data:** Maximum use should be made of available secondary data. Primary data collection should focus on determining what has changed, validating data, and filling gaps in validated available secondary information.

- **Continuity:** No assessment is a one-off event. Rather, it is a process that should continue throughout a situation, adding to information on gaps and needs, and meeting any requirements for more detailed information to support operational decision-making. Always take steps in the design and implementation of each assessment to ensure comparability between data collected at different points in order to monitor trends.

- **Age, Gender, and Diversity:** Humanitarian assistance must be needs-based and consider that different groups within an affected population will have both common and unique needs, in line with the AGD approach. Persons of concern do not experience emergencies or their aftermath in the same way. Protection risks, needs, priorities, capacities, resilience, and coping mechanisms are varied, depending not only on age, gender, social roles, and other forms of diversity but also on the extent to which groups are able to participate in finding durable solutions to their situations.

Rights-Based Approach [23]

A rights-based approach is a conceptual framework that integrates the norms, standards, and principles of the international human rights system into the policies, programmes, and processes of development and humanitarian actors. It therefore focuses on both procedures and outcomes.

A rights-based approach is founded on the principles of participation and empowering individuals and communities to promote change and enable them to exercise their rights and comply with their duties. It identifies rights holders (women, girls, boys, and men of concern) and duty bearers (principally the State and its agents), and seeks to strengthen the capacities of rights holders to make their claims and of duty bearers to satisfy those claims.

This requires an attitudinal shift in how humanitarian actors work with and for persons of concern. They are no longer viewed as beneficiaries of aid but as rights holders with legal entitlements. This shift requires that our policies, programmes, and activities be based on international legal standards, and that members and leaders of the community consider their roles as both rights holders and duty bearers.

With all actors, it is important to analyse the obstacles to exercising these responsibilities and ways to overcome them. For example, States have a duty to provide education for children, while parents have a responsibility to encourage their children to attend school, providing that they have access to schools and the means to support their attendance. If necessary, UNHCR and partners may have to advocate for change so that such legislation conforms to human rights instruments.

Participatory Approach, Community Engagement, and Accountability

Needs assessments must adhere to the principles and practices of participatory and community-based approaches. While the scope and activities of participation may depend on the specific context of each situation, participatory and community-based approaches are standard practices in UNHCR.

23 See UNHCR, *A Community- based Approach in UNHCR Operations*, 2008.

Although needs assessment activities are characterized as an exercise conducted at a single point in time to understand the various needs of a population, in practice different assessment approaches and tools can be used. These include highly qualitative approaches such as the UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessments as well as more-quantitative assessment approaches such as IDP Profiling. The Needs Assessment Handbook is not a substitute for the Participatory Assessment Tool but rather has been developed to complement the various tools by providing a framework for needs assessments.

Regardless of the tool or approach chosen, participatory and community-based approaches must apply and guide all relevant aspects of assessment activities. It is good practice to establish a comprehensive assessment strategy that employs various assessment approaches to meet the needs of each sector, based on the level and types of operational data required to achieve the identified purpose.

Ensuring that persons of concern can exercise their right to participate in decision-making regarding their own lives, their family, and their communities requires meaningfully involving them in the full programme cycle, including all the needs assessment steps. Although it is crucial to use participatory assessment methods (see the *UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations*) when data is collated and collected, diverse women, men, girls, and boys of concern should be involved in the other needs assessment steps as well. That includes understanding the context, defining the information needs, conducting the analysis, and sharing information – for instance, through refugee outreach volunteers. Specific initiatives may be needed to ensure the full involvement of all persons of concern, including older women and men, youth, persons with disabilities, and LGBTI persons.

Accountability can be ensured by continuously consulting persons of concern and strengthening their participation in decisions that impact their lives.[24]

To conduct a needs assessment in a participatory manner[25] means to listen to diverse women, men, girls, and boys of concern speak about their own needs, priorities, and capacities so that they can take part and influence decisions instead of being passively subjected to them. A participatory assessment supports response design that leverages community capacities to increase equitable access to protection, services, and assistance. It will ensure:

- A more accurate and comprehensive understanding of a situation, including underlying causes;
- Minimized risks of exclusion of the needs, priorities, and capacities of marginalized groups by ensuring a balanced representation of all AGD groups;
- Identification of existing capacities and coping mechanisms in order to draw upon them in the response;

24 UNHCR, *Operational Guidance for Accountability to Affected Populations*, 2016.

25 UNHCR, *Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations*, 2006.

- Recognition and understanding of power relations among groups; and
- Contribution to improved relations between persons of concern and UNHCR and its partners.

For more information on participatory assessments, please see the *UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations*.

Protection-centred Approach

There are a number of protection practices that need to be respected when collecting and handling information at any stage of a needs assessment. By incorporating these principles at the initial stages of a needs assessment, UNHCR can ensure that its activities target the most vulnerable, enhance safety and dignity, and protect and promote the human rights of beneficiaries.

- **Confidentiality:** The safety of those who either ask for or provide information is critical. Be mindful of which individuals are used as information sources, ensuring the confidentiality of participants in a needs assessment, being sensitive to who might overhear interviews, and/or not visiting particularly insecure areas.
- **Sensitivity:** When interviewing survivors and witnesses, assessment teams should be mindful of any suffering experienced by the affected population. Sensitivity is particularly important regarding the potential for re-traumatization and vicarious victimization. The assessment team should have referral information available for when immediate mitigation and remedial actions are needed.
- **Integrity:** Assessment teams must treat all informants, interviewees, and co-workers with decency and respect at all times, and carry out their assigned tasks with integrity. Data collection teams should introduce themselves clearly and respectfully to assessment participants, and explain the goals and limitations of the assessment process, how the information will be used, and with whom it will be shared.
- **Informed consent:** Assessment teams must specifically ask respondents for their consent to use any information they provide. When interviewing children, parental consent must be sought as well as the child's assent. A respondent can always decline to answer a specific question. Personal information can never be disclosed or transferred for purposes other than those for which it was originally collected and for which consent was explicitly given.
- **Safeguard recorded information:** All data and information management activities must adhere to international standards of data protection.[26] Ensure the permanent confidentiality of recorded information, including the identity of respondents. Be mindful never to collect more information on individuals than is needed for analytical purposes. Consider using coded language and passwords, as well

26 UNHCR, *Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR*, 2015.

as keeping personally identifiable information separate from other information provided by respondents.

- **Participation and inclusion:** Action must be taken to ensure that participation in a needs assessment by diverse women, men, girls, and boys – including persons with disabilities, older persons, youth, and LGBTI persons – is adequately captured.

Link to other processes and information systems

The role and success of needs assessments in a humanitarian response depend on the extent to which they responsibly inform decision-making processes and contribute to other information systems. These other systems may include:

- Population Data Management;
- Registration of Refugees and Asylum-seekers in proGres;
- IDP Enrolment for Assistance;
- Profiling Displacement Situations;
- Targeting; and
- Protection Information Management Systems.

Population Data Management and Needs Assessments

Population data management (PDM) – the systematic recording of the number and characteristics of a population in a specific place and time – is essential for needs assessments, programming, monitoring, and effective protection and assistance. Population figures form the basis for population planning groups ('PPGs' in UNHCR's Focus software) and are most useful to operations when based on a well-defined Humanitarian Profile.[27] To assist in understanding our persons of concern better, population figures can be further broken down by various characteristics necessary for programming and planning (e.g. demographic, specific need, socio-economic, or displacement profiles).

Population data management and needs assessment systems are crucial to generate information that support decision-making and to help structure evidence-based operation plans. Population data is often the denominator and baseline for humanitarian indicators

27 IASC, Guidelines on the Humanitarian Profile Common Operational Dataset, 2010. The *Humanitarian Profile Support Guidance on Humanitarian Population Figures* (guidance on how to calculate affected population and population in need figures) is available here.

that serve as a basis for comparison and analysis over time. Population data is also regularly required by the needs assessment process to evaluate the scale and severity of humanitarian crises and to prioritize what populations need. Further, when planning needs assessments, population figures – disaggregated by age, sex, and other demographic data, as well as location data – help to identify targeted population groups and to determine the appropriate geographical coverage of a needs assessment exercise. Conversely, in some situations, needs assessments will trigger the introduction of population data management activities in particular geographic areas or for specific groups of displaced persons.

The most common methodologies used to collect population data within UNHCR are estimation, profiling, registration (including when only for the purpose of enrolment for assistance), and secondary data reviews. In most cases, context, time, and resources will determine the extent to which various PDM methods are appropriate and can be feasibly implemented. That being said, the choice should always be guided by the level and types of operational data required by the operation in order to achieve the identified purpose. For example, estimations might be sufficient to quickly generate an approximate figure of the total population in a given site for advocacy purposes, but a more rigorous methodology such as registration would be required if the operation needs an accurate count and description of a population to generate a detailed distribution list or do case management. Since different PDM methods will generate population figures of differing types and depth, their usefulness and value for needs assessment activities will vary.

The following sections describe common PDM methods and discuss their relationship to needs assessment activities.[28]

Registration of Refugees and Asylum-seekers in proGres[29]

Continuous, individual registration of refugees and asylum-seekers is one of UNHCR's core protection activities, both at the onset of a crisis and in protracted situations. In addition to enabling case management, registration generates disaggregated population figures and allows UNHCR to identify persons with specific needs who may require targeted interventions.

Registration is conducted as soon as practically possible, and regular updates of registration data are required as a situation continues. Aggregated statistical data from registration incorporated into a needs assessment may help in the prioritization of assistance or the tailoring of programmes for the population.

In a refugee situation, data from registration and proGres can be used in needs assess-

28 Registration, profiling, estimations, and secondary data reviews are common PDM methods. These are implemented with techniques such as area-based sampling, focus group discussions, key informants, surveys, remote sensing, flow monitoring, and counting (e.g. the number of shelters).

29 ProGres (Profile Global Registration System) is UNHCR's enterprise registration tool, which implements the registration standards defined in ExCom Conclusion No. 91 on the Registration of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers.

ments in multiple ways:

- **Source of population figures:**[30] Registration data is often the primary source of population figures in refugee situations. Needs assessment analyses require such figures in order to ascertain the severity of a situation (i.e. in terms of the number of affected populations) and to calculate indicators (i.e. baseline population figures are used as denominators to calculate the result of indicators).

- **Vulnerabilities related to family composition:** Statistics on needs can be derived from family composition, including unaccompanied children, households headed by single or female parents, and unaccompanied elderly persons. Even in emergency household registration, it is possible to derive needs information from family composition.

- **Vulnerabilities related to specific needs:** Important data on the number of persons with disabilities, individuals with a serious medical condition, pregnant teenagers and other children-at-risk, and other types of specific needs are often recorded.

- **Population sample frame:** If primary data collection will be undertaken in a needs assessment, population figures from the registration system can be used as the basis for calculating survey samples.

- **Additional needs assessment data:** In some cases additional questions are recorded – for example, with regard to a refugee's living situation. Responses can then be collated and analysed, and later incorporated into a needs assessment analysis.

IDP Enrolment for Assistance

In refugee situations, UNHCR is a major provider of population figures due to its role in registration, and often leads the collection and management of data. By contrast, in situations of internal displacement, UNHCR's role in PDM is less standardized, since the registration of nationals in their own country poses specific challenges and risks that should be considered. Sometimes called 'IDP enrolment for assistance', IDP registration involves the collection of biodata on selected individuals or households for the purposes of tracking assistance, case management, or other protection interventions.

There are a number of differences between registration in refugee and IDP contexts. Refugee and asylum-seeker registration denotes an international legal status and the protections that come with it, while IDP registration does not. Unlike registration activities with refugees, IDP enrolment for assistance is not associated with status, nor is it associated with the re-establishment of identity. Registration of asylum-seekers and refugees can be a goal in and of itself due to UNHCR's mandate, while for IDPs it is not. An IDP will not be enrolled just because s/he is internally displaced or because s/he is a

30 In the absence of detailed registration data, population estimates may be required to guide sample sizing for needs assessments and programming. See IASC, *Humanitarian Population Figures*, 2016.

person of concern for UNHCR. Rather, only a targeted sub-set of the IDP population will be registered, and only when household- or individual-level data is required to facilitate and/or monitor the provision of assistance, protection, or services.[31] Finally, registering IDPs in conflict zones may create protection risks, especially when the government or national army is a party to the conflict. Rather than conducting a comprehensive registration as in refugee settings, UNHCR collects the least amount of data that is required to support the purpose.[32]

Unlike the registration of refugees and asylum seekers, IDP registration relies on needs assessments in two distinct ways:

- **Registration decision:** Information from needs assessments is used to determine if and what type of household-level assistance and services are required, and thus whether enrolling IDPs is necessary.

- **Eligibility criteria:** Information from needs assessments is used to identify the eligibility criteria for being enrolled, i.e. what types of persons and households will be targeted for distributions and assistance.

In short, needs assessments generate information that helps the operation decide if IDPs should be registered in order to provide assistance or services, and if so, to identify and prioritize which IDPs should be registered for this purpose.

Note that given its narrow purpose and light touch, the population figures generated by IDP registration are less comprehensive than those generated by refugee registration: They do not represent the total IDP population and therefore cannot be used as denominators for indicators. Moreover, the data from IDP registration is usually less usable in secondary data analysis for needs assessments than the data from refugee registration, which will be more exhaustive, comprehensive, and detailed. Instead, the data from needs assessments will be useful for decisions about IDP registration, as explained previously.

Profiling Displacement Situations

Profiling is the collaborative process of identifying internally displaced groups or individuals through data collection. It is intended to build a comprehensive picture of a displacement situation including demographics, needs, strengths, and vulnerabilities, often in comparison with host populations. Profiling is used to provide an evidence base for governments as well as humanitarian and development actors to advocate and fundraise for an improved response; to inform joint programming, policy development, and long-term solutions for the displaced; or to address other problems identified during the

31 In IDP settings, 'light touch' registration involves the collection of only that data which is necessary to establish identity for the provision of assistance. Contrast this with comprehensive registration in refugee settings, which leads to the issuance of identity and entitlement documentation and is used for Refugee Status Determination, protection and community services interventions, durable solution assistance, and the planning and targeting of assistance and services.

32 In all cases, a thorough analysis is required before undertaking IDP enrolment to ensure that 'do no harm' and other core principles are respected.

profiling exercise.

Like joint needs assessments, profiling is collaborative in nature, ensuring coordination between governments, humanitarian, and development actors in order to produce agreed upon results and inform joint action. Profiling makes use of multiple quantitative and qualitative methodologies for data collection and analysis, often involving household surveys with representative sampling. The core goal is to provide reliable estimates of the number of persons of concern, their characteristics (age, sex, location, diversity), and often their needs, capacities, coping mechanisms, and intentions. A profiling exercise may:

- Provide population-profiling elements and characteristics;
- Contain a needs assessment component that can be considered in needs analysis; and
- Provide a solid basis by which to identify the need for specific sector assessments.

In contrast to profiling, a needs assessment typically will use population data from external sources or rapid population estimation.[33] While needs assessments may be conducted during all phases of a humanitarian response, profiling is usually preferable in the later phases of a crisis. By that point, up-to-date and agreed disaggregated population figures are often lacking, or a comprehensive picture of opportunities and obstacles for achieving durable solutions is needed to inform policy development.

Profiling and needs assessments can be seen as complementary in many cases. They can be conducted simultaneously or in tandem to optimize resources or when access to the affected population is likely to be difficult or expensive.

Sources for more information on profiling during displacement situations include the following:

- JIPS website: www.jips.org
- JIPS Essential Toolkit (JET): www.jet.jips.org
- Profiling and Assessment Resource Kit (PARK): www.parkdatabase.org
- Dynamic Analysis and Reporting Tool (DART): www.dart.jips.org

Targeting

Targeting is a process that aims to ensure that persons of concern are supported with the most appropriate intervention(s) to address their needs and reinforce their ability to exercise their rights.[34] Within the UNHCR programming cycle, the targeting process starts with needs assessments and programme design, and is part of plan-

33 ACAPS, *Technical Brief: Estimation of affected population figures*, 2012.

34 UNHCR's Operational Guidance for Targeting (forthcoming).

ning for implementation.

As targeting is needs-based, understanding the needs of a population is a critical component of this process. Information from needs assessments feeds into the definition of targeting eligibility criteria, which describe the characteristics of intended beneficiary groups. In general, eligibility criteria are chosen to reduce inclusion errors (i.e. persons that are not targeted benefit from the activity) and exclusion errors (i.e. persons in the target group do not benefit from the activity). The process of formulating eligibility criteria varies between contexts (emergency or protracted), understanding of the needs and vulnerabilities of the population and/or various sub-groups, and the type of analysis that is most feasible and appropriate.

Needs assessments may be undertaken at several points in the targeting process. For example, information from a community-level needs assessment may be used to prioritize the themes upon which targeting eligibility criteria will be based. The results of the data analysis will identify certain sets of indicators that are either directly associated with or proxies of a specific situation of individuals and/or households – for example, the most affected, poorest, most vulnerable, or households in certain categories. Often a set of indicators is used to define the eligibility criteria, but the types of indicators and number of indicators can vary by situation and context.

Applying eligibility criteria to a population of concern will lead to a broader understanding and projection of comprehensive needs. It is then possible to estimate how many persons of concern need to be targeted for required interventions and to determine if a smaller or larger number of persons of concern need to be considered. Household-level needs assessments may be conducted to identify which households meet the eligibility criteria. After targeted assistance has been provided, additional assessments may be undertaken to see if the needs have been met.

Protection Information Management Systems[35]

Needs assessments are implemented as part of an information ecosystem. They should not duplicate other information systems or try to replace them but rather complement and build upon them. This implies understanding the purpose and scope of existing information systems and building linkages between needs assessments and other core information management systems, notably protection information management (PIM) systems. An overview of common PIM systems and their relationship(s) to needs assessments are described in Table 8:

35 PIM provides quality data and information on individuals and groups of persons affected by natural or man-made disasters in a safe, reliable, and meaningful way. See more on http://pim.guide/.

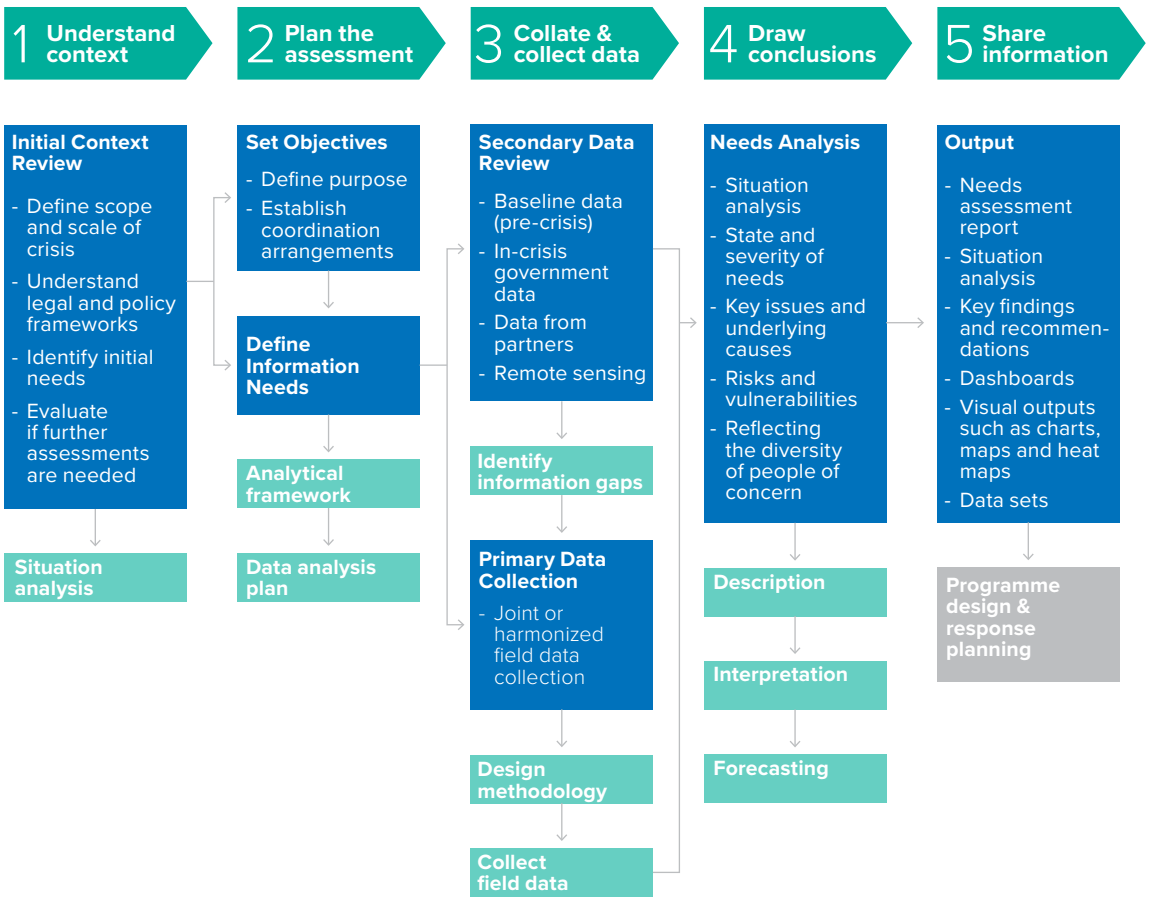
Table 8 Needs assessments linkages to PIM systems

Type of PIM system and definition	Relation to needs assessment
Protection monitoring systems systematically and regularly collect, verify and analyse information over an extended period of time in order to identify violations of rights and protection risks for populations of concern for the purpose of informing effective responses.	• Needs assessment activities help prioritize protection monitoring activities (i.e. identifying protection risks and threats at a certain time and place, and over time), the populations to target, or specific geographic locations that may need to be monitored over time. • Needs assessment activities can be triggered by protection monitoring data, which may need further inquiry in the form of an in-depth assessment. • Needs assessment activities can inform the type and level of protection monitoring that is needed, including duration of system. • Aggregate indicators from protection monitoring systems can be used as secondary data in needs assessments.
Case management systems support the provision of protection and/or targeted interventions to identified individuals or groups through the management of data – from case identification to case closure – related to a specific case.	• Needs assessment activities can identify urgent action cases that are referred to case management systems (i.e. follow up cases). • Needs assessment activities can identify vulnerability profiles and help inform the scope and scale of case management systems and services. • Needs assessment activities can be informed by aggregated case management data (i.e. patterns of cases can indicate trends in needs and inform further assessments).
Response monitoring and evaluation systems involve the continuous and coordinated review of implementation of response to measure whether planned activities deliver the expected outputs and protection outcomes and impact, both positive and negative. Evaluation is distinct but compliments monitoring by asking questions around causal linkages, looking at intended and unintended results. Evaluation is not continuous but rather periodic and targeted.	• Needs assessment activities can use data from protection response monitoring systems as secondary data. • Needs assessment activities can inform the development of indicators and the identification of protection response priorities. • Needs assessment data can be used as part of a larger programme evaluation process.
Population data management systems record the number and characteristics (disaggregated by sex, age, demographics, and diversity) of a population in a specific place and time period, for the purpose of programming effective prevention and response.	• Needs assessment designers use population data to develop a methodology and sampling frame. • Needs assessment activities require population data to help set a baseline for assessments and indicators. • Needs assessment data includes population data as a denominator for representative needs assessments.

The Needs Assessment Process

Needs assessments are informed by key principles and implemented following a systematic process with key steps. Their complexity and scope will vary depending on the scale and context of emergencies. Figure 7 summarizes the needs assessment process and its main outputs, and each step and its associated activities are briefly described below. The process is described in detail in Part 2 of this Handbook.

