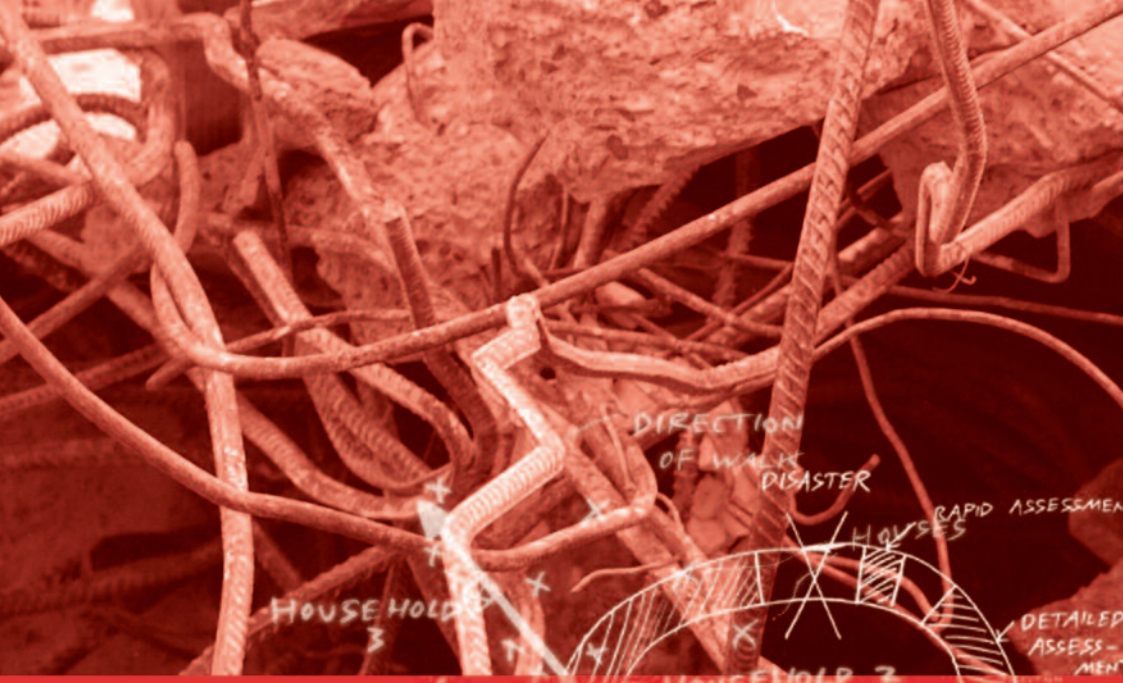

Guidelines for assessment in emergencies

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ICRC

International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

2008

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
DREF	disaster relief emergency fund
DRU	disaster response unit
EOC	emergency operation centre
ERU	emergency response unit
ERW	explosive remnants of war
FACT	field assessment and coordination team
GFD	general food distribution
GPS	global positioning system
HF	high frequency
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	internally displaced person
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
International Federation	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
NGO	non-governmental organization
RDRT	regional disaster response team
SMS	small message service
SWOC	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
URD	Urgence Réhabilitation