Fig. 7 Needs assessment process



Step 1: Understand Context

An initial desk review of available information to understand the context is conducted prior to any planning or data collection activity. This involves analysing existing pre-crisis data and information collected by other actors (e.g. humanitarian organizations, national or local governments, civil society organizations) on the current situation. The aim is to build an initial understanding of the context and the crisis drivers in order to define further information needs, determine whether a needs assessment is needed, and identify

which type of assessment will best address the information needs given available time and resources. Results of the review are summarized into a **situation analysis**, which seeks to:

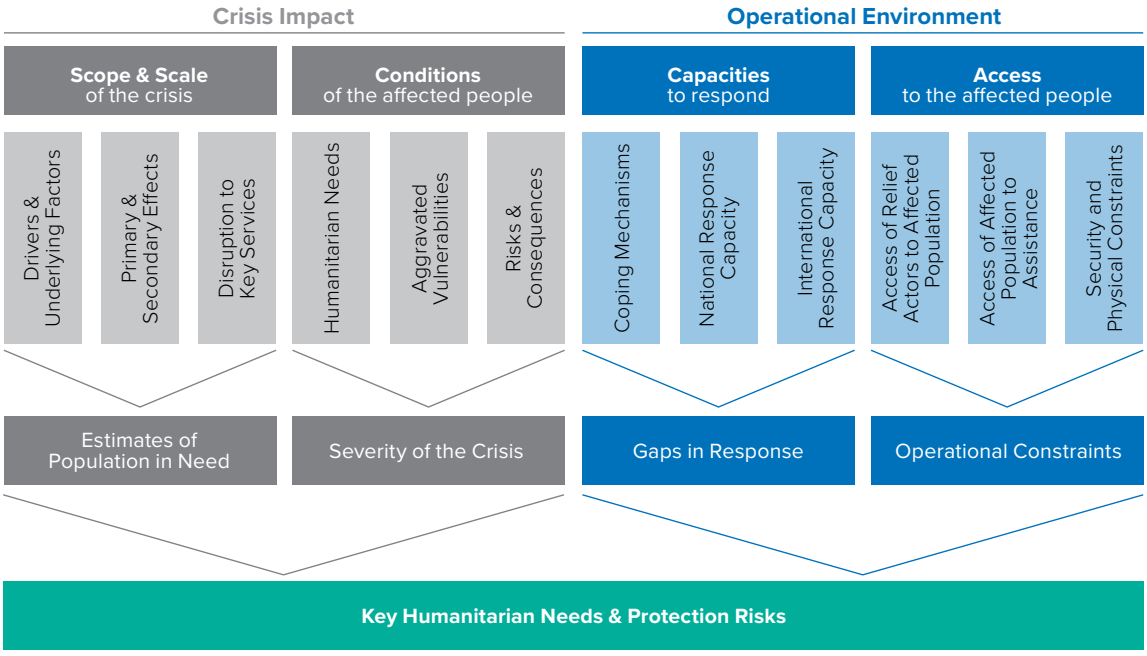
- Define the scope, scale, and context of the current situation;
- Identify the initial needs and roles of affected women, men, girls, and boys of concern, including any sub-groups that have particular needs such as persons with disabilities, older persons, youth, or LGBTI persons;
- Understand the socio-political context and relevant legal/policy frameworks; and
- Identify protection risks and likely evolution, including projections based on data from previous similar emergencies that have happened with this population or in this context.

Step 2: Plan the Needs Assessment

Based on the results of the context review, the assessment project outline can be developed. Minimum requirements include:

- Clear and precise **objectives and focus** for the needs assessment, keeping in mind the purpose of the needs assessment, guiding principles for safe and ethical protection-related information management, the needs assessment coverage (populations, sectors, and geographic areas), the types of decisions that need to be informed, and the time frame by which they need to be made.
- An **assessment project outline**, including data collection and analysis methodologies, data collection tools, analysis plans, training and pilot plans, budget, human resources requirements, work plan, terms of reference, etc.
- **Coordination modalities and arrangements** if multiple actors are involved, including a plan on how to engage affected populations in the needs assessment process.
- Detailed information needs, organized into an **analytical framework** that shows the linkages between information categories and how they intersect analytically. An example of an analytical framework is proposed in Figure 8 and described in the text box that follows.
- An **analysis plan** that operationalizes the analytical framework and details indicators and sources for each information element sought, as well as how the information will be analysed.

Fig. 8 Example of analytical framework



The analytical framework:

- Supports and guides the collection and analysis of secondary and primary data by identifying key analytical questions;
- Provides a way to organize what data to collect and how to analyse it, and as well as how to describe the relationships and interactions between the elements that are to be measured;
- Supports a common analysis of where humanitarian needs and protection risks are most severe and which population groups are most in need; and
- Serves as a communication tool between stakeholders and should be considered as a reference throughout the needs assessment process.

Step 3: Collate and Collect Data

Needs assessments rely on both secondary and primary data and should always start with a desk review of available information, based on the analysis plan and in support of the analytical framework. For the purpose of this Handbook, primary data is defined as data that has been collected within the scope of a current needs assessment exercise, while secondary data has been collected outside that scope and for other purposes.

The **secondary data review** should be undertaken to understand the situation through consolidation of data that has been collected outside the scope of the current assessment exercise. Potential sources of data within UNHCR include previous assessments, situation reports, operations plans, and registration systems such as proGres, protection monitoring and case management systems, Focus, and sector-specific monitoring

systems such as Twine. Common sources of relevant secondary information outside UNHCR include other humanitarian and development actors, as well as government, civil society organizations, and educational and research institutes.

An important step in the secondary data review is to identify information gaps by comparing what information needs have been identified with the available data that has been consolidated. **Primary data collection** can then be considered in order to help validate information already collected and/or fill identified gaps in existing information. Different methods can be used to fill these gaps, including direct observations, focus group discussions, and interviews with persons of concern. These methods must be designed to ensure that women, men, girls, and boys (including older people, persons with disabilities, youth, LGBTI persons, those with specific needs, minorities, and indigenous peoples) are given the opportunity to express their needs, priorities, and capacities.

An assessment registry should keep track of conducted and planned assessments, while a data repository should store assessment reports and data from a secondary data review. Data from primary data collection in the field is generally compiled into databases.

Step 4: Draw Conclusions: Needs Analysis

Needs analysis is a process that aims to make sense of information and to draw conclusions about the severity of conditions and humanitarian needs priorities. There are four different phases of analysis, including:

- **Description:** Grouping, summarizing, and comparing data based on the analysis plan in order to identify trends, patterns, outliers, and anomalies.
- **Explanation:** Determining why certain patterns and trends are present or emerging, and the underlying factors and processes that led to their existence.
- **Interpretation:** Drawing conclusions on severity and priorities. Interpretation also involves judging the amount of evidence that supports those conclusions and estimating the extent to which the findings can apply to others settings.
- **Anticipation:** Predicting or forecasting a situation's likely evolution(s) based on past and present data. This step provides information about potential future events and their expected consequences for the affected population, and helps to identify new and emerging risks.

Generally, the interpretation and anticipation phases of analysis are conducted jointly among the assessment stakeholders, i.e. in a workshop setting. Findings from the analysis are compiled into a final report, and all processing and analytical decisions are documented. The report and the assessment findings are the basis for a subsequent response analysis that draws strategic, programmatic, or operational conclusions based on current and forecasted severity and priorities.

Step 5: Share Information

The findings from the analysis step should be transposed into clear and persuasive information products and shared with relevant stakeholders. The most common output from such a process is the needs assessment report, including a concise summary of key findings and recommendations to assist decision-making. Assessment results can be disseminated through many other information products in condensed formats, including verbal presentations and briefings. Dashboards, maps, and infographics can be used to visually illustrate the main findings and messages of the assessment.

Data, methods, and findings are shared as widely as possible with other agencies and actors in the humanitarian response. This includes the affected populations and assessed communities, who also should be given explanations about how the information will be used and what decisions it will impact. Protocols or agreements for the sharing of data should regulate the sharing of findings and raw data. It is important to share both internally and externally – including with persons of concern – but only after protection risks for all the actors who were or will be involved (i.e. data collectors, subjects, managers, disseminators, etc.) have been identified and mitigation strategies been agreed.[36]

More details about the step-by-step approach to the assessment process are provided in Part 2 of this Handbook.

36 UNHCR, *Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern*, 2015; UNHCR, *Information Classification, Handling and Disclosure Policy*, 2010.

Additional Resources & Guidance

UNHCR needs assessment support documents and tools

Needs Assessment for Refugee Emergencies (NARE) checklist

Assists UNHCR operations with initial multi-sectoral needs assessments when there has been a significant sudden forced displacement of populations across borders.

The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations

Ensures that refugees or other persons of concern – women and men of all ages and backgrounds – are given the opportunity to identify and voice their own protection risks, priorities, and solutions.

Joint Assessment Missions (JAM) Practical Guide

Aids in understanding the situation, needs, risks, and vulnerabilities of refugees, returnees, and host populations with regard to food security and nutrition.

Handbook for Emergencies

Online guide for agile, effective, and community-based humanitarian emergency response.

Emergency Information Management Toolkit

Provides information management advice and tools to inform humanitarian response in a refugee emergency and other operational settings.

Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR

Lays down the rules and principles relating to the processing of personal data of persons of concern to UNHCR.

Age, Gender and Diversity Policy

Provides guidance on a systematic application of an Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach to ensure that all persons of concern enjoy their rights on an equal footing and are able to participate in the decisions that affect their lives.

Understanding Community-Based Protection

Guides UNHCR staff and partners to integrate community-based approaches to protection into their humanitarian work.

Inter-agency needs assessment support documents and tools

IASC Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments

Promotes a coordinated approach to needs assessments. While established for IDP settings and the cluster system, it can guide the RCM.

IASC Multi Sector/Cluster Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA)

Documents an inter-agency process enabling actors to reach, from the outset, a common understanding of a situation, priority needs, and likely evolution for joint response planning and resource mobilization.

IASC Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO)

Provides an overview for developing a humanitarian needs overview (HNO), explains the purpose of a joint analytical process, the main steps required, and the different roles and responsibilities entailed.

IASC/EDG Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations in the HRP

Sets out actions to be undertaken throughout the humanitarian programme cycle (HPC) to fulfil commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and to ensure that protection is central to humanitarian response.

IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action

Defines the centrality of protection in humanitarian action as well as the process for its implementation at the country level. It seeks to reinforce the complementary roles, mandates, and expertise of all relevant actors.

IASC Operational Guidance on Responsibilities of Sector/Cluster Leads and OCHA in Information Management

Sets out responsibilities by cluster/sector leads and OCHA for information management (IM) activities, support national information systems, standards, build local capacities, and maintain appropriate links with relevant national and local authorities.

NRC/IDMC/OCHA Guidance on Profiling Internally Displaced Persons

Provides guidance on how to reach a commonly agreed number of IDPs in a given location/situation by a variety of profiling methodologies.

Other resources

Profiling and Assessment Resource Kit (PARK)

Contains easily accessible and practical tools that serve to improve planning, implementation, and dissemination of information that articulates the needs of displacement-affected populations.

Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS) Toolkit

Compiles JIPS' best-practice tools and guides for profiling exercises in IDP situations.

Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) Resources

Resource library for needs assessment technical guidance and resource documents.

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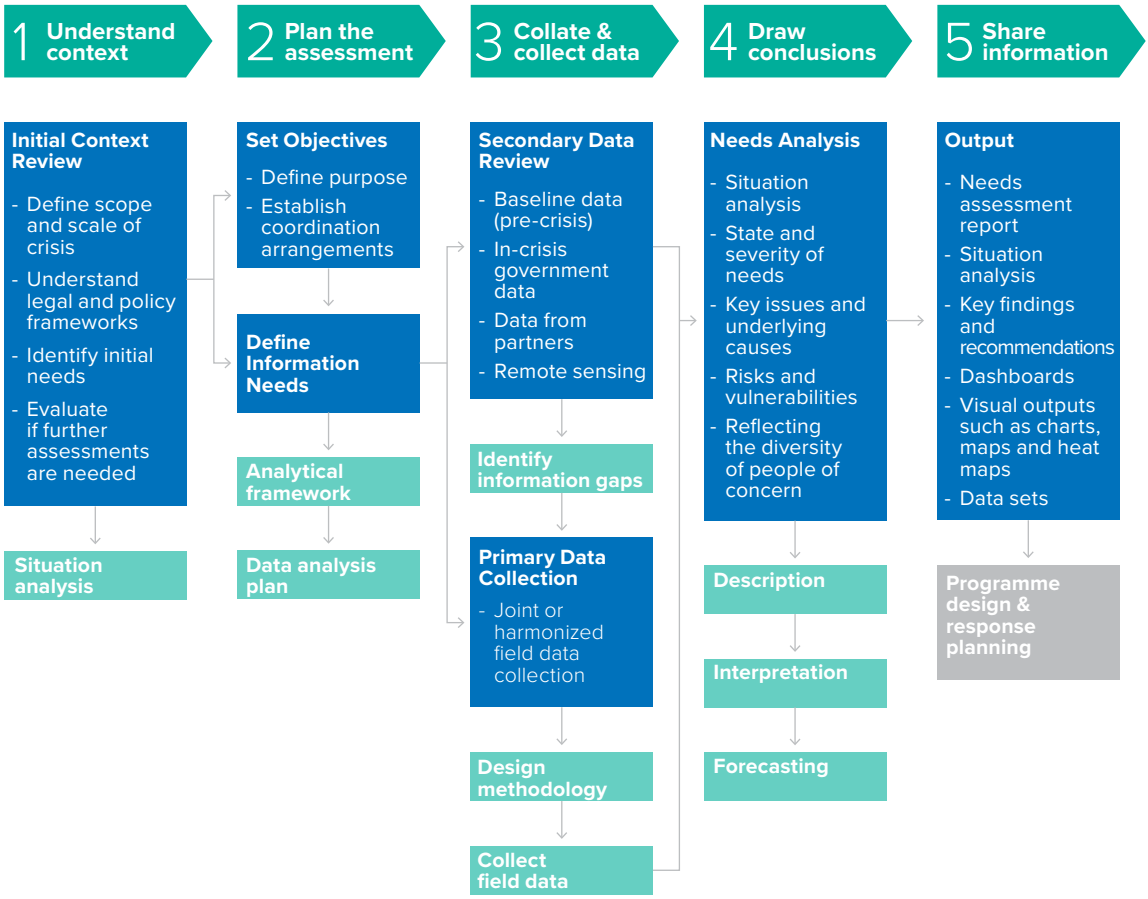
A needs assessment encompasses much more than just creating a form and asking questions. From the initial planning to the dissemination of results, each step of the assessment process is critical to the overall success of the exercise.

PART 2
Practical Guide to Needs Assessment

Part 2 of this Handbook is targeted to UNHCR staff who will implement assessments. It outlines in detail the needs assessment process through the following steps, which were briefly described in Part 1:

1. Understand the context;
2. Plan the needs assessment;
3. Collate and collect data;
4. Draw conclusions; and
5. Share information.

Fig. 1 Needs assessment process



STEP 1: **Understand the Context**[1]

As highlighted in Part 1, before planning any field visits, it is crucial to understand a situation's context and the information landscape. Doing so helps in defining information needs and gaps, and in deciding whether to conduct a needs assessment.

In a new emergency or after a sudden or substantial change in an existing emergency, an initial situation analysis should be conducted. This process seeks to analyse available pre-crisis data as well as initial reports on the situation from humanitarian and development actors, government, civil society, media, persons of concern, and other stakeholders.

In an ongoing emergency or protracted situation, however, the situation analysis is likely to play a more significant role in determining the need for and scope of any further assessment. This process will be more systematic and thorough, as generally more detailed information and data will be available.

Situation analysis activities will include, at a minimum:

- Defining the crisis context and characteristics, including:
  - Crisis drivers and underlying factors;
  - Geographical scope and scale of the crisis;
  - General social, economic, security, and political context, as well as applicable legal and policy frameworks;
  - Known/likely humanitarian consequences;
  - Displacement drivers, trends, and patterns;
  - Affected population groups and humanitarian profile, and differentiation between sub-groups considering age, gender, and diversity (if data is available);
  - Historical, political, and social dynamics within and between groups, including marginalized groups and relationships between displaced populations and host communities;
  - Vulnerabilities and protection risks;
  - Operational constraints and humanitarian access (e.g. security, physical obstacles); and
  - Stakeholder capacity, including national actors (i.e. government, civil society, and human rights organizations), international actors, and affected populations (i.e. their capacities, coping mechanisms, and community-based protection mechanisms).
- Defining information needs, including main topics of interest, geographical areas, and target population groups.

- Identifying and prioritizing information gaps by comparing existing or available information with the list of information needs.

1 As in most contexts, the first step toward an effective response to statelessness is to fully understand the nature of the problem. However, the challenges that arise in the context of statelessness are often complex and affect large numbers of people. Effective responses require applying standards set out in international law. Many of the issues may also be transnational in character. For more information, see Chapter 1 in UNHCR, *Statelessness: An Analytical Framework for Prevention, Reduction and Protection*, 2008.

Main results for the situation analysis include:

- ✓ Crisis context and characteristics have been assessed.
- ✓ A situation analysis has been developed.
- ✓ Information needs have been identified.

Resources in the Toolkit:

- → Situation analysis template
- → Humanitarian profile support guidance
- → Rapid Protection Assessment Toolkit

Different types of emergencies and contexts will require different types of needs assessments and methods, and it is important to understand how those specific situations may require adapted methods and tools. Tables 1 and 2 present characteristics of different settings – namely conflict vs. natural disaster emergencies, and rural vs. urban settings – and the actions to take in each.

Table 1 Situations and actions: Conflict vs. natural disaster settings

CONFLICT SETTINGS	NATURAL DISASTERS SETTINGS	
	Sudden-onset disaster	**Slow-onset disaster**
Characteristics		
• Complex and protracted situations • Displacement tends to be protection-induced • Deterioration of national institutional capacities and economic situation over time • Administrative boundaries and place names may change or be used inconsistently by different parties to the conflict • Insecure environments reduce access to areas and populations • Unpredictable evolution over time, with multiple data baselines to compare over multiple periods (i.e. 'pre-crisis' and 'post-crisis' are more complex to define because the conflict is ongoing, although often at varying intensities of violence) • Exacerbation of pre-existing vulnerabilities and negative impact on resilience • Skewed population distribution • Risk of politically biased response by government when party to the conflict	• Crisis event(s) often unforeseen • Continuous crisis development allows predictable evolution and forecasting • Often temporary in nature • National institutions and capacities remain (even if with reduced functionality) • Sudden exacerbation of pre-existing vulnerabilities • General community resilience largely remains (unless multiple disasters occur in short sequence)	• Crisis event(s) foreseen • Protracted crisis evolution is predictable • National institutions and capacities remain • Gradual exacerbation of pre-existing vulnerabilities • Community resilience weakened, particularly if multiple hazards occur
Actions To Take		
• Establish system of multiple assessments (initial and rapid) in a harmonized approach • Conduct assessments in both areas of origin and areas of displacement because displacement may last longer and be repetitive (i.e. secondary or multiple displacements) • Undertake regular needs analysis to monitor key indicators for needs and protection risks, considering specific needs and risks related to age, gender, and diversity • Gauge expiration time of any data collected, based on the evolution of the conflict and displacement patterns • Develop methods for remote assessment for inaccessible or hard-to-reach areas and hard-to-reach population groups • Establish strategies to work with parties to the conflict to gain access • Ensure safety and protection of both respondents and assessors, and of sensitive data • Establish participatory consultation and engagement of persons of concern, ensuring the involvement of sub-groups groups according to age, gender, and diversity • Engage with CSOs, including women's and LGBTI rights organizations • Ensure that reasons for displacement and the profile of displaced populations are well-understood in the needs assessment findings	• Undertake preparedness measures in anticipation of event(s), including developing needs assessment methodologies and tools • Establish a coordinated assessment approach for regular joint analysis • Undertake rapid assessments initially and in-depth assessments when time allows and situation has stabilized • Work towards durable solutions to support early recovery • Understand market recovery to support implementation through multiple response modalities • Where appropriate, work closely with government to enhance local capacity	

Table 2 Situations and actions: Rural vs. urban settings

RURAL	URBAN
Characteristics	
• Homogeneous demographic patterns (i.e. standard family size and composition) • Mainly subsistent, agrarian, and traditional livelihoods • Persons of concern are often identified by the community/ies • Standard vulnerability groups apply (e.g. elderly, people with disabilities,[2] single-headed households, children at risk) • Social structures and hierarchies often remain intact, which in some cases may hinder women or discriminated sub-groups from accessing assistance and services, as well as equal participation • Identification of key informants and representatives of the community and/or affected population groups is relative easy • Generally a more stable environment than urban settings, so the data has a longer validity	• Heterogeneous demographic patterns (i.e. varying family sizes and composition) • Persons of concern are displaced among a large and dense population, and may frequently move in and out of urban areas, making it difficult to identify them, in particular women and children at risk • Variety of social and economic status and livelihoods as well as age, gender, and diversity creates diverse needs • A dynamic and shifting environment results in data becoming obsolete shortly after collection • Traditional social hierarchies disrupted with often different and competing leadership and representatives • The geographic expanse of a city, greater insecurity, and the lack of clear boundaries due to growing informal settlements create logistical and methodological challenges • Typically vulnerable people might have other opportunities (e.g. a working single mother) • Some vulnerable groups choose anonymity for their own protection, so additional measures are needed to enable identification, protection, and access to assistance and services • A greater variety of communication channels to disseminate or raise awareness represents both a challenge and an opportunity
Actions To Take	
• Utilize reliable sampling methods (e.g. probability sampling) with often stable sample frame or qualitative methods (e.g. purposive sampling) • Identify key female and male informants that represent different aspects of displaced and host populations • With reliable sampling and a combination of key informant interviews, household interviews, and direct observation, in-depth information and quantitative information can be derived	• Consider respondent-driven or snowball sampling methods, since establishing a sample frame can be challenging • A qualitative mapping of areas through key informant interviews may be helpful for understanding where displaced populations and other affected populations are most likely to live • Community-based information methods must reflect the social make-up of the selected area as well as address age, gender, and diversity • Set alternative times of day for interviews, since heads of household tend to be away more often during the day • Plan to interview in a location where people tend to gather ('intercept-point sampling'), such as outside a community centre or in a town square, to reach populations that may not be likely to receive a referral through snowball sampling • Utilize other means of interviews such as phone interviews, crowd sourcing, and SMS surveys • Focus more on relative numbers and distribution patterns than on absolute numbers • More frequent updates of needs data are required with a focus on identifying trends and movement patterns

2 According to Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), 'Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.'

- Engage civil society and persons of concern through participatory methods to assess needs, priorities, and capacities to ensure inclusion of all age, gender, and diversity related sub-groups, including women's and LGBTI rights organizations, as well as hard-to-reach groups (e.g. people with disabilities, young mothers, and people with minority-language backgrounds)
- Conduct focus group discussions by sex, age, and other relevant diversity factors to provide qualitative information that contextualizes, offers nuance to, or otherwise complements other quantitative findings, and provide formats that allow access also for hard-to-reach groups
- Prioritize an understanding of pre-existing and exacerbated vulnerabilities

Profiling Displacement Situations in Urban Contexts

In light of the added complexity of collecting data in urban areas, the Joint IDP Profiling Service developed Guidance for Profiling Urban Displacement Situations (June 2014). This document provides practical tips for developing methodologies adapted to urban areas through a collaborative process.

Examples from two urban profiling exercises of refugees living in Quito, Ecuador (2013), and in Delhi, India (2013), highlight several challenges but also opportunities.

In Ecuador, the vast mix of actors was unwieldy until a coordination platform was set up that brought together national and local authorities, relevant UN agencies, and NGOs, as well as academic and technical institutions, including the National Statistical Office of Ecuador. Through this platform, the exercise was able to benefit from the shared interest and variety of expertise of all actors.

The vastness of Delhi made it difficult to know what geographic areas to cover in the profiling exercise. In order to select relevant neighbourhoods where refugees lived, the partners took advantage of the fact that the UNHCR proGres database includes addresses of registered refugees to get a first indication of where some refugee populations cluster. This was later triangulated using qualitative and participatory methods such as key informant interviews and community mapping.

STEP 2: **Plan the Needs Assessment**

Ensuring the successful implementation of a needs assessment, as well as the appropriate use of its results, requires adequate planning and agreement between key stakeholders, including persons of concern. Careful attention to this phase will help save time later by ensuring that issues related to quality, ethics, analysis standards, data protection measures, and information-sharing mechanisms are discussed and agreed at the outset. This section will detail the following key activities and outputs of the planning phase of a needs assessment:

- Setting objectives;
- Determining coordination arrangements;
- Detailing information needs; and
- Setting data-management procedures.

Setting Objectives

Based on the situation analysis (Step 1), stating clear objectives of purpose and coverage – including geographical scope, population groups and sub-groups to be assessed, and topics to be covered – will support a common understanding of what the needs assessment will deliver. It also will help to identify appropriate methodologies and frame the analysis. For any assessment to be undertaken, the parameters outlined in Table 3 should be agreed among all partners. See Annex 1 for further considerations.

Table 3 Components of an assessment concept note

Parameters	Examples
General objectives	Provide decision-makers with information that is robust enough to enable them to set priorities and make informed decisions about community response and programmes, based on: • Key needs and their severity • Existing capacities and coping mechanisms • Initial information on preferences, including modality of response (cash, in-kind, combination) • Protection risks and threats to diverse women, men, girls and boys in the affected populations and host communities
Scope, geographical coverage	Establish geographic boundaries and units of reporting, e.g.: • Affected areas vs. non-affected areas • Administrative units (provinces, departments, districts, etc.) • Camp vs. out-of-camp populations • Urban vs. rural settings
Targeted groups[3]	Clearly define groups to be assessed (e.g. diverse women, men, girls, and boys): • Persons of concern: Refugees, IDPs, stateless, asylum-seekers, host communities and returnees, including vulnerable people • Persons facing additional risk, including women and girls, unaccompanied and separated children, older women and men, persons from religious, cultural, and/or language-minority backgrounds, men of fighting age, and those with specific needs such as persons with mental and/or physical disabilities, LGBTI, single older persons, survivors of SGBV, etc.

...

3 Targeted groups can be combined with geographic scope to further define the groups to be assessed. For example, the assessment may focus on at-risk older people in rural areas, or on separated and unaccompanied children in IDP settlements.

Clusters/sectors or themes	Ensure clearly defined topics to be assessed, e.g.: • Protection (e.g. child protection, education, prevention of SGBV), CCCM, food and nutrition, public health, shelter and core relief items, WASH, livelihoods, durable solutions
Time frame	• Establish a realistic time frame, based on the objective, available resources, security, and other constraints • Ensure that data can be collected, processed, and analysed in time to be fed into the relevant planning cycle and that the outputs can be delivered in a timely fashion to inform response planning and design
Assessment coordination	Identify organizations, agencies, or individuals in charge of the assessment coordination, and their respective roles and responsibilities
Outputs	Pre-define the outputs and their respective dissemination plans: • Report templates and outlines • Type of graphs and maps

Main results include:

✓ Decision on objectives and scope of the assessment have been discussed and agreed by key stakeholders, including persons of concern and decision-makers, and are clearly outlined in the assessment project outline.

Resources in the Toolkit:

→ Assessment project outline template

Determine Coordination Arrangements

Clear coordination structures are required in a needs assessment. This is particularly important when multiple actors are involved, such as in a refugee situation when UNHCR may lead joint multi-sectoral and multi-thematic needs assessments, or in IDP situations when UNHCR may coordinate intra-cluster multi-agency needs assessments. The structure and size of the coordination arrangement will vary by context (refugee situation, IDP situation, or mixed), size of assessment, type of crisis, sectors to be assessed, and organizational mandates.

During a refugee situation, the assessment team will need to coordinate with assessment teams in the country of origin and surrounding countries of asylum to ensure a coherent analysis of and response to the situation. Common coordination tasks include:

- Undertaking a stakeholder mapping to ensure the involvement of relevant organizations – humanitarian and development agencies, civil society organizations, government counterparts – and people with the right expertise and skills;
- Involving affected communities and their representatives throughout the assessment process, differentiating among sub-groups regarding age, gender, and diversity;
- Establishing an appropriate coordination mechanism for facilitating agreement on needs assessment activities and data sharing. This could include establishing the following:

- A steering group or committee for governance and management. This will determine the scope, provide the budget, oversee the implementation, and endorse the findings of the needs assessment. Note that adherence to participatory and community-based approaches is imperative for the success of any steering group, committee, or technical working group.

- A technical working group/analysis team will serve as a forum for developing the methodology, compiling and analysing secondary data, processing and analysing primary data, and implementing and coordinating the joint assessment and analysis. It will develop and implement the data analysis plan (see below), and will promote the adoption of tools and methodologies to support harmonized assessments and help build ownership.

- If needed, field data-collection teams will visit selected sites and collect data. These teams should be multi-functional and gender-balanced, and should include staff from local, regional, or national government bodies (where appropriate) as well as a range of humanitarian and development actors, particularly those with sector expertise. They also should include members with technical experience in programming and assessments, and those with local knowledge.

Needs Assessment Coordinator

Large-scale joint assessments will require a dedicated assessment coordination function, responsible for the following:

- Facilitating the assessment forum (i.e. steering group or committee);
- Coordinating assessment teams (i.e. field data collection team and technical working group);
- Facilitating consensus around the objectives, information needs, scope of the exercise, data analysis plan, data sharing modalities, and dissemination plan;
- Negotiating with stakeholders who may have relevant secondary data that can contribute to the analysis;
- Mobilizing financial resources, material, and logistics;
- Planning for and mobilizing additional human resources at different steps of the assessment implementation (e.g. field data collection, analysis, data entry, etc.);
- Encouraging stakeholders and when appropriate government to take part in the assessment;
- Liaising with external actors and persons of concern to manage their expectations around the assessment results, and ensure buy-in and ownership of the assessment; and
- Promoting and ensuring the use of the information for decision-making and response planning.

The coordinator will work with multidisciplinary teams and sector/cluster experts and may be supported by information management specialists, such as those with expertise in data analysis, reporting, GIS, and/or statistics (if representative sampling is required).

Main results include:

✓ The roles and contributions of national and international stakeholders as well as persons of concern are clearly detailed in the assessment project outline.

✓ Description of coordination mechanisms is drafted and made available, including description of mandate, composition, and roles and responsibilities.

Resources in the Toolkit:

→ IASC, *Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises*, 2012

- → Assessment project outline template
- → Terms of reference templates for assessment working group
- → Terms of reference template for assessment coordinator

Detail Information Needs

Based on the situation analysis and in collaboration with decision-makers and persons of concern, assessment teams review the initial list of information needs, identify what is already known, and determine what is perceived as any lack of or gap in information. In addition, they:

- Define the minimum set of sectoral data needed to undertake evidence-based analysis supporting established objective(s);
- Identify thematically cross-cutting issues (e.g. livelihood, security, environment, protection risks, and resilience); and
- Describe the links or correlations between elements that are to be informed (i.e. needs and response information allow for a determination of any gaps in the response).

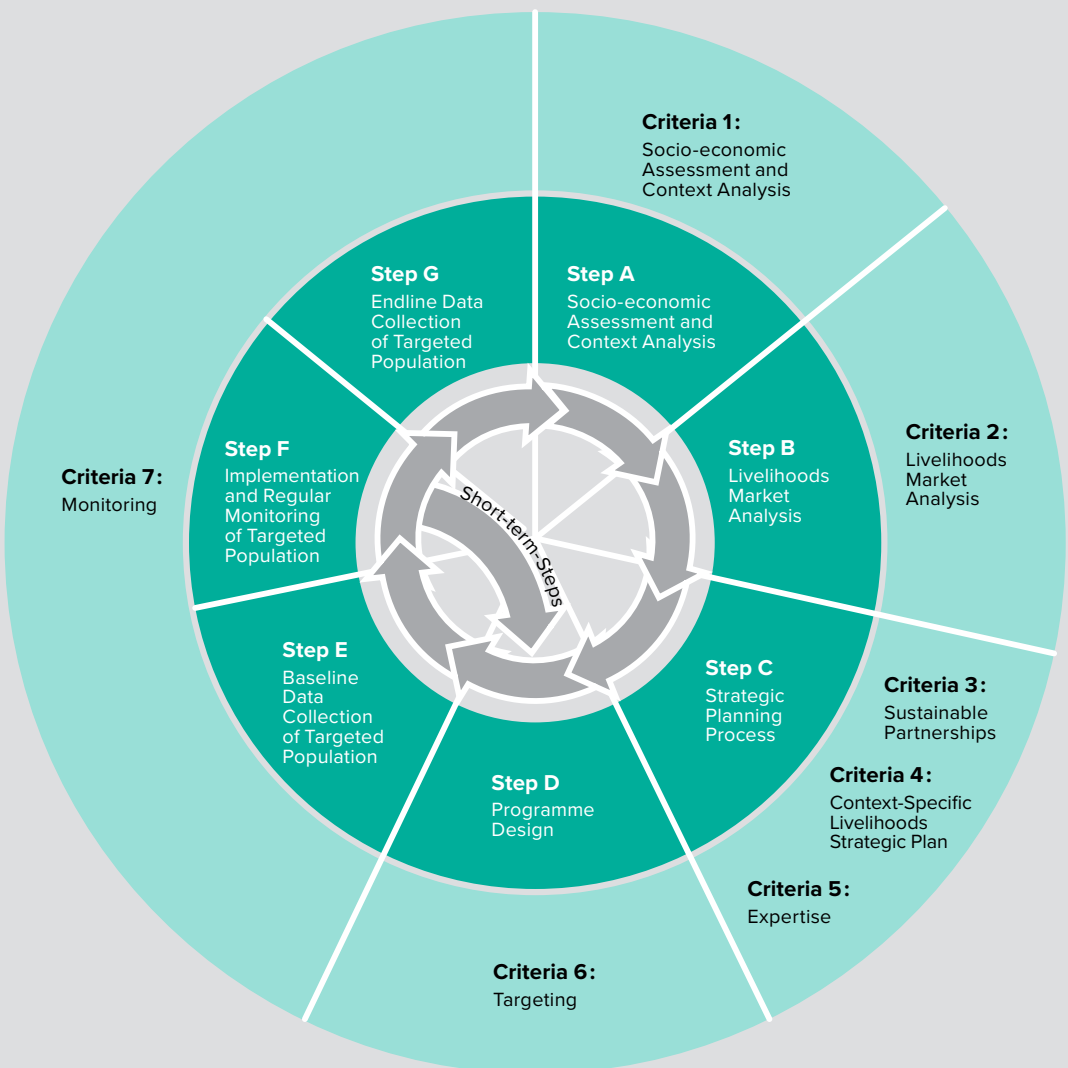
The core information collected will generally focus on the needs of affected populations of concern, including their priorities, capacities, and potential risks, including age, gender, and diversity.

Available thematic and sectoral frameworks should build on the overall analytical framework (see Needs Assessment Toolkit). For example, see below for livelihoods minimum criteria.

Considering UNHCR's Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods During the Needs Assessment

The minimum criteria are designed to ensure that operations meet basic standards for livelihoods programming, have the required expertise and evidence, and are able to demonstrate impact. To help refugees and other persons of concern achieve self-reliance is an important part of UNHCR's work throughout all phases of displacement. Self-reliance is the ability of people, households, or communities to meet their basic needs and to enjoy social and economic rights in a sustainable and dignified way.

The figure below describes the steps to be taken and is supported by guidance available within the Toolkit, which contains further information on UNHCR's Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods. Note that the criteria below should be integrated into other planned assessment activities as part of a comprehensive assessment strategy.



Socio-Economic Data and Needs Assessments

Increased targeting of food, cash, and livelihoods programs has generated an increasing recognition that socio-economic indicators can play a vital role among a basket of other indicators reflecting poverty. Collecting basic information on socio-economic stratification of households can help inform the planning process and where appropriate frame a wider targeting of assistance. UNDP measures multidimensional poverty in an index as a combination of the severe deprivations that people face at the same time. Socio-economic conditions are often an attributing factor rendering a person poor. Assessing a household's socio-economic status in relation to the surrounding community can help identify a wider set of factors in multidimensional poverty and is imperative as the basis for better understanding our persons of concern in order to inform programmatic response to address their needs. For this purpose, needs assessments can be critical to identifying proxies that may be good indicators for the socio-economic situations of households and/or individuals. For further information, please see the Needs Assessment Toolkit.

Additional information might also be needed and collected through the needs assessment on how best to deliver the response – for instance, understanding how best to communicate with the affected population or transfer modalities for delivering aid and services. For more information, see the text box below.

Considering Assistance Modalities During the Needs Assessment

There are three main transfer modalities for the delivery of assistance or services to persons of concern: cash, vouchers, and in-kind. A combination of these can also be used. Cash and vouchers, also known as cash-based interventions (CBIs), offer persons of concern flexibility to meet their needs through existing markets and service providers. In-kind assistance, on the other hand, can be useful when existing markets cannot respond to identified needs.

Needs assessments are useful to gather information from persons of concern and market actors on which transfer modality, or which combination, is most appropriate. The collected information will specify how people prefer to receive assistance, clarify consumer habits, and give initial indication of the capacity of existing markets to respond to identified needs. It can also identify potential protection risks and how to enable equitable access and use of CBIs. The following key questions for persons of concern should be considered:

- Do you currently depend on markets?
- Are you able to access markets? If not, why?
- What are you buying? Where do you buy it from?
- Do you have any reliable or regular sources of income? If so, what are they?
- How do you prefer to receive assistance, by cash, vouchers, or in-kind?
- Does receiving assistance pose any security/protection concerns (e.g. fear of assault when returning from distribution point or escalation of domestic violence)? Will different modalities pose different risks? Do you have any ideas on how these risks can be reduced?
- If you were to receive cash assistance, what would you be most likely to spend it on?

If markets are functional and people prefer cash or vouchers over in-kind assistance to meet their needs, cash-based interventions may be an option for delivering assistance and services. Understanding which transfer modality for assistance is most appropriate to use in a response can be researched in the context of a needs assessment. The final choice of transfer modality may only be taken after a separate comprehensive feasibility and response analysis is conducted, but information collected during a needs assessment will be helpful in giving a preliminary indication of the most appropriate modality (or combination) for responding to protection and humanitarian needs. Among other aims, the response analysis will further define market capacity, explore various cash or voucher delivery mechanisms, analyse the protection risks and benefits of different modalities of assistance, and assess the cost-efficiency of the available modalities.

Analytical framework

The information needs can be structured and detailed in different ways, and one common method is to use an analytical framework. This provides a way to visually organize what data to collect – describing the relationships, interactions, and causes and effects between elements that are to be measured – and how to structure the analysis.

The analytical framework requires identifying analytical questions and sub-questions of interest, particularly thematic and cross-cutting ones, where advanced discussions can ensure efficiency, comparability, and predictability in the data gathering and analysis. It provides a structured, systematic, and comprehensive approach to the planning and execution of needs assessments, including the analytical process. By doing so, such a framework reduces bias and supports a common analysis of where humanitarian needs are most severe and which population groups are most in need, considering age, gender, and diversity.

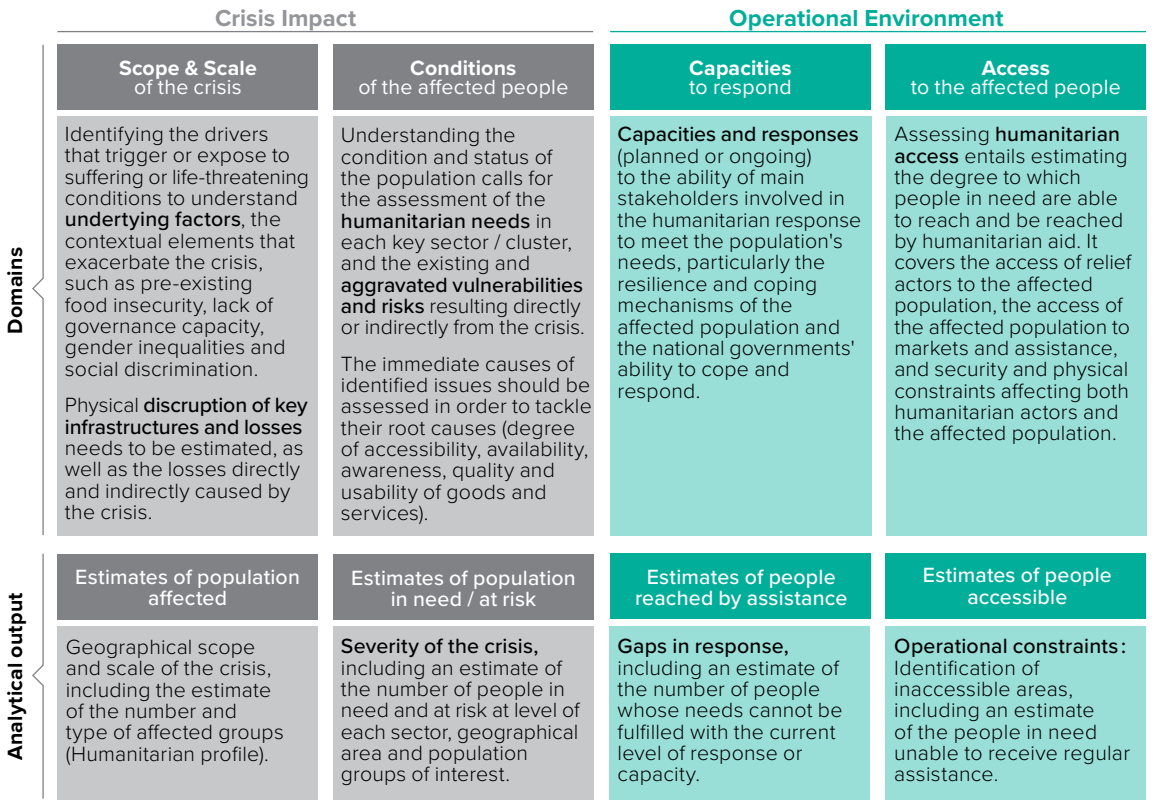
The analytical framework also serves as a communication tool between stakeholders, and should be considered as a reference throughout the programme cycle. The framework is not static: It should be regularly updated as events and the response evolve and new types of information become available or are required.

The framework is not intended as an instrument to gather statistics directly, nor is it a substitute for existing international standards or guidance provided by UNHCR. Rather, it serves as a tool to facilitate dialogue around joint analysis and to draw together available information without missing key questions.

See *Statelessness: An Analytical Framework for Prevention, Reduction and Protection* (UNHCR, 2008) for an example of what key questions may be captured in the analysis framework (and subsequent analysis plan) for statelessness. While other sectors or areas of responsibilities may have different key questions, the domains of 'Scope & Scale', 'Conditions', 'Capacities' and 'Access' must be considered, as these play a particularly important role in ensuring a holistic analysis and maximizing the operational value of related data and information.[4]

4 See UNHCR, *Statelessness: An Analytical Framework for Prevention, Reduction and Protection*, 2008.

Fig. 2 Standard analytical framework



The framework will be applied using the main categories of analysis, as required by the objectives of the assessment. Those could be geographical areas or population groups, and can be combined as necessary (e.g. to compare the needs of female and male IDPs and host community members in five provinces and across three sectors of interest). The framework will also describe how information needs are changing over time (i.e. the shift of information needs for life-saving measures to more long-term planning and durable solutions).

Table 4 Standard categories of analysis

Geographical characteristics	Population group characteristics

• Administrative area (e.g. province A vs. province B)
  • Which province has been worst affected by, for instance, a natural disaster?
• Setting (e.g. urban/rural, coastal/inland)
  • Is the population affected differently in different settings? For example, how is their access to goods and services (e.g., markets) affected?
• Distance (e.g. to earthquake epicentre or conflict zone)
  • Are humanitarian needs greater when nearer the earthquake epicentre than in other places? Are people in areas of high conflict intensity more affected than others?
• Composite (e.g. areas with high population density within a particular distance of the storm-track)
  • Is the humanitarian impact in coastal areas affected by tidal surge greater than in inland areas affected by extreme winds?
	• Affected groups (e.g. IDPs/refugees/returnees/ stateless/host communities)
	  • Are certain groups more affected/exposed to more risks than others, either in terms of quantity (number of risks) or diversity (types of risks)? How do different groups cope with the emergency situation?
	• Vulnerable groups (e.g. children at risk)
	  • How are different vulnerable groups such as women and girls, persons with disabilities, and LGBTI persons affected differently? To what extent are existing vulnerabilities exacerbated by the crisis?
	• Socio-economic groups (e.g. farmers vs. wage workers, religious groups, and ethnic groups)
	  • Are certain groups more affected due to their origin, religion, trade, or level of poverty?
	• Gender, age (e.g. early childhood, younger children and adolescents, older adolescents, youth, adults and older men and women) and diversity (e.g. LGBTI, diverse cultural, religious, or language backgrounds)
	  • How do existing gender inequalities affect the vulnerabilities, protection risks, and unequal participation and access of different groups within the affected population? Does the crisis exacerbate existing gender-, age-, and diversity-based discrimination? Does the crisis exacerbate discrimination against specific minorities?

Data analysis plan

A data analysis plan is the operational extension of the analytical framework. It should be developed to guide the compilation or collection of data for each domain of the analytical framework, and to identify appropriate indicators for measurement. The analysis plan should be drafted before primary data collection is undertaken and in parallel with the review of secondary data (Step 3). In turn, it will facilitate the analysis (Step 4). A strong data analysis plan ensures that:

- All necessary data is collected for analysis.
- Time is not wasted in collecting data that is available from other sources, will not help to achieve the assessment objectives, and/or will not be used.
- Indicators are formally stated and described.
- The data to collect from primary vs. secondary sources, including identification of information gaps and reliability, is recorded.
- Analytical outputs are identified and understood by all stakeholders.

The data analysis plan template features several columns, each corresponding to a step in the process of information gathering and analysis, as shown by the example in Figure 3. The person leading the needs assessment fills out the analysis plan with input from sector experts and the technical working group, and keeps it updated throughout the process.

Fig. 3 Analysis plan with a practical example

Indicator information				Data sources				Output
Analytical question link to AF	**Indicator** needs/ outcome/ output	**Data required** question/ options incl. disaggregation	**Baseline/ benchmark**	**Source**	**Type** secondary/ primary	**Reliability**	**Status**	**Analysis/ comparison/ tabulation**
Risk for deterioration of nutritional conditions	Litres of potable water per person per day	# of litres a household on average is accessing per day	15 litres per person/day	WASH survey	Primary	2. Reliable (Purposive sample)	Planned	Quantitative Litres/ household over average household size
		Average household size		Population data Census 2015, Government Statistical service	Secondary	3. Very reliable	Completed	

To develop an analysis plan:

1. List the key analytical questions to be answered based on the analytical framework and establish corresponding indicators, data required, and available baseline or set target, where feasible. When selecting and defining indicators to collect and measure, ensure a reasonable balance between the following:

   - The importance of the information (for operations, strategies, programmes, advocacy), for instance:
     - Protection risks created by the collection exercise for data collectors and data subjects, and the protection benefits of having that information;
     - The degree to which the information has relevance (for multiple end users) or is appropriate to the activities planned or being undertaken within the crisis; and
     - Its representativeness of the affected population, including by age, sex, and diversity.

   - The time and effort required to obtain the information, including:
     - The accessibility of data/information sources;
     - The anticipated duration of the data's validity in a dynamic environment;
     - The level of accuracy and precision desired; and
     - The human, financial, material, and technical resources required.

2. Record relevant sources of available secondary data in the template, thus also revealing gaps.

3. Assess the level of trust of the source and the information. Only relevant and credible information should be included in the analysis. To assess the level of trust, a rating system is applied (see Step 3, Secondary Data Review).

4. Finally, describe the planned analytical output and relations between elements.

5. As new information emerges and is consolidated – particular during Step 3 – update the analysis plan.

Main results include:

- ✓ Minimum information requirements and analytical questions are structured in the analytical framework.
- ✓ A data analysis plan with indicators to guide data collation and collection has been developed by the technical working group.
- ✓ The analysis framework and analysis plan have been validated by the steering committee and representatives from the affected population.
- ✓ The analysis plan is updated as more information and sources becomes available and is consolidated, or the situation changes.

Resources in the Toolkit:

- → Needs Assessment in Refugee Emergencies (NARE) checklist
- → Guidance and templates for analytical framework and data analysis plan
- → Indicator guidance[5]

5 See Gender-sensitive Indicators, Annex 6.

Measuring by Using Indicators

A direct indicator is a measurable, evidence-based scale providing specific information on the condition of the object under study. For example, if we want to know if a camp is overcrowded, we will measure the average camp area per person (square metres). If we want to know the enrolment rate for primary school, we would measure the % of primary school-aged girls enrolled in primary education and the % of primary school-aged boys enrolled in primary education.

Indicators can also measure progress toward pre-defined results at different levels (e.g. performance / output indicators and impact / outcome indicators). Indicators are often a direct and quantitative measure, such as a percentage or share, rate (i.e. birth rate), or ratio (i.e. inhabitants per doctor).

Indicators can also be qualitative, such as people's judgments and perceptions about a subject (i.e. those who feel safe and secure). Qualitative indicators are valuable to study changes in people's lives and communities, as they seek to measure long-term effects and focus on people's experiences. Quantitative data can provide numeric measures for indicators, while qualitative data can provide information about why certain patterns or trends are observed.

To make the analytical topics and questions more evidence-based and measurable, needs and situation indicators should be established in order to set standards and benchmarks gauging the severity of a situation. Indicators and their targets should be established in ways that are 'SMART', i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound. Also, consider and indicate where disaggregated data (i.e. age, gender, and other forms of diversity) is appropriate. Sex and age disaggregation of data is highly encouraged whenever possible in order to enable more accurate understanding of needs, priorities, and capacity and to guide the design of adequate protection and assistance services.

The relation with an analytical question could be one question corresponding to many indicators. Note that an indicator also could be used to inform other analytical questions, or it could function as a proxy or indirect indicator for another analytical question that is difficult to measure with a direct indicator.

Proxy indicators

A proxy indicator is an indirect measurement that is used when direct measures are not possible. As a substitute, it provides a measurement of a phenomenon that exhibits the same trend or characteristics as the thing we wish to measure. In other words, when we cannot or have not measured something that we want to know about, we can measure something else that follows the same pattern, or measure something similar.

For example, if school enrolment data shows a sudden increase in dropouts when the harvest season begins, this can be a proxy indicator for child labour in the agriculture industry.

There can be several reasons to formulate a proxy indicator:

- When the subject of interest cannot be measured directly. This is particularly the case for more qualitative subjects such as behavioural change, living conditions, or good governance, or for areas with limited or no access.
- When the methodology required does not match the allowed time frame for report submission (e.g. daily food intake), the measurement of indirect indicators can be more time- and cost-effective.
- When the subject of analysis can be measured directly but is too sensitive to do so due to cultural taboos, a security situation or other reasons.
- Proxy indicators may have a causal relationship and correlation to other indicators. This correlation can be either positive or negative. When a proxy indicator has a negative pattern, it does the opposite of whatever is not being measured.

Reference indicators

UNHCR is consistently using performance (i.e. output) and impact (i.e. outcome) indicators in support of the Result-Based Management framework and Focus. While establishing a needs indicator, make sure to consider existing performance and impact indicators for reference.

The global clusters have established a joint humanitarian indicator registry (housed on ReliefWeb and HumanitarianResponse.info) to support field operations with the aim of standardizing and enhancing comparability across emergencies.

Another initiative is JIPS's project to operationalize the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons by developing agreed indicators, tools, and methodologies for comprehensive yet practical approaches to durable solutions analysis in displacement situations.

Setting Data-Management Procedures

The technical working group should set procedures for collation, quality control, and processing of data. It should also ensure the protection and safeguarding of personal information by following UNHCR's Data Protection Policy.[6] This includes establishing protocols among partners for the sharing of different types of information (e.g. raw vs. aggregated data vs. findings) and agreeing on how to share information or findings with persons of concern in an accessible and culturally appropriate manner.[7] Related protocols must define the following:

- Type of metadata to describe the dataset (date of collection, geographic coverage, methodology);
- Geographical units (use of country P-codes[8] and/or agreed administrative place names, disaggregation levels, and other technical standards);
- Who owns the data and who has what rights to change or modify the data;
- Determination of whether datasets should be cleared or sanitized prior to sharing, and by whom;
- Who has what rights to access the data at each level of aggregation and sensitivity; and
- Details on data confidentiality and safeguarding of information.

During primary data collection, the assessment teams will need to ensure that collected data is stored and referenced properly, ready to be used for later analyses. Irrespective of the method used for collection and storage, all data should indicate:

- Location or geographical area to which the data is applicable, using agreed standards (i.e. CODs);
- Population segment or affected groups from which the observation is derived;
- Sector(s) or sub-sector(s) the observation represents or belongs to, or other themes of interest (e.g. humanitarian access, response capacity, etc.);
- Date on which the data was collected or the information to which it refers;
- Basic information about the assessor, such as sex;
- Basic information about the respondent, such as age, sex, and other aspects of diversity; and
- A unique identifier for each questionnaire.

Data storage or archiving protocols need to be identified for safeguarding data. UNHCR has established a safe server environment to store data using the mobile data-collection tool KoBo Toolbox, which is available for all UNHCR operations. See more information about how to set up and access data storage solutions and the use of mobile data collection in the Needs Assessment Toolkit.

6 UNHCR, *Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern*, 2015.

7 For ethical and safety recommendations for data collection on sexual violence in emergencies, see World Health Organization, *WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies*, 2007.

8 P-code is an abbreviated term for 'place code'. P-codes are similar to ZIP codes or postal codes and are part of a data-management system that provides unique reference codes to thousands of locations.

Handling a large amount of data always has constituted challenges. The use of paper forms for interviews, for instance, can result in delays in analysis due to long data-entry requirements. Likewise, poor data entry can have a significant impact on the quality of an assessment, and related errors surface for several reasons – glitches in the data-entry process, poor transformations and merges when multiple data sources are brought together, or missing data. Fortunately, mobile data collection offers an efficient way to minimize those concerns. Moreover, setting up clear procedures for data cleaning and providing close support to the data-entry clerk goes a long way toward minimizing errors.

The outsourcing of information management services is a growing practice. In such a situation, it is crucial to ensure that the organization or company follows agreed ethical and protection standards, uses established analytical frameworks, and agrees to data-sharing protocols that are consistent with UNHCR practices and values.

Outsourcing Information Management Services

While outsourcing often is seen as a quick win for country offices, the following questions should be considered in order to ensure a successful collaboration and reliable results at the end of any needs assessment initiative.

Assessing the project proposal:

- Will local and/or international UNHCR staff be trained as part of the project?
- Does the project proposal include a participatory, protection-focused, and AGD approach?
- Who will own the data gathered within the project? Who is authorized to see, process, use, share, or store the data?
- Is some of the work included within the project already occurring within the operation?
- How will responsibility for information management be divided between UNHCR and the proposed external organization?
- Will the project introduce new information systems? If yes, how will these relate to existing systems?
- Have the proposed outputs or deliverables been aligned with strategic and operational priorities, including realistic timeframes, appropriate units of analysis, audience-specific targeted products, etc.?
- Are the costs of the project proportionate to the value of the output?
- Is the investment being made in outsourcing IM work rationalized with investment that could be made within UNHCR to increase IM capacity within the operation?
- Do the process and supporting tools used to achieve the deliverables meet UNHCR standards and practices?

Formalizing a partner agreement, MOU, or commercial contract:

If a decision is taken to collaborate with a partner on information management, it is recommended that the following clauses, or some customized version of these clauses, be included in any partner agreement, memorandum of understanding or contract:

- UNHCR retains ownership of the data and will have full access at all times to an updated copy of the database.
- UNHCR and partner-generated data should not to be used without permission in other projects or for unauthorized purposes.
- The partner should consult UNHCR prior to sharing or publicly posting personal or focused information arising from the project, as defined in the MOU.
- The partner should not approach additional donors for the project without notifying UNHCR in advance.
- Geographic data used for the project should match that of the IASC Common Operational Datasets (CODs) or the UNHCR equivalents.

Main results include:

- ✓ Procedures and staff responsible for data collection, management, and storage are identified.
- ✓ Protocols for managing and safeguarding data records, checking and validating data entry, tracking changes, and ensuring clean datasets for analysis are in place.
- ✓ File naming conventions, metadata standards, and procedures for archiving and keeping up-to-date back-ups are established.

Resources in the Toolkit:

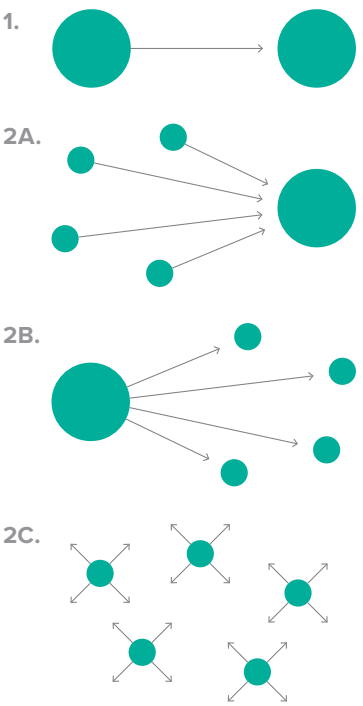
- → UNHCR, *Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern*, 2015
- → Example of data-sharing protocol

Data collection in assessments can be broadly grouped into two areas, based on the type of data collated or collected: secondary and primary. As defined earlier, secondary data is that which is external to a particular needs assessment exercise (i.e. collected for other purposes), while primary data has been collected within the context of a time-bound assessment. Not all assessments will include a primary data collection component: For instance, a Humanitarian Needs Overview is generally conducted using only existing secondary data.

Population Movements and Displacement

Population movements create significant challenges for a humanitarian response. It is important to collect and analyse information on population movement and displacement patterns in order to identify whether particular types of communities or population segments are more prone to movement, as well as any reasons for this. Such information gives an indication of the level and type of coping mechanisms being used by affected populations, and subsequently can help in projecting the possible size of a population of concern. Information about population movement patterns will inform what type of needs assessment should be undertaken.

Fig. 4 Displacement patterns



Displacement patterns take multiple forms and continue to evolve, and more than one such form can be observed in a given context. A broad pattern can be seen in terms of whether a displaced community stays together:

1. An entire community relocates to another place, e.g. a village decides to relocate.

   In such situations, the overall social unit can remain somewhat intact, with established community leaders staying in charge. In general, communities relocating together will have a greater ability to establish coping mechanisms to deal with the effects of displacement.

2. When communities cannot stay together, displacement may follow one of several patterns:

   - Individuals or households from various locations may relocate to the same location;
   - Individuals or households from one location may relocate to several locations; or
   - Individuals or households from several sites may disperse among many sites.

In situations with scattered or dispersed displacement, community members will need to overcome challenges without established community structures. Without established social covenants, identified community leaders, or governance structures, traditional community-level coping mechanisms may be unavailable. Even if they do exist, they are likely to function poorly.

When designing a needs assessment, it is important to take into consideration the type of displacement patterns observed. Social structures and power relations should be considered when identifying key informants or respondents. Accurate population stock and flow figures should be available to support the analysis (see Table 5).

Table 5 Population stock and flow figures

Population stock figures	Population flow figures
Population stock figures measure the number of people on a single day and render a snapshot of a community's make-up. Stock figures are often starting or ending points of flow figures. A stock figure must always have a date associated with it.	Flow figures measure changes in population over a specified period. It is particularly important to understand where people relocate. A flow figure must always indicate what period it measured.
Stock and flow figures are important data points to understand, monitor, and analyse population movement patterns and trends. Multiple sources and methodologies are available, and which to choose will depend on access to the displaced population and the context of the crisis. These sources and methodologies include: • Registration; • Spot-check methods; • Analysis of aerial and satellite images; • 'Quick count' methods;[9] • Tracking cell phone usage, i.e. call-determination records; • Flow monitoring, meaning observing people's movements in areas of operation by placing enumerators at key locations (bridges, border crossings) who count passing individuals and conduct short interviews; and • Collecting data at points of arrival.[10]	

Main results include:

✓ Population data structured as humanitarian profile.

Resources in the Toolkit:

→ IASC, *Humanitarian Population Figures*, 2016

→ ACAPS, *Technical brief: Estimation of Affected Population Figures*, 2012

→ NRC-IDMC/OCHA, *Guidance on Profiling IDPs*, 2008

Secondary Data Review

Secondary data review (SDR) is an often-overlooked component of an assessment, although it is critical to establishing a thorough understanding of a situation. An SDR ensures that all available data is used before investments are made to collect primary data, contextualizes primary data, and helps to avoid duplication of effort. It is recommended that operations maintain an updated secondary data review.

9 NRC-IDMC/OCHA, *Guidance on Profiling IDPs*, 2008, pp. 23-36.

10 UNFPA, *Guidelines on Data Issues in Humanitarian Crisis Situations*, 2010, pp. 33-38.

Based on the data analysis plan, the SDR establishes what is known and unknown about a situation and its impact, including details on the size and status of the affected population and the severity of conditions. The review involves collecting and analysing pre-crisis and crisis-specific information, statistics, demographics, and other relevant data at various levels of aggregation. In refugee situations, secondary information from both the country of origin and the country of asylum will be relevant. The main tasks to undertake for an SDR are detailed in Table 6.

Table 6 Main steps in undertaking a secondary data review

Step	Objectives	Activities
Compile	Tracking and compiling pre- and in-crisis data and information	• Locate, track, and compile pre- and in-crisis information • Establish or utilize existing assessment registries • Establish a data repository and archive all data • Update data analysis plan with new sources
Organize	Tagging information for easy retrieval and consolidation based on established analytical questions in the analytical framework	• Establish main categories of analysis (e.g. rural vs. urban) and tag information accordingly • Get population data and store at the lowest possible level of disaggregation • Use agreed data-management procedures and standards
Validate	Determining usability and trustworthiness of the information based on reliability of the source and robustness of the method	• Check that collated data is fit for purpose in terms of resolution, time, etc. • Check sources' credentials, possible motives for bias, past record of accuracy, and technical expertise • Check methods used to collect and analyse data • Ensure that sources are validated based on criteria outlined in the data analysis plan
Consolidate	Summarizing data by grouping similar data and consolidating related findings	• Summarize findings by geographical area, population groups of interest, and/or topics • Highlight differences or similarities of findings between geographical areas, groups of interest, and/or topics • Prepare visuals to aid and illustrate the analysis • Identify information gaps
Analyse	Undertaking analysis with subject-matter experts based on the prepared analytical framework and analysis plan For more detailed analysis steps, see Step 4 on needs analysis	• Use established analytical framework as the basis for analysis and interpretation, within and across sectors • Check credibility of information by assessing the degree of corroboration and convergence of evidence between multiple independent sources • Ensure sector-level analysis by subject-matter experts from agencies or clusters and representatives of the affected population • Facilitate joint analysis to identify key inter-sector issues, as well as severity of needs and risks • Validate analysis and findings involving broad set of stakeholders, including representatives of the affected population

Both pre-crisis and in-crisis information should be collated in order to allow for time comparisons when relevant. The collated assessment reports and data should be recorded in an assessment registry, which stores basic information about the data sources and methods used for collection. In addition, it is also important to establish a data repository and archive all data, and make it accessible to the stakeholders involved.

Pre-crisis secondary data

Basic information on the country context, including baseline data and general information about the general political, economic, social, and security environment, is collected to gain a more in-depth understanding of the characteristics related to local vulnerabilities, opportunities, capacities, and risks. Pre-crisis secondary data includes available lessons learned on the impact of previous similar events, as well as information about relevant upcoming events (e.g. elections, seasonal change, etc.).

Table 7 Pre-crisis information sources

Pre-crisis information required	Possible sources
• Population figures and demographics (e.g. population breakdown by sex, age, and other forms of diversity) • Socio-economic data (e.g. average household size, gender roles, livelihood practices, religion and beliefs, languages) • Existing vulnerabilities • Protection profile and risks • Spatial data (political/administrative boundaries, settlement locations), maps, and satellite imagery • Health and nutrition data (mortality, morbidity, and malnutrition data) • WASH information (existing water sources, type of soil) • Location and status of infrastructure (roads, health facilities, communications) • Contingency plans • Upcoming events (elections, winter, etc.) • Legal, political, and environmental data	• National statistics offices, censuses, and relevant line ministries[11] • UNHCR resources include Country Operation Plans, registration systems (ProGres), protection case-management systems, TWINE, Focus, EMIS, GBVIMS, CP IMS, UNHCR Statistical Yearbook, web portal (data.unhcr.org), map portal (maps.unhcr.org/en/search), and previous assessment results • IASC Common Operational Datasets (CODs) • Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) (data.humdata.org/) • ReliefWeb (http://reliefweb.int) or Humanitarian Response Web (www.humanitarianresponse.info/) • UNMAS Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) Database • World Bank development indicators, Millennium Development Goals, other development partners • Previous appeals, Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNOs), and Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) • World Health Organization country epidemiological profiles • UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) data • Remote sensing, Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT), UNGGIM • Civil society and UN agency reports (sectoral, thematic, programmatic), lessons learned, evaluations • ALNAP lessons learned • NGO, UN agency human rights and gender equality rights reports • Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) • IRIN News • Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS) • Index for Risk Management (INFORM)

11 In refugee or mixed situations, consider country of origin and country of asylum.

In-crisis secondary data

In-crisis secondary data constitutes information directly related to the impact of the current situation. This could include, for example, information about the influx of refugees since a conflict started or about cholera rates in IDP settlements. This data is generally used and analysed to help determine the most affected regions, populations, sectors, and sites, and those that require further assessment.

Table 8 In-crisis information sources

In-crisis information required	Possible Sources
• Problem areas for key sectors (what is an issue, what is not) • Population estimates for UNHCR persons of concern by sex, age and diversity (e.g. number, locations, types) • Humanitarian access constraints (e.g. due to insecurity, logistics, weather, infrastructure) • Affected geographical areas • Presence or absence of humanitarian actors in affected locations • Protection incidents (e.g. types, locations, victims, alleged perpetrators)	• ReliefWeb, Humanitarian Response Web • UNHCR data portal and map portal • Civil society organizations, government, and UN agency situation reports (including UNDSS, DPKO, OCHA) • Cluster and inter-cluster reports, websites, and meetings • UNMAS Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) Database • OCHA security incidents and humanitarian access database • Remote sensing, Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT), UN-GGIM, International Charter on Space and Major Disasters • Social media, other media, blogs, crowdsourcing • Personal networks • Funding appeals

Validate: Level of trust in secondary data

Assessing the level of trust in collated information is an iterative process, including the assessment of a single piece of evidence or a body of evidence, and the conclusions. Generally, the more information from independent sources about a specific topic, the better the opportunities for triangulation and the easier to assess trustworthiness.

Table 9 Validation criteria for level of trust

	ASSESSING		
Criteria for assessment of level of trust	**One piece of evidence**	**Several pieces of evidence**	**Conclusions**
Fitness for purpose (timeliness, comprehensiveness, granularity, relevance to analysis questions, interoperability with other data)			
Reliability of the source (technical expertise, track record for accuracy, motive for bias)			
Robustness of method used to collect the data (data collection methods, sampling strategy, validity)			
Credibility of information (degree of corroboration with other pieces of evidence originating from independent sources, plausibility in context)			
Strength of underlying logic (from weak to strong logical inferences, analytical writing, strength of logical reasoning)			
Transparency (reproducibility, documentation of data and methods, metadata)			

If inconsistent information is found, assessment teams will estimate the trustworthiness of each detail based on an evaluation of the sources and the method of collection, and will document discrepancies and assumptions.

The analysis team undertaking the SDR (see text box below) must have quantitative and qualitative research and analysis skills to ensure a comprehensive and accurate review. A thorough secondary data review requires resources and time, and can be undertaken remotely. However, robust links to field operations are necessary, and a good understanding of the local context (such as geographic areas and cultural norms) will be required for the final interpretation of any secondary data.

Analysis Team

In order to undertake a secondary data review in a coordinated manner, a best practice is to form an analysis team involving agencies and stakeholders with sectoral expertise and local knowledge and experience. The analysis team or technical working group will support joint analysis with an agreement on the findings and output of the analysis.

A team leader such as an assessment coordinator or experienced data analyst leads the secondary data review with sectoral experts. He/she is supported by information management specialists with expertise in data analysis, GIS, remote sensing, or statistics. The team should ensure the following:

- A common assessment registry and a repository for reports and datasets is established (storage and sharing applications such as Dropbox are commonly used as quick and collaborative solutions).
- In this central repository, members of the team collate relevant reports and assessments.
- Roles and responsibilities are shared among members and sector specialists, and should be decided upon early in the process.
- A report template for the secondary data review is outlined, consolidating the sector reviews and facilitating cross-sector analysis and findings.

The final step of the secondary data review is to identify information gaps by comparing the existing consolidated data to the information needs that were agreed in the data analysis plan. The gaps can be geographical (i.e. areas of coverage), thematic (e.g. sectoral information or specific questions), time (e.g. information on ethnic composition in 1960 but not 2016), or in terms of a lack of perspective (e.g. sub-group of affected population based on age, gender, and diversity considerations). Once the gaps have been identified, discussion can begin on what primary data will be collected, how, and by whom.

Main results include:

- ✓ Relevant information is captured and assessed for trustworthiness.
- ✓ Information systems and initiatives (e.g. assessments, monitoring systems, etc.) are mapped and tracked through the assessment registry.
- ✓ Both pre- and in-crisis information is collected, validated, and stored.
- ✓ Secondary data is reviewed and analysed, resulting in a report.
- ✓ Information gaps are identified by comparing available information against the information needs in the data analysis plan.

Resources in the Toolkit:

- ACAPS, Technical brief: Secondary Data Review, 2014
- IASC, Humanitarian Population Figures, 2016
- ACAPS, Technical brief: Estimation of Affected Population Figures, 2012
- Assessment registry template
- Secondary data review template

Primary Data Collection

If information gaps emerge from the secondary data review when compared with the data analysis plan, collection of primary data is required.

Refining objectives and analysis plans

Based on the findings of the secondary data review, if needed the team will revise the objectives (set in the assessment project outline) to clarify the purpose and coverage of primary data collection. The data analysis plan also will be revised to identify indicators and analytical questions that remain to be answered through primary data collection.

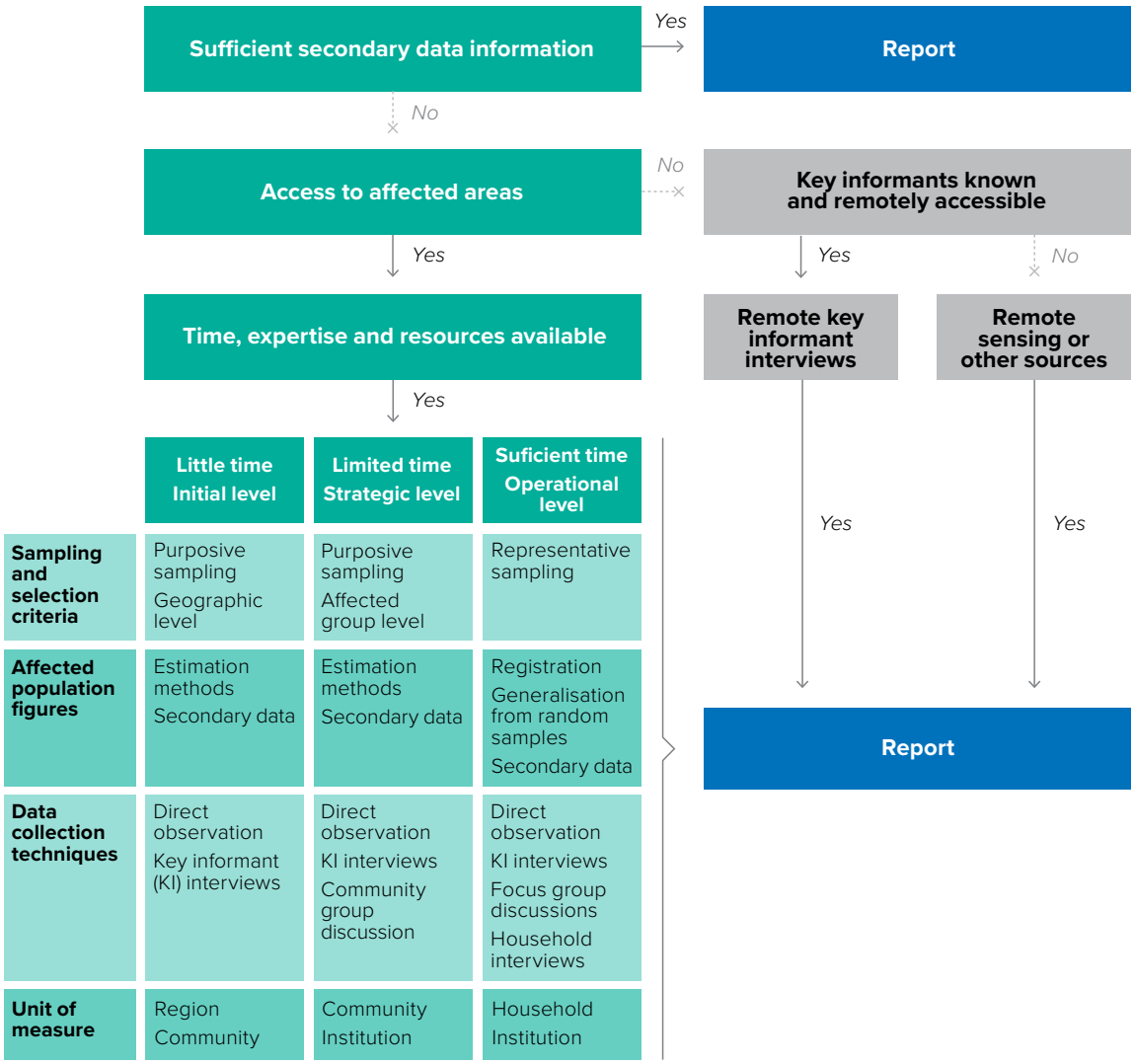
Designing the methodology

The appropriateness and feasibility of different data collection methodologies will depend on the objectives of the primary data collection exercise (i.e. key questions to be answered), constraints (time, resources, access, etc.), and expected benefits and costs (in terms of protection outcomes, security risks, etc.). Context is also important, and the main elements to consider are:

- Scale of the emergency (e.g. in terms of the number of people and/or areas affected, or the severity of the effects);
- Stability of the crisis and frequency of changes in the operational environment;
- Security context for data collectors and subjects, and for the data itself (e.g. level of sensitivity at collection points, transfer points, sharing points, storage points, etc.);
- Value and operational importance of the information to be collected;
- Resources and capacity available to collect the primary data;
- Protection risks associated with the assessment; and
- Possible over-assessment of any population group.

Note that more than one technique can be used to meet the purposes of the exercise. The decision tree below can be helpful in deciding which research methods should be chosen.

Fig. 5 Decision tree to select methodology for primary data collection



The elements described in Figure 5 will influence the methodology, which describes how the research will proceed. At a minimum this needs to detail:

- Type of information to collect;
- Level of information to collect (e.g. individual, household, community, institution);
- Data-collection techniques (e.g. focus group discussions);
- Unit of measurement;
- Sample methods and strategy;
- Data collection tools; and
- Data capture methods (e.g. mobiles, paper questionnaires).

Needs assessment tools and standards have been developed for particular purposes and settings, which could serve as a starting point for adaptation. For additional tools and standards, see Annex 2, 'Standardized Assessment Tools'.

In a situation with no or little access to affected areas, field data collection can be hampered. For guidance, see the text box below on need assessment in hard-to-reach areas.

Needs Assessment in Hard-To-Reach or Inaccessible Areas

Many people are hard to reach due to a variety of factors, including armed conflict and limited means of transport, making it challenging to identify their most pressing needs. For example, it is difficult to access besieged communities, which in turn often forces humanitarian actors to rely on information based on rumour and assumption. Remote assessment methods have been devised to improve and instil a systematic approach to data collection, even in inaccessible areas. These include:

- Remote sensing for in-depth damage assessment and determination of other visual characteristics of geographical areas of interests.
    - Remote sensing requires appropriate satellite imagery or aerial photographs, combined with expertise in imagery analysis and local knowledge of the ground situation.
    - Drones or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are increasingly being used to support humanitarian action.
- Identification of key informants such as IDPs/refugees with information about their area of origin.
    - Collect information from newly-arrived female and male IDPs, returnees, or refugees.
    - Establish a network of key female and male informants who have access to information from and are in regular contact with the area of interest. Often there exists a regular flow of movement and/or communication between persons of concern who have stayed in affected areas and those who have fled.
    - To avoid bias, facilitate group interviews to capture the views of multiple key informants, rather than relying on a single key informant.

By harnessing a regular flow of information, key information can be provided to humanitarian actors. This will improve the basis for response planning and programming purposes, and will ensure an evidence-based response. While that might not result in a full and unbiased understanding of needs, it will provide a systematic approach, rather than relying on assumptions of needs in areas that are difficult to access.

Finally, triangulation of findings with other informants and any available secondary data is crucial, as there are few means of objectively verifying the information.

See Needs Assessment Toolkit for more examples and tips on hard-to-reach populations.

Data-collection techniques

There are different methods for collecting primary data. Each has advantages and disadvantages, and each provides qualitative and quantitative data in different proportions. Often techniques are combined to strengthen the analysis (i.e. make it more comprehensive) and look at the information from different points of view. Table 10 summarizes the most commonly used techniques in different types of needs assessments.

Table 10 Data-collection techniques and appropriate use for each technique

Type	Means of collection	Respondent group	Purpose	Initial	Rapid	In-depth	Monitoring
Key informant interviews	Structured or semi-structured questionnaire adapted to respondent's expected knowledge	Individuals with prior and specific knowledge on an issue, situation, group, or location	• Gather information about the impact of the crisis among different population groups, protection risks, challenges, opportunities, and resilience	X	X	X	X
Direct observation	Structured (looking for) and unstructured (looking at) observation (sounds, smells, visual impressions, for instance the presence and absence of things and people, taste, touch)	N/A	• Discover conditions and specific features of an affected site or a population • Discover what is or is not there, or what is/feels abnormal • Triangulate data obtained through other techniques	X	X	X	X
Focus group discussions[12]	Semi-structured interview with a group of individuals to gain information on conditions, situations, experience, expectations, or perceptions through group interaction	Small population groups sharing certain characteristics (e.g. age, sex, diversity factors, economic status)	• Listen to affected population • Record priorities, needs, capacities, and protection risks identified by specific groups • Understand underlying factors, risks, threats, and causes • Deepen knowledge gained from other techniques			X	X
Community group discussions	Discussion with a diverse group of individuals from a specific community	Diverse groups of individuals from the selected community representing different groups, household situations, and characteristics	• Gain information on conditions, experience, expectations, or perceptions to ensure different points of view • Record priorities, needs, and protection risks identified by the community • Deepen knowledge gained from other techniques		X		X
Household visits	Structured interviews with members of households to gain information on conditions, situations, experience, expectations, or perceptions. Teams observe the living conditions of these households	Female and male heads of household (or other representatives of the households, e.g. caregivers, including where these are single women or children)	• Understand the condition and situation based on pre-defined indicators • Record priorities, needs, and protection risks identified by household representatives			X	X

Resources in the Toolkit:

- ACAPS, *Technical brief: Direct Observation and Key Informant Interview Techniques for primary data collection during rapid assessments*
- UNHCR, *Instructions for Rapid Assessment Focus Group Discussions*
- UNHCR, *Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations*

12 For more information on interviews and focus group discussions, please see the UNHCR, *Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations*, 2006.

Units of measurement

Data is generally collected at specific levels called units of measurement, which also determine the level of analysis. There are four principal units of measurement in humanitarian needs assessment. It is important to note that different units should not be combined on a single data-collection form.

- **Community-level** assessments take place at the neighbourhood, village, or camp level. The aim is to evaluate the availability and quality of community-shared resources; the existence of community-level needs, risks, and threats; and the coping mechanisms within a community.

- **Institution-level** assessments look at the availability and quality of services and the condition of key public buildings such as schools and hospitals. In some situations, there may be more than one such institution for a particular community.

- **Household-level** assessments are carried out to evaluate the needs of a household and are usually conducted with a representative or the head of household. A household is defined as a group of persons (one or more) living together who make common provisions for food or other essentials of living (e.g. stove, shelter).[13]

- I**ndividual-level** assessments evaluate the needs of individuals. Such an assessment should be disaggregated by sex, age, and other diversity factors (e.g. instances when the needs of some individuals in a household differ from those of others within the same household due to their gender, age, or other diversity or vulnerability criteria).

The unit of measurement used in a needs assessment directly affects the types of data that can be gathered and the types of questions to include in the data collection form, if applicable. Here are some examples of how, for instance, health-themed questions on a data collection form could differ depending on the unit of analysis used:

- **Community level:** Is there a functioning health facility in this village?
- **Institution level:** How many doctors work at this health facility?
- **Household level:** Can your family afford to buy medicines?
- **Individual level:** What vaccines have you had?

Volume of Data

The choice of unit of measurement has an impact on the volume of data generated by the assessment. As the unit of measurement gets 'smaller' in order to improve the accuracy of data (e.g. individual level rather than community level), the volume of data increases.

For example, a community-level assessment for five camps will result in the collection of five data-collection forms. However, if there are 1,000 households in each of those five camps and a 10 per cent sample is needed for a household-level assessment, this will result in the collection of 500 forms. Similarly, if there are five family members in each household and an individual-level assessment is needed, this will result in 2,500 forms.

13 The term 'household' can be defined in a variety of ways. It is important that each operation clearly articulates the definition it uses. See the Needs Assessment Toolkit for further information and definitions. Approaches to 'household' can include specificities such as MF – household (HH) with both male adult and female adult, MNF – HH with male adult and no female adult, FNM – HH with female adult and no male adult, and CNA – HH with no adult, i.e. child-headed household.

Sampling methods

Sampling is the process of selecting a small number of elements from a larger, defined target group. In most assessments, a sample of population or sites will need to be created because time, resource, and other constraints make it impossible to assess all populations and sites. This selection may be carried out through probability or non-probability sampling, the choice of which will depend largely on the availability of resources and the type and objectives of the assessment.

Results from representative probability sampling can be extrapolated from the study population to a broader population. Any assessment findings from an exercise using non-probability sampling, on the other hand, cannot be extrapolated statistically and can describe only areas visited and individuals interviewed.

In general, initial or rapid assessments will use non-probability sampling due to lack of time, while in-depth assessments will use probability sampling. In addition, probability sampling generally consumes more resources than non-probability sampling. As such, when choosing the methodology, there is often a trade-off between the representativeness and diversity of the sample, and the efficiency and timeliness with which data can be collected.[14]

For an in-depth assessment or in the context of a monitoring system, more time and resources are generally available, and assessment teams should seek to collect more-detailed information. In such situations, in order to allow for the generalization of results to the overall population of interest, the use of probability sampling is recommended. See Annex 3 for an overview of the different sample methods.

Factors commonly influencing the choice of sampling method include the following:

- Nature and quality of the sampling frame;
- Accuracy requirements;
- Type and level of detail of analysis expected;
- Available resources (time, human, material, financial, technological); and
- Context and operational concerns (e.g. humanitarian access).

Drawing a Representative Sample

The information gathered from the small number of units visited can be generalized to the entire affected population if a *representative sample* method has been applied. The *sample* will be drawn from the *sampling frame*, a master list of the population or elements to be assessed. The sampling frame needs to be clearly defined, within which a variety of sampling methods can be employed, individually or in combination. The formulas vary for establishing a statistically significant sample size.

A calculator for sample size is available at http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm.

14 See Annex 5 for a summary of sampling methods.

Probability sampling gives every target subject in an area equal chance of being selected for assessment. This method is appropriate if the target group is homogeneous and a complete list of all target subjects is available. If a simple random sampling method is used, for example, target subjects may be selected using numbers generated electronically to obtain a representative sample.

Non-probability sampling is diversity-driven and aimed at sampling as many units as possible. Units (e.g. sites) can be stratified using criteria such as urban/rural, affected populations in camps/outside camps, etc. Under this process, the criteria used for selection should be set to address the differences between sites. Characteristics that may influence site selection include the following:

- **Density:** The affected population is located in urban versus rural areas;
- **Livelihood or agro-ecological zone:** These are areas where people share broad common livelihood-sustaining activities (farming, pastoralism, fishing);
- **Geography:** Altitude and/or topography (the population is located in coastal, riverine, plains, mountains, etc.);
- **Severity of situation:** The population is located in the most affected areas, either directly or indirectly;
- **Pre-existing vulnerabilities:** The population is located in areas with higher or lower access to services, levels of poverty, prevalence of chronic malnutrition, etc.;
- **Security:** Access and constraints due to insecurity; and
- **Administrative units:** The population is within a given district, department, province, etc.

Purposive sampling is often recommended for rapid assessments because the sampling ensures target subjects with different characteristics are selected. Purposive sampling is useful for conducting needs assessments on a limited budget, where there is capacity to reach only a smaller number of sites. Results based on purposive sampling cannot be generalized to cover an entire population.

Purposive sampling involves a two-part process. The first part is to define which selection criteria are important to consider, according to the assessment objectives. The second is to visit sites that represent a cross-section of these. Potentially important types and characteristics for such sites could include the following:

- Sites with the most urgent needs (based on secondary data review);
- Sites where little is known or key information is lacking (knowledge gaps); or
- Sites showing one or several typical situations or groups of concern for the analysis, such as the following:
  - IDPs vs. non-IDPs;
  - Persons of concern in rural vs. urban areas; or
  - Directly vs. indirectly affected populations.

Another type of sampling is **respondent-driven** or the similar **snowball sampling**. This approach attempts to uncover new informants within a particular group by asking respondents to identify others who might know about a particular topic or who share the same characteristics as the respondent group. This technique is particularly useful in locating 'hidden' populations or members of a specific population (e.g. identifying IDPs in urban settings). However, it can be subject to considerable selection bias.

Resources in the Toolkit:
→ Annex 3: Sampling methods
→ ACAPS, *Technical brief: Purposive Sampling and Site Selection*

Design of the data-collection tool

The design of the data-collection tool will depend on the unit of analysis (e.g. household, community, individual) and the chosen data-collection techniques (direct observation, key informant interview, focus group discussion, etc.). A primary data collection exercise might require more than one data-collection tool or instrument, and each needs to be designed purposefully. As noted earlier, make sure not to combine different units of measurements in a single data-collection form.

A common tool used to capture information during needs assessment is a structured or semi-structured questionnaire. In designing a questionnaire, a major difficulty is making it both relevant to the context and understandable to all stakeholders. A questionnaire needs to be designed by someone with the appropriate technical expertise, a good understanding of principles and practices regarding communicating with the affected population, and a good grasp of the context. Too often, generic questionnaires are used that do not fulfil the requirements of the needs assessment and consequently waste considerable resources.

The analytical framework and analysis plan will guide the design of questions to ensure that only relevant and needed information is included in the instrument. The introduction of any new, unrelated questions should be considered very carefully, only with a clear rationale; if included, they should be recorded in the data analysis plan.

When designing questionnaires, consider the following:

- Keep the questions as brief as possible, based on the questionnaire's purpose, the identified information needs, and the amount of time you expect to have available to complete a questionnaire.
- Keep the wording simple and to the point, and do not use long sentences or uncommon words.
- Avoid ambiguity; the meaning of both the questions and the possible answers should be clear.
- Avoid threatening questions, giving due consideration to cultural and other sensitivities.

- Keep a question related to one subject (i.e. one topic per question; do not ask two questions in one).

- Ensure clarity in terms of which questions require a single response and which require multiple answers. Note that the analysis will be directly impacted by this choice.

- Avoid leading questions.

Draft questionnaires need to be translated if necessary and should be tested prior to deployment. Using a small test sample, observe the collection of data and review the questionnaire with the interviewers and, if possible, with respondents. Identify any protection risks or concerns for data subjects and/or data collectors, and develop preventive and mitigation strategies.

Questionnaires should always ask information about age, sex, and other relevant diversity factors, even if the survey is anonymous. It is standard good practice to include these questions at the end of the questionnaire to avoid bias. Examples of language to use include:

- Sex: Female/Male/Other
- Age:
  - Early childhood (ages 0-5)
  - Younger children and adolescents (6-12)
  - Older adolescents (13-17)
  - Youth (18-24)
  - Adults (25-59)
  - Older men and women (60+)

Here are some other diversity questions that can be useful to include at the end of a questionnaire to enable disaggregated analysis:

- Sexual orientation and gender identity;[15]
- Disabilities;
- Religion (depending on population); and
- Ethnicity (depending on population).

Resources in the Toolkit:
→ ACAPS, Technical brief: Questionnaire Design, 2016
→ Examples of questionnaires via the Profiling and Assessment Resource Kit (PARK): http://www.parkdatabase.org

15 For definitions of LGBTI, see UNHCR, *Protecting person with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities*, 2015, p. 5.

Data-capture methods

Traditionally, data has been collected with paper and pen and then entered into a database such as Excel for processing, storing, and analysis. Increasingly, primary data collection is conducted using mobile data-collection systems, e.g. through the use of mobile phones, tablets, or Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) that allow for real-time data collection, uploading, analysis, and sharing. These are considered more efficient than paper-based forms, which take longer to process. When contemplating using mobile data collection, consider the following pros and cons:

Table 11 Pros and cons of mobile data collection

Pros	Cons
• Easy management of the data with a central server • Real-time data submission allows for checking quality and correcting mistakes while assessors are still in the field • No transcribing or data entry needed • Allows for clean data through built-in integrity check • Increased security, as forms/responses are safely uploaded without paper trails that could be confiscated, e.g. at a checkpoint • Less resource intensive with no printing needed • Easy capture of observation data (images, video, GPS points) • Allows for instant visualization and mapping	• Difficult to manage qualitative data and free text answers • Can disturb the interview if the respondent feels insecure or uncomfortable with the device • Use of mobile devices can put respondent and assessor at risk in some settings • The assessor has to choose options (or decline to answer) if the respondent offers an unclear answer • Mobile devices are easily lost or stolen, or become obsolete • Mobile devices are initially costly to procure • At varied scales, the process is dependent on cell-phone coverage for synchronization with the server • Power sources are needed to recharge devices

Numerous tools for mobile data collection exist. Most commonly used in humanitarian settings are the Open Data Kit (ODK) or customized versions such as KoBoToolbox.

KoBoToolbox[16]

KoBoToolbox is a suite of tools for mobile data collection intended for field use. The software is free and open-source. UNHCR has adapted it and developed a unique and secure server available to all field operations.

It is set up for humanitarian workers in crisis situations, as well as aid professionals and researchers working in developing countries. It is an efficient and effective mobile data-collection tool widely used across humanitarian crises, especially where time is of the essence.

KoBoToolbox was developed by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative in collaboration with the United Nations and IRC.

For further information from UNHCR Headquarters, contact: HQIM@unhcr.org

16 See: http://www.kobotoolbox.org/.

Training of assessment teams[17]

The assessment teams need to receive adequate and timely training, as well as clear reporting lines and job descriptions. The length of this training can range from one day for rapid assessments to up to one week for in-depth assessments. At minimum, these trainings should include the following:

- Assessment background, objectives, time frame, geographical scope, and methodology;
- Team structure, roles and responsibilities, reporting and communication lines, and reporting/debriefing requirements;
- Site and target group selection process and guidance;
- Techniques and tools to be used such as questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, or direct observation techniques, including mobile data collection where relevant;
- Interview techniques and inter-personal skills (see Table 12);
- Techniques on how to implement an ethical and protection-focused approach, including AGD awareness, understanding and signing of a code of conduct and a confidentiality agreement;
- Instructions on referral mechanisms for any persons identified as needing urgent attention (e.g. unaccompanied children, medical cases, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence);
- Strategies to enhance data quality and reduce bias;
- Security protocols and emergency procedures; and
- Administrative and logistics arrangements, such as transport and accommodation.

17 See Needs Assessment Toolkit for further guidance on assessment training.

Table 12 Tips on how to conduct interviews

Do	Don't
Establish contact first by introducing yourself, the team, and the organization. Explain the purpose of the assessment to the respondents and that all information will remain confidential.	Don't influence responses or probe for additional information that is not required. Instead, show empathy for the respondent and interest in understanding his/her views as relevant to the purpose of the assessment.
Obtain consent from all adult participants and parents or guardians for any child participants. Inform respondents that they can refuse to take part in the assessment without negative consequences, and that they can refrain from answering specific questions. If the interview will be recorded on a device, explain how the recording will be used and protected.	Don't take pictures or videos of individuals or record a conversation without their informed consent.
Hold the interview in a place that can put the respondents at ease and ensure their security.	Don't ask intrusive questions or use a judgmental tone. Instead, be aware of what is considered intrusive in the cultural context. Avoid arguing with or challenging the respondent; rather, let the respondent do most of the talking, and intervene mostly to clarify.
Try to obtain responses from multiple sources whenever possible. Involve all groups, particularly persons with specific needs, to ensure the assessment reflects the diversity of needs experienced by different groups.	Don't ask questions, particularly those related to protection, in front of armed personnel, security personnel, officials, or other persons who could create protection risks for respondents. This can include male members of the family.
Establish a rapport through friendly behaviour in order to inspire confidence and trust. Be an active, attentive listener and record proceedings properly.	Don't get stuck on a question. If the respondent is uncomfortable with certain questions, do not insist that he/she answer.
Respect the dignity of individuals and local customs at all times. Use local impartial and properly trained language interpreters to ensure an inclusive approach. Ensure that interpreters are familiar with any technical terms that may be used during the interview.	Don't talk to other participants about a specific interview. Respect the confidentiality extended.
Pace yourself according to the time you have allotted for the interview. For each interviewee, note your own observations about the process and content of the interview.	Don't prevent respondents from asking you questions at the end of the interview.
Be sensitive to gender, age, and diversity. This includes ensuring female assessors and translators are available for female groups or individual respondents and vice-versa; and ensuring that communication methods are adapted for persons with disabilities, children, persons with low literacy, etc.	Don't create expectations or make promises about future humanitarian or other support.
In a household survey setting, wherever possible verify answers through observation by data collectors. This can help to triangulate information in a simple, non-intrusive way.	Don't make assumptions about gender roles, or about women's and men's needs and priorities.

Resources in the Toolkit:

- ACAPS, Technical brief: Building an Effective Assessment Teams
- UNHCR, Listen and Learn: Participatory Assessment with Children and Adolescents
- UNHCR, Brief Instructions for Rapid Assessment Focus Group Discussions
- UNHCR, Ethical Considerations Guide, Rapid Protection Assessment Tool
- Template for terms of reference for assessors/field assessment team/team leaders
- Template for code of conduct and confidentiality agreement

Inclusion of age, gender, and diversity

There are practical ways to include perspectives across age groups, gender, and other aspects of diversity in field assessments. These include encouraging the participation in the review process of community-based organizations and the representation of women, men, girls, and boys but also people with diverse cultural, religious, or language backgrounds. It also means committing to share results with affected communities and, if possible, validating the findings with them before finalization and dissemination.

To ensure that needs assessment information is fully representative of a community's diversity, staff should:

- Ensure involvement of all segments of a population. In this, outreach to more isolated and less mobile persons might be required, including those with health issues or disabilities, women with babies, and older persons.
- Use key informants from different social strata in structured interviews.
- Conduct focus group discussions according to AGD principles (e.g. have separate discussions for men, women, boys, girls, minorities, people with disabilities).
- Triangulate data from many social strata to obtain information on the variety of experiences faced by different groups in the affected population.
- Include questions and themes that might be relevant to marginalized or less-vocal segments of communities.
- Collaborate with specialized non-governmental organizations that work with more isolated groups (such as older persons, persons with disabilities, minorities, and children) to enhance participation by these groups in needs assessment exercises.
- Engage with community structures (e.g. committees for youth, women, and persons with disabilities).
- Ensure that crisis-affected communities and humanitarian actors jointly identify a community's protection risks, existing capacities, and the community members' own priorities for intervention.

Resources in the Toolkit:

→ UNHCR, Age, Gender and Diversity Policy

→ UNHCR, Community-based Protection (Standing Committee Report)

STEP 4: **Draw Conclusions: Needs Analysis**[18]

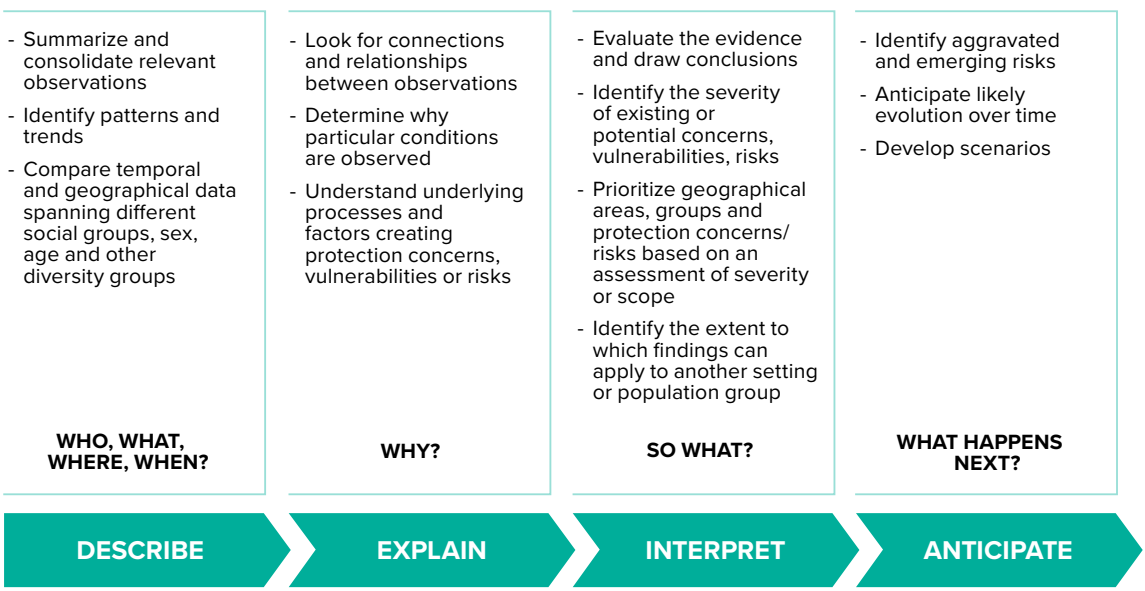
Analysis is a systematic and iterative sense-making process guided by the analytical framework and analysis plan that are defined for a specific needs assessment exercise (see Step 2).[19] The more detailed the analysis plan, the more automatic and straightforward the needs analysis will be, with minimized bias.

Analysis is an ongoing activity throughout the needs assessment. It should start as soon as data becomes available, rather than waiting until after it has all been collected. In order to be able to reproduce analysis results and to transparently provide evidence of how the findings and conclusions were drawn, the entire analysis process needs to be documented.

The needs analysis will often combine qualitative and quantitative approaches. The exact combination will depend on the purpose of the exercise and the sampling method used, and the differences and limitations of each must be understood when undertaking the needs analysis. Needs analysis aims to accomplish the following:

- Describe and understand the severity of conditions of various affected groups, including sub-groups according to age, gender, diversity, or locations;
- Explain cause-and-effect phenomena;
- Identify and prioritize main needs, protection concerns, vulnerabilities, and risks; and
- Predict subsequent impacts of the crisis.

Fig. 6 Analytical tasks



18 It is important to ensure not only that needs analysis is done but also that we do not skip the imperative intermediary step between needs analysis and programme design, i.e. response analysis. Response analysis involves the selection of appropriate and feasible response options to address unmet need, while minimizing potential harmful side effects.

19 See UNHCR, Participatory Assessment in Operations and Programming for Protection on Learn and Connect for further information on 'Systematizing the information gathered', 'Follow-up Actions', and 'Comprehensive Analysis of the Findings and Prioritization'.

Analysis steps are incremental, and each builds on the results of the previous step to provide additional information and value.

Description

Describing data means to state what the numbers indicate. This requires compiling large amounts of data into a representation that makes it easier to compare and identify the main points, important stories, and useful messages in the data. For example, the description process involves grouping similar data (e.g. all data from IDPs in a province) and summarizing this into higher-level measurements or statements.

Basic descriptive statistics such as median, mode, or mean can be used for quantitative data (e.g. on average, 57 per cent of IDPs indicated tensions with their host communities). On the other hand, higher concepts or themes can be used to synthesize qualitative data (e.g. most [80%] of key informants mentioned growing animosities and rising numbers of incidents between IDPs and the host community). Grouping and summarization is made easier if data-management procedures have been put in place during the planning process, and definitions and categories are clearly stated and agreed.[20]

After summarization, comparing data will allow for the identification of similarities and differences between two or more measurements. Comparisons allow patterns, trends, anomalies, or outliers in the data to emerge, providing the basis for findings and key messages. Most types of comparison are possible for use in a needs analysis, but the following are used most often in needs assessment:

- When **conventions or standards** are commonly applied, they can be used as the reference values for calculations, e.g. UNHCR standards or SPHERE minimum standards.[21] If external standards do not exist or additional contrasts are required, pick salient reference values within the data (e.g. the average access to clean water in a middle-income neighbourhood before vs. after a crisis).

- **Geographical** comparisons entail comparing different geographically delineated areas, e.g. two provinces, areas of higher- vs. lower-conflict intensity, etc. This type of comparison can be extended to other defined elements with spatial attributes such as the type of setting (e.g. rural vs. urban or camps vs. non-camps).

- **Socio-economic group** and other diversity comparisons allow for the identification of different levels of need between different types of populations or affected groups (e.g. agro-pastoralists vs. farmers, hosts vs. IDPs, ethnic group A vs. ethnic group B). This is especially useful in describing the variation of needs between and within affected groups identified in the humanitarian profile.

- **Sex and age** comparison is essential for all humanitarian assessment in order to understand the different needs, priorities, and capabilities of women, men, girls,

20 'Tagging' observations around specific categories of analysis (e.g. geographical locations, affected groups, sectors or sub-sectors, or other themes) allows for quick filtering and re-organization of data depending on analytical needs.

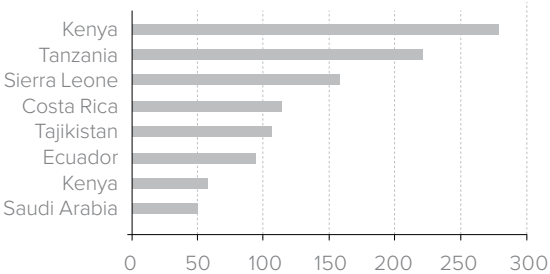
21 The *Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response* is one of the most widely known and internationally recognized sets of common principles and universal minimum standards in life-saving areas of humanitarian response.

and boys in key age groups. In addition, analysis of the needs, priorities, and capabilities of other marginalized groups is key for comprehensive analysis, including persons with disabilities, LGBTI persons, minorities, and indigenous people.

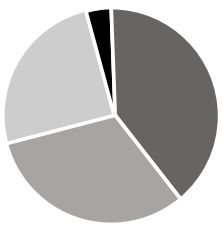
- **Time** comparisons are also useful. They are sometimes employed as a proxy measure for showing the impact of the crisis or as a measure of the evolution of the response.

Fig. 7 Common stories or interesting patterns emerging from the descriptive analysis involve:

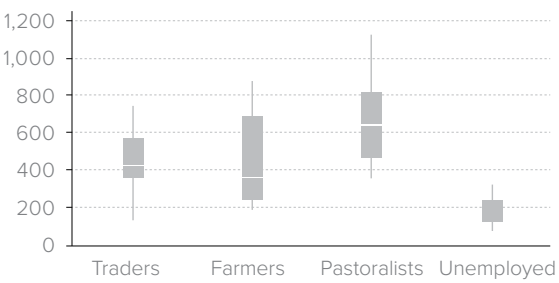
Ranking: Comparison of one measure to another as well as quantitative order



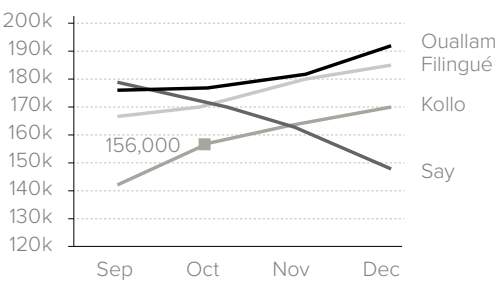
Part of the whole: Comparison of a measure to the whole



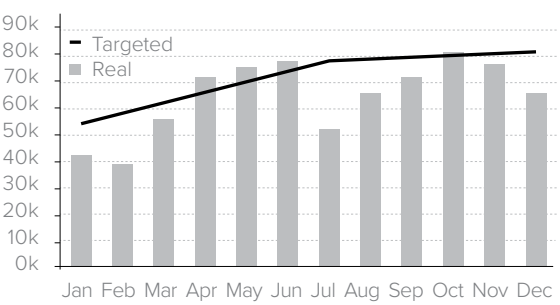
Distribution: Comparison of the distribution of values for one or multiple subdivisions



Time series: Comparison of a measure taken over equal time periods



Deviation: Comparison of the difference between a measure and a reference measure



Spatial: Comparison of a measure based on spatial characteristics

Main results for the descriptive analysis include:

- ✓ Secondary and primary data are grouped and summarized based on the analysis plan and pre-identified categories of analysis, e.g. urban vs. rural, etc.
- ✓ Comparisons of results based on relevant characteristics such as geographical areas, population groups, or time highlight similarities and differences.
- ✓ Key patterns, trends, anomalies, and outliers emerge from the comparisons and are described.

Resources in the Toolkit:

- → ACAPS, Technical brief: Compared to What? Analytical Thinking and Needs Assessment, 2013
- → IASC, Humanitarian Needs Overview Guidance, 2015

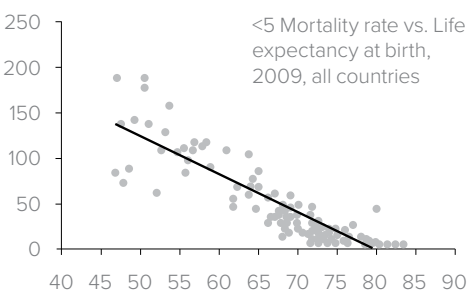
Explanation

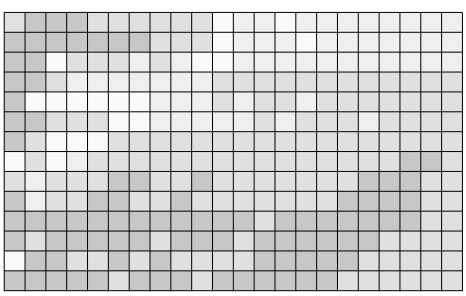
Explanatory analysis looks for associations, correlations, and more generally for connections between observations and measurements.[22] It is an extension of the descriptive phase and allows for the identification of key underlying factors based on careful investigation of relationships, processes, or causal mechanisms.

Identifying relationships is an important part of the analysis process, because it prepares for moving from a simple description of the population conditions and settings to explanations of why and how things happened as they did. This level of analysis implies carefully connecting the dots and assessing whether two or more variables, conditions, or observations vary according to a pattern, if there is a strong or weak

Fig. 8 Common stories or interesting patterns emerging from the explanatory analysis

Correlation: comparison of two set of measures to determine if as one data set goes up, the other set correspondingly goes up or down, and how strongly





22 See the Needs Assessment Toolkit for examples of analysis and helpful tools available to support the analysis phase. For example, CARE, *Rapid Gender Analysis for Emergencies Tool*, and UNRWA, *Gender Analysis Manual*, 2011.

relationship linking them, and if one is a cause of or contributor to another. The main underlying processes that impact the well-being of the affected population should be carefully identified and verified, as they will constitute the basis for further operational and programmatic recommendations.

As an effect of small samples, complex mechanisms, and combinations, uncertainties regarding the most accurate explanation often arise, and several reasonable explanations might account for the current conditions. Assessment teams should develop hypotheses and rival explanations, none of which should be discarded until sufficient evidence is gathered to identify the most plausible.

Association, Correlation, and Causation

Pattern detection and recognition allows for the identification of specific associations within the data.

An **association** is any relationship, correspondence, connection, or link between two or more variables of interest whose dependence can be measured and verified. Simply put, there is association when two variables move together, but one does not influence or cause the other.

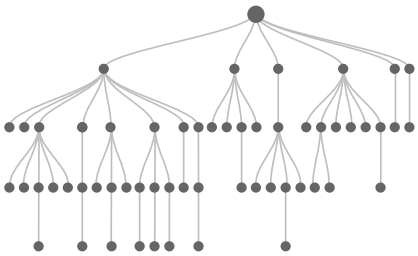
The term association is closely related to the term correlation, and both imply that two or more variables vary according to some pattern. However, **correlation** is primarily interested in measuring the degree to which the association of the variables tends to adhere to a certain pattern. Correlation is positive when the values increase together and is negative when one value decreases as the other increases.

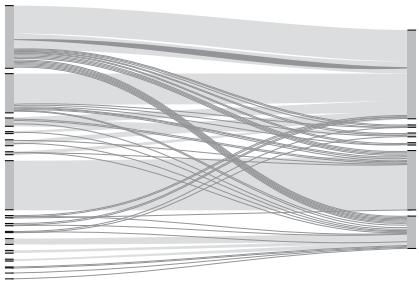
Remember that just because two variables have a statistical relationship with each other does not mean that one is responsible for or causes the other.

Causation is the relationship between cause and effect, where one factor causes another. It implies identifying the start variables (baseline conditions that will have changed), the intermediate variables (events, states, processes, and/or factors that initiate changes or action of some kind), and the outcomes (the consequent and final results, positive or negative, of start and mediating variables).

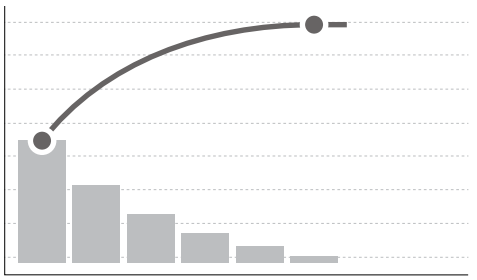
Analysts should be cautious and should not treat simultaneity (or co-occurrence) as causation. Note that a correlation does not necessarily imply a causal relationship. However, if two things are causally linked, they will be correlated.

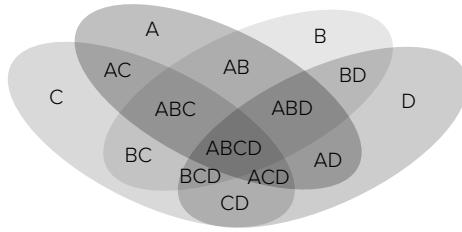
Underlying factors: Comparison, identification and structure of contributing factors and causal mechanisms





Underlying processes: Comparison of the combined weight of a set of factors in the final outcomes





Main results for the explanatory analysis include:

- ✓ Associations and correlations are detected and their strength described.
- ✓ Contributing factors and underlying processes are described.
- ✓ Factors likely contributing the most to observed outcomes are identified.
- ✓ Explanations and/or alternative or rival hypotheses are developed.

Interpretation

Interpretation is the process of attaching meaning to data. It aims to move beyond findings to instead draw well-supported conclusions through careful argumentation, evaluation of strength of evidence, and attention to plausibility in context.

Interpretation demands objective and careful analytical judgement. Often the same data can be interpreted in different ways by different analysts with differing levels of expertise, biases, assumptions, and areas of focus. To overcome this issue, it is helpful to involve other partners and stakeholders in the analysis process, including persons of concern (e.g. through a workshop with local experts or affected populations, meeting with stakeholders, consultation with clusters or sector experts, etc.). With regard to consulting persons of concern, ensure a setting that allows for consultation with sub-groups regarding age, gender, and diversity.

Not all humanitarian issues have the same importance. Some contribute more than others to the deterioration of the physical, mental, or social well-being of an affected population, and thus these need priority attention. Establishing the intensity or risk of harmful consequences if nothing is done to address a particular issue, as well as how many people are currently facing those conditions, allows for issues to be prioritized based on their actual or expected negative outcomes and their prevalence among a given population. Beyond issues, priority should also be established for geographical areas or population groups that are the most severely impacted.

Strengths and limitations of the evidence that supports final conclusions and the reasoning behind analytical judgments must be assessed in order to detect possible flaws in argumentation and establish the trustworthiness and credibility of conclusions. Conclusions derived from assumptions rather than the available data should be clearly flagged

and communicated as such to avoid any risk of misinterpretation or accusations of bias.

In cases where a random sample has been used, interpretation also implies determining the conditions and extent to which findings can apply to others places, humanitarian sectors, or population groups through careful generalization and extrapolation.

Finally, operational recommendations need to be provided on the issues that have been identified as the most severe and highest priority.

The following is a set of questions frequently used when interpreting needs assessment data:

- What was learned? What are the results? What is known about similar past crises in the region, and what does this tell us about the current findings? Is it plausible?

- What is new, what was expected, and what has changed since the emergency started? What has stayed the same when everything else has changed, and why did the crisis change it? What is surprising? What is not surprising and does not need to be presented or explained in detail? If the situation for certain groups or areas did not worsen, why not?

- What is important or different about one group, time, or place when compared to another? Are patterns consistent across different groups and sources of information? Do they make sense? How does one geographical area differ from another, and why? What trends can be observed?

- What conditions are the most severe? How many people face those conditions? What are the critical issues or concerns to be addressed in the short, middle, and longer term?

- What is the source of the evidence? How credible are the findings? What are the limitations of the analysis? Could chance or bias explain the results? How do the results compare with those from other studies? Are the patterns meaningful signals, or do they simply represent the 'noise' in the data? How big is the difference or change in conditions and behaviour? What differences are bigger than the imprecision of the measurement?

- What conclusions can be drawn? What are the most important messages? What theories or mechanisms might account for these findings? What alternative hypotheses can be suggested?

- What is missing? What is the next level of detail required? Where do gaps in knowledge persist? Are those gaps on issues that are not well understood and where further study is needed? What are the next research steps?

Joint Analysis and Validation of Findings

To ensure that all relevant stakeholders, including persons of concern, are sufficiently involved in the analysis process, at minimum an external validation of the analysis and its findings is necessary before the findings are more widely shared and disseminated.

While a broad-spectrum analysis team may work together to ensure expertise in technical subject matter, a joint analysis process with a broader group – including representatives from the affected population and, where possible and appropriate, relevant government stakeholders – ensures sufficient buy-in by a broader stakeholder group and the consideration of local knowledge in the findings.

Joint analysis also reduces the risk of duplication and wasted resources.

With these aims in mind, a workshop or presentation could be arranged to:

- Present the purpose of the exercise, the data collection method, the analysis method, and limitations (e.g. only few areas surveyed due to access constraints);
- Present analytical outputs, preliminary findings, conclusions, and interpretations;
- Validate these with participants, after exploring possible biases, distortions, gaps, and alternatives;
- Generate ownership of the results; and
- Discuss and agree on key issues and priority needs.

A collective process of joint analysis can consolidate sector-level with inter-sectoral analysis. Sector-level analysis involves consolidation, processing, and analysis of data collected for each sector. On the other hand, inter-sectoral analysis facilitates discussion so that intra- and inter-sectoral findings and knowledge can be shared and consolidated in a structured manner, cross-cutting issues can be identified, and a common understanding of the situation can be built.

Main results for the interpretive analysis include:

- ✓ Severity and priorities have been identified across geographical areas, sectors, and population groups.
- ✓ The distinct assistance and protection needs of girls, boys, women, and men have been identified, along with how discrimination might impact their access to services or assistance.
- ✓ Strength of evidence has been reviewed to determine degree of confidence in and trustworthiness of final results. Each piece of information is clearly sourced, and distinctions are made between facts and assumptions.
- ✓ The extent to which the findings can apply to other settings, geographical areas, or population groups has been assessed.
- ✓ Key stakeholders, including the affected population, have been consulted to interpret the findings and have agreed on final conclusions and recommendations.

Resources in the Toolkit:

- → ACAPS, Technical brief: How Sure Are You? Judging Quality and Usability of Data Collected During Rapid Needs Assessments, 2013
- → IASC, Humanitarian Needs Overview Guidance, 2015

Anticipation

The next level of analysis is to anticipate future developments and envisage different possible outcomes and evolutions for the current situation. Response interventions usually take place a period of time after the analysis is done. Therefore, conditions previously identified may have changed between the initial data collection and the implementation of the response. To ensure future programming remains aligned with the realities on the ground, this type of analysis involves identifying probable developments (i.e. scenarios) and attempting to predict how these might impact current conditions and the nature and severity of needs for different groups in different areas.

Anticipatory analysis identifies the likelihood of future events and trends in a specifically identified time frame (e.g. three to six months, one year), based on current and historical data. It combines predictions (a one-off estimate of a specific event in the future) and forecast (identifying a set of possible futures that include probability estimates of occurrence and the severity of humanitarian impact). Predicting and forecasting are an integral part of scenario-building in response planning and will also usually inform preparedness activities.

Typical steps for forecasting include the following:

- **Extend current conditions to forecast future outcomes:** Using historical data and trends therein, forecast how the situation will evolve in the short to medium term or how it already has evolved since the data was collected. Consider the impact on humanitarian needs and the ability to respond to those needs if there is no significant change in the direction of the trend.

- **Examine and develop alternative futures:** Analysis of an extension of current trends (as per the above) does not factor in new developments. Identify alternative ways the situation might develop if other events or situations arise to anticipate a change in context and assess how different the outcomes would be from the initial/current situation.

- **Validate scenarios:** Develop scenarios based on the above. Scenarios are discussed in groups, workshops, or meetings to assess their likelihood and potential humanitarian impact, based on expert judgement and comparison with similar events in the past, either in-country or in similar contexts.

- **Compare results:** Monitor the situation and compare the actual results with the predicted results. This is an important step to improve forecasting procedures, tools, and assumptions for future use.

Main results for the anticipatory analysis include:

- ✓ Factors, assumptions, and drivers that might change or exacerbate the crisis are clearly highlighted, such as lack of governance capacity, gender inequalities and social discrimination, or the development of an ongoing crisis event such as drought or flooding.
- ✓ Distinctions between current and future potential conditions are clearly established.
- ✓ Implications of potential developments on needs, risks, threats, vulnerabilities, and coping mechanisms are identified and inform the planning of programmes and interventions.
- ✓ Scenario triggers are clearly identified and monitored.

Resources in the Toolkit:

- → ACAPS, Technical brief: Scenario Building: How to Build Scenarios in Preparation for or During Humanitarian Crises, 2016

STEP 5: **Share Information**

In order for a needs assessment to serve its purpose and have operational impact for the benefit of affected populations, analysis results must be communicated in a timely and effective manner, and disseminated to appropriate audiences. Needs assessment results can inform strategic response planning, project design, programming, resource allocation decisions, advocacy, fundraising, and reporting. Such information is also a tool of accountability to communities and donors. A dissemination plan should be established at the planning phase of the exercise, since each end user of the findings may require them to be presented via different products and platforms.

Protocols for data sharing in support of a coordinated needs assessment approach should be negotiated and signed to regulate the sharing of aggregated findings and/or raw data. It is important to share this information both internally and externally as appropriate, based on agreed dissemination plans and data-sharing protocols, and after having identified and mitigated any potential protection concerns.

Assessment Report

A report produced at the end of the assessment process can be adjusted to suit a number of audiences, but it must at all times be structured to assist with the defined purpose and objective(s). The report should be as short as possible, and the outline should be developed at the outset of the needs assessment initiative in order for stakeholders to agree on expectations and anticipated results. For long reports, an executive summary of the assessment findings should appear at the beginning. Needs assessment reports should include the following:

- Clearly stated purpose, objectives, and scope of the needs assessment;
- A description of the populations and geographic areas covered by the assessment, and the dates when data collection took place;
- A detailed description of the methodologies used in the data collection and sampling, including any known limitations;
- A context description including scope and scale of the crisis, socio-political context, evolution of the events, and applicable legal frameworks;
- Clearly stated findings, conclusions, and recommendations to assist users in determining what further actions are required. These can include the following:
    - An indication of needs, priorities, challenges, and capacities disaggregated and analysed by sex, age, and other population sub-groups (e.g. persons with disabilities, LGBTI persons, survivors of SGBV, minorities, and indigenous persons);
    - An indication of the targeted beneficiary community's own solutions and priorities for humanitarian intervention;

- Prioritization of particular gaps, sectors, geographic areas, and population sub-sets based on analysis of the severity, depth, and estimated prevalence of the problem; and

- Where possible, a comparison of current living standards with a baseline or established benchmarks.

- Strategic use of data visualization and highlighted text boxes within the report, which can direct attention to particularly important information;

- Description of the analysis method(s) used, documentation of any assumptions made and how conclusions were reached; and

- Acknowledgement of all organizations participating in the needs assessment, such as UN agencies, NGOs, government entities, and academic institutions.

Needs assessment reports should be released as soon as possible, i.e. as soon as validated and approved by relevant stakeholders. Data on needs becomes stale very quickly, particularly as more assessments are conducted and the situation on the ground changes. Data should always be presented as disaggregated by sex, age and diversity criteria. Consider sharing preliminary findings with relevant stakeholders prior to the final report, especially if approval is required before publication.

Keep the validation and consultation process as short as possible without compromising quality, consensus, and buy-in. The finalization process may significantly delay the release of a report, perhaps to allow for finishing touches or to await approval from multiple parties. In all cases, make sure that the results and key findings are available for use in strategic and operational decision-making as soon as possible.

Dissemination of Findings

As emphasized throughout this Handbook, the primary reason for doing an assessment is to use the information gathered to make decisions and take action that can improve the effectiveness of UNHCR and humanitarian community programming as well as inform community response in meeting the needs of an affected population.

In order to promote information sharing, it may be necessary to create different versions of a needs assessment report to follow UNHCR's data-sharing guidelines and any related protocols that have been established (e.g. one with restricted circulation and a second that can be shared more broadly). Personal data, including photographs of individuals, should not be shared as part of an assessment report.

Collected information, including raw data that is not considered sensitive or does not include personally identifiable data, should be shared as widely as possible, as per the dissemination strategy agreed in the planning stage. This includes the government when possible and appropriate, implementing and operational partners, the media, donors, NGOs, and other UN agencies.

The affected population also needs to be made aware of the results to ensure impact of the needs assessment. This improves accountability to affected populations and allows persons of concern to improve information-based community or even individual response. The information should include both needs findings and how these will be translated into programmes. Information should be available in multiple formats in order to ensure access by groups with diverse means of communication (e.g. persons with visual, hearing, or intellectual disabilities; persons with low literacy; children; persons who use minority languages). It is important to highlight that communication channels remain open toward persons of concern after the needs assessment is finalized, to regularly adapt the response based on the suggestions and recommendations received.

In order to properly manage expectations, it is important to clearly communicate limitations on follow-up actions and commitments, including by using negative or hard messages. For instance, neither UNHCR alone nor the broader humanitarian community will be able to respond to all identified priorities. Such clear communication toward unmet needs not only increases acceptance of development and humanitarian agencies but also allows persons of concern to develop community or individual responses to unmet needs in a clearer frame.

In order to inform and disseminate findings, assessment organizers need to identify appropriate and accessible communication channels and formats in the planning stage. The dissemination strategy must always consider protection risks associated with dissemination through different platforms and means, and identify appropriate mitigation strategies.

Disseminating assessment findings through multiple channels increases the likelihood that the information will be used in decision-making. In addition to the assessment report, assessment results can be disseminated through multiple other information products in condensed formats. Options include dashboards, maps, infographics, and camp profiles.

Aside from traditional hard-copy dissemination, there are many ways to distribute assessment findings electronically, including the following:

- UNHCR operational web portals, Refworld;
- Shared humanitarian portals such as HDX, HumanitarianResponse.info, and ReliefWeb;
- Cluster-specific websites (i.e. sheltercluster.org, globalprotectioncluster.org, globalcccmcluster.org);
- Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, Yammer; and
- File synchronization services such as Sharepoint, Dropbox, and the Humanitarian Kiosk.

Main results for dissemination include:

- ✓ As a first step to quickly inform response, preliminary findings are consolidated and presented clearly, with the methodology and limitations included as background, to key selected partners and/or stakeholders.
- ✓ A dissemination plan with clearly defined audiences, information product outlines, and distribution channels has been established at the planning stage.
- ✓ Reports and materials are tailored to defined audiences.
- ✓ Data sharing protocols are established and respected when disseminating data and information product(s).
- ✓ Feedback is provided to assessed communities by sharing the results of the assessment and outcomes (e.g. response planning).

 Resources in the Toolkit:

- → Report template
- → Dissemination plan template

ANNEXES

	Considerations	Influenced Decisions
Decisions to be informed	• What strategic and/or operational decisions need to be made? Who will be making those decisions, and when? • What information is needed to make those decisions? • How can this information be tied to the programme cycle? • How will the information be used? • How often should this information be updated, delivered, and shared?	• The choice between collecting qualitative and/or quantitative data • The complexity of questionnaires and the required qualifications, skills, and gender of potential translators, and assessors • Type of data-collection techniques and assessment • Geographical scope, unit of measurement, and time frame
Crisis characteristics	• Is the situation cyclical, stable, or dynamic and fast-changing? • Is there a 'before' and 'after', or is it a protracted situation? • Are there different crisis scenarios evolving at the same time (natural vs. man-made)? • How quickly is the situation changing? For how long will the collected information be valid? • What is the scale and stage of the displacement? • How could the crisis evolve?	• Level of details and accuracy (initial, rapid, or in-depth assessment) • Resource allocation, size, and scale of assessment • Choice of one-off assessments or a monitoring system • Sampling method • Type of population estimation method
Security and access	• How is access (security and logistics) to the affected population? Can responses be undertaken in places where assessments will be made? • How sensitive is the information that will be collected? What data protection measures might be necessary? • Can the safety of response and assessment teams be ensured in the field? • How does the population perceive humanitarian and development organizations? • Are there hard-to-reach areas or hidden affected population groups?	• Level of access to male and female key informants and the choice of on-site visit or remote assessment • Safety measures for informants and the response and assessment teams • Data security and confidentiality protocols
Information availability	• Is the required information available through other sources, existing information systems, or assessments? If so, will organizations and agencies share their information? • Is a field assessment required to complement, validate, or triangulate secondary data? • Are there or have there been similar crises in the country or region from which to learn? • Will respondents be able to provide accurate and reliable information?	• Type of coordinated assessment (harmonized or joint) • Importance of secondary vs. primary data • Objectives of the primary data collection • Coordination and facilitation skills required • Choice of quality-control procedures, triangulation methods
Information value	• How indispensable is the information that is to be collected for decision-making? • How many people or agencies need the information? • How much effort is necessary to collect the data? Is the effort proportional to both the identified risks and costs vis-à-vis the expected benefits of the response? • Do we need to compare baseline data between affected and non-affected populations?	• Financial, material, and human resources • Level of details and accuracy (initial, rapid, or in-depth assessment)

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	Considerations	Influenced Decisions
Scale of emergency	• How large is the area to be assessed? How many places should be visited to get an accurate picture of the situation? • Is it more important to cover more areas or to have more granular and in-depth information in some particular areas? • How many people have been affected, and what are their basic socio-demographic characteristics?	• Number, sex, ethnicity, languages spoken, and qualifications of assessors and potential translators • Sampling method • Unit of measurement
Assessment capacity / resources available	• Are there any existing assessment methodologies or tools in-country adaptable to the current context? • Are there any mobile data collection devices or systems available? • Are the resources and skills required to use them available?	• Tool design and testing, logistical requirements, and technological skills • Budget of the assessment • Complexity of the questionnaires, qualifications and skills of assessors • Duration and depth of training • Number and types of sectors assessable • Sampling methods

Assessment	Type	Sector	Context	Design and Methodology	Purpose
Needs Assessment in Refugee Emergencies (NARE)	Rapid assessment	Multi-sector	• Refugee situations • Sudden or significant forced displacement across borders	• Checklist • Methodology not prescribed	• Helps UNHCR operations assess multi-sectoral needs • Describes the situation, needs, risks, capacities, and vulnerabilities of refugees and host communities
Multi-sector/ cluster Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA)	Initial and rapid assessment	Multi-sector	• IDP situations and other non-refugee crises • Natural disaster	• Desk review of secondary information • Non-probability sampling through: - Key informant interviews - Direct observation	• Informs strategic response planning (flash appeal and humanitarian response plans) • Identifies scope, scale, and magnitude of crisis • Describes the situation, needs, risks, capacities, and vulnerabilities of IDPs, host communities, and other affected populations
Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO)	Compre-hensive needs as-sessment/ analysis	Multi-sector	• IDP situations and other non-refugee crises • Natural disaster or complex emergency	• Desk review of secondary information generated by all participating agencies and organizations in the Humanitarian Response Plan	• Informs strategic response planning (humanitarian response plans) • Informs Humanitarian Country Team protection strategies
Rapid Protection Assessment (RPA)	Rapid assessment	Protection	• New emergency or sudden dramatic change in an existing emergency, in both natural disaster or conflict settings	• Desk review of secondary information • Non-probability sampling through: - Key informant interviews - Focus group discussions - Direct observation	• Assists protection teams to elaborate a strategic plan or an action plan • Identifies protection trends and problems that affect populations in general • Informs decision to implement more in-depth assessments or needs analysis for more specialized protection programmes
Tool for Participatory Assessment	Participatory assessment	Multi-sector	• All UNHCR operations	• Focus group discussions with various social groups	• Analyses protection risks and incidents together with persons of concern • Involves refugees in the design, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of services throughout the programme cycle • Promotes accountability to the populations that UNHCR serves

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Assessment	Type	Sector	Context	Design and Methodology	Purpose
Joint Assessment Mission (JAM), a UNHCR/WFP joint initiative	In-depth assessment	Food and nutrition	• Refugee settings	• Representative sampling • Household interviews	• Determines number of beneficiaries • Describes the situation, needs, risks, capacities, and vulnerabilities of refugees, returnees, or IDPs
Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey (SENS)[23]	In-depth assessment	Food, nutrition, health and WASH	• Refugee setting, annually or bi-annually • Triggered by larger influx, reduced food rations, or major disease outbreak	• Customizable methodology depending on context • Representative sampling • Household interviews • Individual anthropometric and anaemia measurements	• Reviews findings with regular intervals • Assists in identifying response strategies • Describes/helps to understand the nutritional situation of refugees • Enables trend analysis through repetition of surveys • Allows for swift response to findings • Informs TWINE
Health Access and Utilization Survey (HAUS)	Situation monitoring	Health	• Urban and other out-of-camp settings	• Representative sampling • Household interviews	• Provides knowledge of available health-care services, access, and utilization of preventative and curative health services • Identifies barriers to access • Indicates levels of coverage for key health indicators including measles immunization coverage in children under 5, skilled attendance at delivery, and use of antenatal care • Indicates levels of conflict-related injuries or disability and the type of support individuals received
WASH KAP (knowledge, attitude, and practice) survey	In-depth assessment	WASH	• Refugee setting, ideally conducted twice a year in refugee settings (during the dry season and during the rainy season if applicable). • Can also be triggered by a larger influx, significant increase in water-borne disease	• Representative sampling • Household interviews • Individual anthropometric measurements	• Describes/helps to understand the WASH situation of refugees • Assists in identifying WASH response strategies • Enables trend analysis through repetition of surveys • Allows for swift response to findings • Informs TWINE

23 SENS builds on the internationally recognized SMART survey. See: http://smartindicators.org/SMART_Methodology_08-07-2006.pdf

Assessment	Type	Sector	Context	Design and Methodology	Purpose
Joint Education Needs Assessment Toolkit Short Guide to Rapid Joint Education Needs Assessments	Rapid assessment	Education	• IDP situations and non-refugee crises	• Methodology not prescribed	• Highlights immediate, critical education issues and ensures effective coordination across education partners in an emergency • Serves as a baseline for monitoring and evaluation purposes • Supports preparedness planning for emergency assessments
Shelter Cluster Assessment Guidelines	Not specified	Shelter	• IDP situations and other non-refugee crises	• Various methodologies, no one methodology prescribed	• Promotes the use of relevant and timely information to facilitate cluster-wide planning, targeting, and coordination
FRAME Rapid Environment Assessment	Rapid assessment	Environment	• Refugee and returnee situations	• Checklist • Desk review of secondary information	• Assists decision-makers in prioritizing activities and planning in relation to environmental impacts • Describes baseline conditions and predicts impacts
Household Economy Approach (HEA)	In-depth assessment	Livelihood	• IDP situations • Refugee situations	• Desk review of secondary information and socio-economic baseline data • Primary data collection: - Key informant interviews (district KIs, traders, community representatives) - Household interviews	• Provides analysis of how people in different social and economic circumstances get the food and cash they need, as well as their assets, the opportunities open to them, the constraints they face, and the options open to them at times of crisis • Informs livelihoods response strategies
Systems for situation monitoring					
TWINE	Situation monitoring	Health, nutrition, and WASH	• Refugee situations	• Web application that combines streams of information informed by sector-specific tools	• Tracks situation indicators to inform decision-making in the humanitarian sectors
Balanced scorecards	Situation monitoring	Health	• Refugee situations • Protracted crises (not in emergency situations)	• Monitoring through facility-based tools • Scores are allocated for services provided, staffing/coverage, equipment and supplies, health worker and patient satisfaction, and quality of care	• Helps to monitor quality of care in primary health-care facilities in an urban or camp-based setting • Assists in identifying gaps and developing targeted recommendations related to key areas of health service management and service provision • Informs TWINE
WASH Monitoring System (WMS)	Situation monitoring	WASH	• Refugee situations • Protracted crises • Reduced form (3 main indicators) for emergency situations	• Measure indicators at camp level, linked to water coverage, water quality, sanitation, and hygiene • Data collected at production level	• Informs strategy with regard to medium- and long-term WASH • Describes the WASH situation of refugees in a consistent manner over time and across countries • Informs TWINE

	Qualitative Research Method	Quantitative Research Method
When to use	• When in-depth understanding and a holistic approach of a specific issue or process is required • To understand behaviours, perceptions, and priorities of affected community • To explain information provided through quantitative data • When the assessor knows only roughly in advance what he/she is looking for *Recommended during earlier phases of assessments*	• To get a broad, comprehensive understanding of the situation • To get socio-demographic characteristics of the population • To compare relations and correlations between different issues • When precise data is required • To produce evidence about the type and size of problems • When the assessor knows clearly in advance what he/she is looking for *Recommended during later phases of assessment*
Objectives and main features	• To explore, understand phenomena • Provides in-depth understanding of specific issues or processes • Detailed and complete information, contextualization, interpretation, and description • Perspectives, opinions, and explanations of affected populations toward events, beliefs, or practices	• To seek precise measurement, quantify, confirm hypotheses • Provides demographic characteristics • Allows for generalization • Objectively verifiable • Prediction, causal explanation
Data format	• Data can be observed but not objectively measured • Mainly textual (including categories), pictures, audio, video	• Data that can be counted or measured; involves amount, measurement, or anything of quantity • Mainly numerical and categorical values
Answers the questions	Answers questions arising during the discussion: • How? • Why? • When, since when? • What do I need to look for in more detail? *Questions are generally open-ended*	Answers a controlled sequence of questions with predetermined possible answers: • What? • How many? *Questions are closed*
Perspective	• Looks at the whole context from within • Lends itself to community participation, seeks depth-of-perspective through ongoing analysis (e.g. waves of data)	• Looks at specific aspects from the outside
Methods	• Individual interviews • Key informant interviews • Semi-structured interviews (including surveys, questionnaires) • Focus group discussions • Observation	• Quick counting estimates • Sampling surveys • Population movement tracking • Registration • Structured interviews
Sampling	• Non-random (purposive)	• Random
Question-naire/ tool types	• Checklist with open questions and flexible sequence	• Predetermined questionnaire with sequence and structure
Analysis	• Uses inductive reasoning • Involves a systematic and iterative process of searching, categorizing, and integrating data • Describes the meaning of research findings from the perspective of the research participants • Involves developing generalizations from a limited number of specific observations or experiences	• Uses deductive methods • Descriptive statistics • Inferential statistics

Probability Sampling

Probability sampling is applied when UNHCR needs to extrapolate results from the study population to the broader population from which the sample came. This is a method in which every unit in the population has an equal chance of being selected and this probability can be accurately determined. If the sample size is not representative, estimates from the sample will be biased. To avoid selection bias, the sample is chosen at random from a clearly defined population. The table below describes five types of probability sampling.

	Simple random sampling	**Systematic sampling**
Method	Uses random numbers generated electronically or from tables, under which each sampling unit has the same chance of being selected.	Method involves selecting elements from an ordered sampling frame from which systematic selection is easily possible. For example, the total number of households is divided by the required sample size and offers a regular sampling interval.
When to apply	This method is appropriate if the population is homogeneous and if a complete list of all sampling units in the population is both available and used (e.g. in a district where all families hosting refugees are known and listed).	This method is appropriate if the sample population is geographically homogeneous and organized in simple ordered rows (e.g. a well-planned refugee camp). If there are hidden patterns, (e.g. certain ethnic geographical distribution in a camp), it is not appropriate to use this method.

Non-Probability Sampling

Non-probability sampling does not involve random selection, which means that it is not possible to extrapolate the results to a wider population. Non-probability sampling should be used only when the context disallows probability sampling, or when more information is sought on specific groups and vulnerabilities within the crisis. The table below presents six types of non-probability sampling methods.

	Convenience sampling	**Purposive sampling**	**Maximum variation sampling (subset of purposive sampling)**
Method	Sample is selected based on the accessibility and proximity of respondents to the researcher. Because selection bias can easily occur, this is considered the weakest sampling technique, and should be considered only when absolutely necessary. It is very important to record the limitations of this method, particularly the lack of ability to generalize the findings.	Sample is selected and constructed to serve a very specific purpose. In a purposive sampling process, the sample size is determined based on the notion of saturation and cannot be precisely planned before the assessment.	The method is a subset of purposive sampling, and it is used to select a sample with the most diverse characteristics relevant to the assessment (e.g. young vs. old, rural vs. urban).
When to apply	In some cases, perhaps due to access issues, convenience sampling may be adopted. It is considered both efficient and cost-effective, and it is most commonly used during initial assessments when access to the affected population is limited.	This method is most appropriate when trying to obtain information that is relevant and credible in a particular setting within a relatively quick time frame.	

24 For more-specific guidance, consult ACAPS, Technical Brief: Purposive Sampling and Site Selection in Phase 2, 2011.

Stratified sampling	Cluster sampling	Multi-stage sampling
• Stratification is the process of dividing members of the population into homogeneous sub-groups before sampling. Each stratum needs to be mutually exclusive, with every element in the population assigned to just one stratum. • The strata should also be collectively exhaustive, with no population element remaining excluded. • Once groups have been established, simple random sampling or systematic sampling can be used to calculate the sample size required for each of these groups.	The total population is divided into 'clusters', and a simple random sample of the groups is selected. Thereafter, everyone within the chosen cluster is sampled.	The method uses a hierarchical sampling approach. The first step is to construct the clusters. The second is to decide what elements within the cluster to use.
This method is helpful to sample each sub-population (any stratum with common characteristics) independently, if the sample population is heterogeneous.	This method is used when natural and relatively homogeneous groupings already exist in the population of interest.	This method can be used when it is not feasible to take a simple random sample (e.g. if the population is widely dispersed or there is no appropriate sampling frame).

Typical or critical case sampling (subset of purposive sampling)	Snowball or respondent driven sampling	Opportunistic sampling
The method is a subset of purposive sampling and focuses on typical or critical representatives of a particular group (newly displaced, victims of sexual violence, etc.) in order to describe their situation or their specific problem in detail.	The method attempts to uncover new informants within a particular group by asking people who have already been interviewed to identify others who might know about a particular topic.	Guided by a specific purpose, sample is selected on an ad hoc basis. For example, if an assessor meets someone who can provide useful information, or if persons of concern are already present in a location to receive information or a service.
	This technique is particularly useful in locating 'hidden' populations, e.g. IDPs in urban settings.	This technique is useful when little time is available for assessment. It can be used in parallel with aid delivery. Although it is efficient and cost-effective, it can be subject to considerable bias.

	Minimum Criteria	Actions
1	**Socioeconomic Assessment and Context Analysis**	UNHCR operations conduct a protection and solutions context analysis to gain a full picture of the economic, legal, civil-political, socio-cultural and environmental context, and related challenges, opportunities and protection and solutions risks and benefits for persons of concern. Operations conduct a socio-economic assessment, informed by the context analysis, analysing the socio-economic situation and livelihoods strategies of persons of concern. These provide the basis for strategic planning and designing programmes that respond to the livelihoods needs and capacities of specific target group(s) in support of protection and solutions.
2	**Livelihoods Market Analysis**	UNHCR operations carry out a livelihoods market analysis to identify which markets (or sectors) have potential to provide real economic and self-reliance opportunities for persons of concern. Livelihoods market analysis includes two steps: 1) Operations select high-potential sectors using existing market analyses and/or through a rapid sector selection; and 2) Operations conduct a value chain analysis of the selected sectors, examining different functions and actors in the value chain as well as protection and other risks, challenges and support needed for persons of concern to participate in and benefit from the value chain. Information from these analyses helps operations develop strategic plans and design programmes supporting protection and solutions, with strong market orientation.
3	**Sustainable Partnerships**	UNHCR operations conduct an institutional mapping to identify existing programmes and services in the country which could include persons of concern, as well as potential partners, including from the development community and private sector. If facilitating access to financial services for persons of concern, UNHCR operations partner with sustainable financial service providers. Operations utilize monitoring data on progress towards relevant livelihoods results to assess the performance of partners implementing livelihoods activities with UNHCR funds, retaining partners only if they are able to achieve and demonstrate sustainable impact in terms of employment and/or income and in support of protection and solutions.
4	**Context-Specific Livelihoods Strategic Plan**	UNHCR operations develop a 3-to-5 year context-specific livelihoods strategic plan, based on socio-economic assessment, context analysis, livelihoods market analysis and institutional mapping, to provide strategic direction for livelihoods programming that clearly aligns with and is designed to contribute to the achievement of the overall protection and solutions objectives of the operation.
5	**Expertise**	UNHCR operations with a livelihoods programme budget equal to or above USD 1,000,000 (OL partners + direct) have a dedicated livelihoods expert.
6	**Targeting**	UNHCR operations develop clear, explicit eligibility criteria, based on the needs and capacities of persons of concern and the programme objectives, remaining consistent with the operation's overall strategy. This allows operations to properly target livelihoods interventions, ensuring the support is appropriate, effective and efficient.
7	**Monitoring**	UNHCR Operations collect baseline data on targeted persons of concern before implementation of any programme to capture the socio-economic situation of participants and enjoyment of related rights at the start of interventions. Operations collect and analyse endline data after interventions to measure changes in the socio-economic situation and enjoyment of related rights, capturing impact achieved since the baseline. Operations monitor wage and/or self-employment of targeted persons of concern. Where programming aims at self-employment, operations report on the livelihoods Global Strategic Priority (GSP) indicator, "% of persons of concern (18-59 yrs) with own business / self-employed for more than 12 months."

Indicator	Formula	Interpretation	Example
Female share of a total	# (females) *100 # (females + males)	• 50% = gender equality • <50% = females are under-represented • >50% = males are under-represented	Share of women in leadership positions in project management committees
Ratio between females and males	# (females) # (males)	• 1 = gender equality • The closer to 0, the more females are under-represented • >1 = males are under-represented	The ratio between girls and boys school enrolment/ retention rates (# girls per boy)
Female characteristic as percentage of male characteristic	mean female characteristic *100 mean male characteristic	• 100% = gender equality • The closer to 0, the more females are disadvantaged • Values > 100% = males are disadvantaged	Average value of women's average wage as a percentage of average value of men's average wage
Gender gap (% difference between # females vs. # males in the same population)	(# males - # females) *100 # males	• 0% = gender equality • The closer to 100%, the more females are disadvantaged • Values <0% = males are disadvantaged	Differences in access to (or control over) productive assets between women and men

Source: WFP, Comprehensive Food Security Vulnerability Assessment Guidelines, 2009.

The table below consolidates terms, descriptions, and relationships of common assessment concepts within UNHCR.

Term	Description	Relationships
Participatory Approach	The direct involvement of persons of concern in implementing protection strategies they have helped to develop.	Participatory approaches are standard practice at UNHCR while needs assessments (including the PA Tool) are used within this approach (see below).
Needs Assessment	A data-collection exercise usually conducted at a single point in time to gain an understanding of the protection issues, availability of resources, sources of problems, and their impact on the affected population ('snapshot'). Needs assessments are done to identify protection needs, risks, and solutions, and to inform programme interventions and response activities that are complementary with positive community coping mechanisms.	Needs assessments are one of eight categories (or types) of protection information management (PIM) systems used to support evidence-based decision-making in UNHCR. The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessments is one of the needs assessment tools used within the agency. While there is more than one tool, the PA is historically the agency's flagship multi-sector, qualitative tool in which participation has a strategic value.
The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessments	The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessments (PA) builds partnerships with persons of concern to UNHCR, with women and men of all ages and backgrounds by promoting meaningful participation through structured dialogue. Participatory assessments include holding separate discussions with women, girls, boys, and men, including adolescents, in order to gather accurate information on the specific protection risks they face and the underlying causes, to understand their capacities, and to hear their proposed solutions. UNHCR's Participatory Assessment Tool aims to assist offices in strengthening partnerships with persons of concern, in gathering baseline data for age, gender, and diversity analysis, and in developing the most appropriate protection strategies through: • Analysing protection risks and incidents together with persons of concern; • Involving persons of concern in the design, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of services throughout the programme cycle; and • Being accountable to the populations that UNHCR serves.	Like other needs assessment tools and approaches, the Participatory Assessment is one component of a situation analysis, which in turn is one component of the overall participatory approach to doing business. Participatory Assessments are a continuous part of UNHCR's community-based approach and accountability commitments to persons of concern. One-off participatory assessments of varying scope and size are often organized and analysed together to ensure that persons of concern are regularly consulted throughout the Operations Management Cycle, specifically when further inquiry is needed based on ongoing analysis. Note: PAs are highly qualitative assessments and should be utilized when the assessment data needed calls for qualitative data (narrative results). If more quantitative results are needed, another approach should be explored. PAs are not only a key step in the first phase of the Operations Management Cycle (the assessment phase), but they also support and inform all other phases in the cycle: planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

Term	Description	Relationships
Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD)	The application of an AGD approach seeks to ensure that all persons of concern enjoy their rights on an equal footing and are able to participate fully in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their family members and communities. This reflects a recognition that differences between people, whether actual or perceived, can be defining characteristics that play a central role in determining an individual's opportunities, capacities, needs, and vulnerability. A central element of an AGD approach is working in partnership with persons of concern.	AGD is an approach that promotes equality, non-discrimination, and respect for human rights. It informs all stages of the Operations Management Cycle, including participatory assessments. Well-executed participatory assessments involve women and men (including older persons), boys and girls, and people of diverse backgrounds. They do so in order to focus on ways in which age and gender – combined with other diversity factors – contribute to the marginalization of certain groups and disadvantage them. The AGD approach is therefore reflected and adhered to in needs assessments, but the two are not the same.
Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)	Accountability to affected populations is a commitment to the intentional and systematic inclusion of the expressed priorities, needs, capacities, and views of persons of concern throughout the Operations Management Cycle, and to being answerable for organizational decisions and staff actions. It refers to the responsible use of power by humanitarian actors, combined with effective and quality programming that recognizes the community of concern's dignity, capacity, and ability for self-determination. UNHCR situates accountability to affected populations within the broader protection work of the organization, and is mindful of the need to continually review and improve accountability systems.	Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) is a principle and practice that adheres to Participatory Approaches. UNHCR's commitment to AAP includes the 2004 UNHCR Code of Conduct, the 2007 Accountability Framework for Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming, the 2008 UNHCR Manual on a Community-Based Approach, and the 2006 tool for Participatory Assessments in Operations. Accountability is also reflected in the AGD policy adopted in 2011 to ensure that all segments of populations of concern have equitable and non-discriminatory access to protection and assistance programmes, and have a say in decisions that affect their lives. UNHCR'S AAP Framework highlights four essential components that are intrinsically linked and build on each other: • Participation and inclusion; • Communication and transparency; • Feedback, complaints, and response; and • Adaptation and learning.
Global Needs Assessment	The Global Needs Assessment (GNA) aggregates Comprehensive Needs Assessments (CNAs) and provides a comprehensive picture of the humanitarian needs of persons of concern to UNHCR. The GNA feeds into the determination of UNHCR's global budget needs.	The Global Needs Assessment aggregates country-level data to make strategic decisions on global budgets at headquarters.
Comprehensive Needs Assessments (CNA)	UNHCR introduced the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) as a means to comprehensively express the needs of persons of concern worldwide. UNHCR's planning is based on a CNA conducted annually in each UNHCR operation across the globe in which all information on the risks, protection gaps, and capacities of persons of concern gained from assessments carried out throughout the year, as well as from regular monitoring and reporting exercises, is consolidated to identify the total needs for the following year.	The CNA is a process to aggregate in-country data (both primary and secondary data) to make strategic decisions on field priorities and budgets. The CNA should be updated with the aim to assist in defining the process to estimate or provide informed opinions about deficiencies, their underlying mechanisms, and their humanitarian consequences. It entails a systematic set of procedures and the use of specific lines of inquiry undertaken for the purposes of setting current and forecasted priority needs and informing appropriate decisions about programme design, system improvement, and allocation of resources.

Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
ACAPS	Assessment Capacities Project
AGD	Age, Gender, and Diversity
AF	Analytical Framework
COD	Common Operational Dataset
COP	Country Operations Plan
CRIs	Core Relief Items
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FOD	Fundamental Operational Dataset
GIS	Geographic Information System
GNA	Global Needs Assessment
HAUS	Health Access and Utilization Survey
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HEA	Household Economy Approach
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally displaced person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
JAM	Joint Assessment Mission
JIPS	Joint IDP Profiling Service
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practice
KI	Key Informant
MFT	Multi-Functional Team
MIRA	Multi-Sector/Cluster Initial Rapid Needs Assessment
NARE	Needs Assessment in Refugee Emergencies
NFIs	Non-food items
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ProGres	Profile Global Registration System (UNHCR's Refugee Registration Platform)
PWSN	Person with specific needs
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCM	Refugee Coordination Model
RPA	Rapid Protection Assessment
SADD	Sex, Age, and Diversity Disaggregation
SDR	Secondary Data Review
SENS	Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Glossary

Affected Population	Affected population includes all those whose lives have been impacted as a direct result of a crisis.
Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD)	Under the Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) approach, UNHCR seeks to ensure that all persons of concern enjoy their rights on an equal footing and are able to participate fully in decisions that affect their lives.
Aggregated Data	Data from different individuals or sub-groups that is consolidated into a single group is referred to as 'aggregated'. With aggregated data, you can no longer see the records of individual people because they have been summed into a single record.
Analysis Plan	A tool operationalizing the analytical framework providing sources, methods, and data collection techniques for each information element sought, as well as how the information will be analysed.
Analytical Framework	A method for organizing and guiding the collection and analysis of secondary and primary data by establishing basic analytical questions.
Assessment Registry	Also known as an "assessment inventory" or "survey of surveys." A list of planned, ongoing or finalized assessment activities in a humanitarian context. A continuously updated assessment registry improves the coordination of humanitarian actors, avoiding duplication of efforts and increasing the efficiency of resource allocation.
Baseline	An interpretive tool comprised of statistics against which you can compare indicators from your selected population that are from a different period of time, a different place, or a different population.
Baseline Data	Baseline data usually indicates the status at the beginning of the study of a situation and provides a comparison point against which you can measure differences.
Bias	The difference between the measurement result and its 'true value'. This can be caused by a deliberate attempt to represent the information from a particular angle or by mistakes in the methodology used.
Census	While sample surveys result in information obtained from only a subset of a population, a census results in every person being counted and registered individually (MSF 1997, MSF 2006). A census covers the entire population of a country; in addition to individual data, a set of relevant socio-economic information is gathered for every household (IDMC/OCHA 2008). (ACAPS, 2012).
Cluster	Clusters are groups of humanitarian organizations (UN and non-UN) working in the main sectors of humanitarian action, e.g. shelter and health. They are created when clear humanitarian needs exist within a sector, when there are numerous actors within sectors, and when national authorities need coordination support.
Cluster Approach	See also 'Cluster'. The aim of the cluster approach is to strengthen partnerships and ensure more predictability and accountability in international responses to humanitarian emergencies by clarifying the division of labour among organizations, and better defining their roles and responsibilities within the key sectors of the response.
Cluster Lead	Cluster leads are responsible for ensuring that response capacity is in place and that assessment, planning, and response activities are carried out in collaboration with partners and in accordance with agreed standards and guidelines. Cluster leads also act as the 'provider of last resort'. UNHCR is cluster lead of the Protection cluster, and co-lead for the Shelter cluster and Camp Coordination and Management cluster.
Common Operational Dataset (COD)	Critical datasets that are used to support the work of humanitarian actors across multiple sectors. CODs contain important geographic data like administrative boundaries, populated places (settlements), transportation networks, and information about water bodies and terrain. Population statistics and humanitarian profile data are also included. CODs are considered a de facto standard for the humanitarian community and should represent the best available datasets for each topic.
Community-based Protection	Community-based protection (CBP) is a continuous process that engages communities as analysts, evaluators, and implementers in their own protection. CBP means that crisis-affected communities and humanitarian actors jointly identify the community's most serious protection risks including their causes and effects, existing coping capacities, and own priorities for intervention. It also means that they explore with persons of concern options and solutions for preventing and responding to identified risks.

Complex Emergency	A humanitarian crisis that requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency (IASC, December 1994). Complex emergencies are typically characterized by: extensive violence and loss of life; massive displacements of people; widespread damage to societies and economies; need for large-scale, multi-faceted humanitarian assistance; hindrance or prevention of humanitarian assistance by political and military constraints; and significant security risks for humanitarian relief workers in some areas. (OCHA, FTS Definition of Humanitarian Aid for Statistical Purposes)
Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA)	Comprehensive Needs Assessments (CNAs) are conducted annually in each UNHCR operation. In CNAs, all information on risks, protection gaps, and capacities of persons of concern gained from assessments carried out throughout the year, as well as from regular monitoring and reporting exercises, is consolidated to identify the total needs for the following year.
Convenience Sampling	Convenience sampling is one type of non-probability sampling. Households and individuals are selected for the sample based on their accessibility and proximity to the researcher.
Coordinated Needs Assessment	Assessments that are planned and carried out in partnership with other humanitarian actors, with the results shared for the benefit of the broader humanitarian community to identify the needs of the affected population of a humanitarian crisis. Coordinated assessment is a broad term that includes several different types of assessments, ranging from inter- and intra-cluster/sector joint assessments to single agency assessment that are harmonized. (IASC, *Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises*)
Core Relief Items (CRIs)	The food and non-food items most widely used in UNHCR and humanitarian operations around the world to satisfy specific needs of refugees, internally displaced persons, and other persons of concern to the organization (see also the UNHCR Supply Catalogue on the intranet).
Data	The pieces of information collected from primary or secondary sources. (WFP, Glossary of Food Security Terminology)
Demographic Indicators	Statistical variables that describe changes for a population of concern. Examples include birth rate, death rate, child mortality, etc.
Direct Observation	Physical inspection of an affected area using sight, touch, hearing and smell. Although often geographically limited, observation helps to understand the physical, economic, cultural, and social aspects of a crisis. Through direct observation, members of an assessment team are able to validate secondary data and verify statements collected from key informants. Direct observation should be a structured process of looking for the presence or lack of specific behaviours, services, minority groups, etc.
Disaggregated	Disaggregated means that aggregated data is separated along specific sets of variables or criteria (e.g. age, sex or economic status).
Focus/ Focus Client	Data-entry software used by operations to prepare narrative, indicator, and budgetary submissions, including exporting data to UNHCR's main financial software, MSRP. Focus Client is often referred simply as Focus.
Focus Group Discussion	A method to collect qualitative data/information from a group of persons pre-selected according to specific criteria. (UNHCR, Master Glossary of Terms) A small, homogeneous group formed to discuss open-ended questions about a certain topic. Focus group respondents are encouraged to talk among themselves so that a discussion unfolds among them rather than between the evaluator/researchers and the respondents.
Fundamental Operational Dataset (FOD)	Datasets that are relevant to a humanitarian operation whose content is not covered by CODs. FODs often contain data that is specific to a particular sector, such as schools, wells, or security incidents.
Geographic Information System (GIS)	An organized collection of tools (computer hardware and software), information, and professional/ technical knowledge used to input, store, retrieve, utilize, analyse, and output geographically referenced data. GIS uses geography as its organizing principle. GIS is particularly useful in situations with a spatial dimension, such as knowing the locations of refugees, where water taps are, and how far refugees need to walk to school.
Global Needs Assessment (GNA)	The GNA aggregates Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) and provides a comprehensive picture of the humanitarian needs of persons of concern to UNHCR. The GNA feeds into the determination of UNHCR's global budget needs.

Habitation Count	During habitation counts, enumerators are deployed to make a population count. This process attempts to count each habitation in an area at a particular time, whether it is occupied or not. Head counts are taken in a sample of habitations, and the average household size is multiplied by the number of habitations to obtain a population estimate. (CIEDRS 2003)
Harmonized Needs Assessment	A needs assessment in which data collection processing and analysis is undertaken separately from other needs assessments, however the data is sufficiently comparable (because of the use of Common Operational Datasets, key indicators, and geographical and temporal synchronisation) to be compiled into a single database and to serve as the subject of a shared analysis. (IASC, *Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises*)
Household	A group of persons who share accommodation. (UNHCR, *Master Glossary of Terms*)
Humanitarian Coordinator (HC)	Responsible for assessing whether or not an international response to a crisis is warranted and for ensuring the humanitarian response efforts, if needed, are well organized. The HC is accountable to the Emergency Relief Coordinator. HCs lead the HCT in deciding the most appropriate coordination solutions for their country of operation, taking into account the local situation. Agreement must be reached on which clusters to activate and which organizations are to lead them.
Humanitarian Country Team (HCT)	A strategic and operational decision-making and oversight forum established and led by the HC. Composition includes representatives from the UN, IOM, international NGOs, and the Red Cross/ Red Crescent Movement. Agencies that are also designated cluster leads should represent the clusters as well as their respective organizations. The HCT is responsible for agreeing on common strategic priorities related to humanitarian action.
Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO)	The HNO describes the overall humanitarian dimensions of a crisis situation, including the key humanitarian issues considered the most pressing by common agreement. It is informed by data from different sources that is compiled and jointly analyzed. The HNO is based on existing information (secondary data) derived from multi-cluster and sectoral assessments, monitoring data, survey results, and contextual judgement by humanitarian actors and local sources such as government, community bodies, and representatives from affected communities.
Humanitarian Principles	All activities are guided by the four humanitarian principles: humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. These principles provide the foundations for humanitarian action. They are central to establishing and maintaining access to affected people, whether in a natural disaster or a complex emergency, such as armed conflict. Promoting and ensuring compliance with the principles are essential elements of effective humanitarian coordination.
Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC)	In a country with an ongoing humanitarian operation, the HPC is used as common reference by the Humanitarian Coordinator together with the Humanitarian Country Team to prepare for, manage, and deliver humanitarian response to the people affected by disasters and conflict in the country. The five elements of the HPC are as follows: needs assessment and analysis, strategic response planning, resource mobilization, implementation and monitoring, and operational review and evaluation.
Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)	The Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is required for any humanitarian crisis requiring the support of more than one agency. The HRP is prepared by the Humanitarian Coordinator together with the Humanitarian Country Team, and is based on a joint assessment set out in the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO). This assessment informs the strategic objectives in the HRP.
In-depth Assessment	In-depth assessments are carried out when more-detailed information and quantification of needs are required to inform operation design. Findings may not be available until a month or two after the emergency. In-depth assessments may be multi-cluster/sector or may focus on a specific cluster/sector, and they may be undertaken at the household or individual level.
Information Management (IM)	Information management is the capture, handling, storage, analysis, and dissemination of data pertaining specifically to operations and populations of concern, including demographic and statistical information. It involves information on needs and conditions, geo-referenced information, and information related to protection and sector-specific concerns on delivery and impact in health, nutrition, water/sanitation, core relief items, shelter, and education.
Initial Assessment	Initial assessments are undertaken at the early stage of a crisis or after a new event has occurred. They aim to identify the need for and scale of a response, as well as the focus of any further assessments. Findings are made available within a few days, building on available secondary data and a few field visits.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)	The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance. It is a unique forum involving key UN agencies and non-UN humanitarian partners. The IASC was established in June 1992, following a UN General Assembly resolution.
Internally displaced person (IDP)	An IDP is a person who has been forced or obliged to flee, or to leave his or her home or place of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence or violations of human rights, and who has not crossed an internationally recognized State border.
IRIN	News agency focusing on humanitarian reporting.
Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS)	Inter-agency service based in Geneva that provides profiling field support either on site or remotely through technical assistance, training, and the provision of tools and guidance.
Joint Needs Assessment	A JNA is an assessment in which data collection, processing, and analysis form one single process among agencies within and between clusters/sectors, leading to a single report, also referred to as a common needs assessment. (IASC, *Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises*)
Key Informant Interview	In-depth interviews of selected people within the affected population or host communities, often with direct knowledge or experience of the crisis. In any key informant interview, there is likely to be bias in the responses, whether intentional or unintentional. To the extent possible, the interviewer must try to eliminate this bias.
Monitoring	Monitoring is the continuous review of programme implementation to confirm whether planned activities are on track to deliver the expected outputs and contribute to the expected impact. Monitoring also helps identify negative and unforeseen effects of programme implementation on persons of concern.
Multi-Functional Team (MFT)	The MFT is at the heart of UNHCR's participatory approach to operations management, bringing together people with different skills, experiences, and perspectives to make sure that the protection environment is analysed and a response is designed and delivered in a more complete and AGD-sensitive way.
Multi-Sector/Cluster Initial Rapid Needs Assessment	The MIRA is an agreed inter-agency assessment framework that aims to provide fundamental information on the needs of affected populations and to support the identification of strategic humanitarian priorities.
Needs Assessment in Refugee Emergencies (NARE)	The NARE is an easily customized initial multi-sectoral needs assessment designed for refugee emergencies. It analyses pre-crisis and post-crisis secondary data and suggests what information should be gathered during primary data collection. It occurs at one point in time and is not a continuous monitoring system.
Non-food Items (NFIs)	See: Core Relief Items.
Non-probability Sampling	Type of sampling in which a non-random selection is made from the assessed parts of the population. Examples of non-probability sampling methods are convenience sampling, purposive sampling, and snowball sampling.
Operations Management Cycle	The process through which an UNHCR office organizes its programming. While conceptually the cycle operates in a sequential fashion, in reality certain phases can take place simultaneously (e.g. assessment and implementation) or repeatedly (e.g. monitoring throughout the year, reporting at midyear and year-end) depending on the situation and operational realities.
Operations Plan	Represents UNHCR's plan of action or 'business plan' for the coming year.
P-Code (Geocode)	Short for 'place code.' P-codes provide unique reference codes to geographic locations and are important identifiers in data management systems.
Persons with disabilities	Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
Primary Data	For the purpose of humanitarian needs assessment discussions, primary data is collected within the context of a particular time-bound assessment.

Probability Sampling	Also known as random sampling, this is a method to draw a representative sample by means of selecting households or individuals randomly from the whole population of households or individuals surveyed.
Profiling	The collaborative process of identifying internally displaced groups or individuals through data collection, including counting and analysis, in order to take action to advocate on their behalf, to protect and assist them and, eventually, to help bring about a solution to their displacement. (NRC, IDMC and OCHA, *Guidance on Profiling Internally Displaced Persons*, 2008.)
proGres	proGres is UNHCR's enterprise registration tool, which implements the registration standards defined in the Registration Handbook. It supports the registration of asylum seekers and refugees as well as other operational processes, such as repatriation and resettlement.
Proxy Indicator	An indicator that acts as a substitute for one that is hard to measure directly. It is an indirect measurement.
Purposive Sampling	A non-probabilistic sampling method in which target subjects with different characteristics are selected to fit a particular purpose. Results based on purposive sampling cannot be generalized to cover an entire population.
Qualitative Data	Qualitative data, as opposed to quantitative data, is non-numerical. It captures feelings, personal experience, attitudes, and intentions. Examples of sources of qualitative data include focus groups, observations, interviews, narrative texts, and reports. Qualitative data in UNHCR operations can be useful in understanding cultural context, learning sensitive information that may be unavailable through other forms of surveillance, and gaining insight into a situation in the past where no quantitative data was collected.
Quantitative Data	Quantitative data is produced by observing and measuring things that can be counted or calculated. Compared to qualitative datasets, quantitative datasets are easier to store and analyse in a database. However, qualitative data provides contextual information that should be used to interpret quantitative data.
Random Sampling	See: Probability sampling
Rapid Needs Assessment	Undertaken following an initial assessment in a sudden crisis or as a component of a re-assessment. It is based on a combination of secondary and primary data. (WFP, *Glossary of Food Security Terminology*)
Registration	An essential tool for protection, data collection, managing operations, and achieving durable solutions. Data obtained during registration can be an important information source for needs assessment.
Registration Data	Information collected from an individual or a group in the process of registering, updating, or registration verification. Registration data normally comprises several data elements, which can be split into static and variable data elements.
Remote Monitoring	Monitoring conducted without being in the location of interest, e.g. because it is considered a 'no-go' area. Remote monitoring may be facilitated by aerial imagery (e.g. from satellites or drones), by obtaining information through mobile telecommunication (cell phones), or by monitoring social media.
Resident Coordinator (RC)	Funded and managed by UNDP, RCs are the designated representatives of the Secretary-General for development operations. Working closely with national governments, RCs and UN country teams advocate for the interests and mandates of the UN system while drawing on the support and guidance of the entire UN family.
Sample	The subset of a population that is studied in a survey.
Sampling	The process of selecting a sample.
Secondary Data	For the purpose of humanitarian needs assessment discussions, secondary data is collected outside the context of a particular time-bound assessment.
Secondary Data Review (SDR, or "Desk Review")	Review of information already available. A desk review is always an advisable first step to understand the information needs in a particular context.
Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SBGV)	Acts that inflict physical, mental, or sexual harm or suffering; threats of such acts; and coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty that target individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of their gender.

Snowball Sampling	Households and individuals are selected according to recommendations from other informants, with each informant recommending the next set of informants. (WFP, *Glossary of Food Security Terminology*)
Sphere Standards	The Sphere Standards are one of the most widely known and internationally recognized sets of common principles and universal minimum standards in life-saving areas of humanitarian response.
Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)	Written instructions describing how specific activities are to be conducted. SOPs ensure that interventions for persons of concern meet standards and are implemented in a fair and equitable manner. It is also essential that SOPs are regularly updated to reflect changes in operational processes and in the division of labour within the office.
Strata	Sub-groups of an assessed population that share common characteristics.
Stratification	Dividing the assessed population into several sub-groups that share common characteristics, in a way that each individual only belongs to one sub-group (with no overlap among them). For example, different age brackets can be used to divide the population into sub-groups of children, teenagers, adults, and elderly.
Survey	A detailed study that gathers information through observations and questionnaires from a representative sample of the total population studied.
Targeting	A process by which persons are selected for appropriate assistance and protection-related interventions using a protection-sensitive and needs-based approach.
Transect Walk	Uses a compass and a map (usually hand-drawn) to trace a straight line through an affected area. The assessment team follows the line from end to end and notes observations (e.g. settlement patterns, quality of shelters, landmarks, facilities). A transect sample of the population can be taken. (CIEDRS 2003) (ACAPS 2012)
Transformative Agenda (TA)	The Transformative Agenda of the IASC was adopted in December 2011. It is a set of concrete actions aimed at transforming the way in which the humanitarian community responds to emergencies. It focuses on improving the timeliness and effectiveness of the collective response through stronger leadership, more-effective coordination structures, and improved accountability for performance and to affected people.
Triangulation	The process of validating one set of results through comparison with similar results from a different source.
TWINE	Sector-specific monitoring systems currently covering health, nutrition water, and sanitation in selected UNHCR operations.
Uncoordinated Needs Assessments	Needs assessment exercises that use different standards for data collection, analysis, and data sharing.
Verification Exercise	A data collection effort to verify existing sets of data and to update them, if necessary.

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NEEDS ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK

First Edition
Produced and printed by UNHCR
June 2017

http://needsassessment.unhcr.org

FRONT COVER:
SYRIA. A COLLECTIVE SHELTER IN LATAKIA FOR PEOPLE DISPLACED BY THE CONFLICT.
Internally displaced persons queue for food at a collective shelter in the Sports City complex in Latakia, Syria. It is home to over 3000 displaced persons who fled the conflict, mostly from Aleppo and Idlib province.
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UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

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This document along with further information on global displacement is available on UNHCR's website:
http://www.unhcr.org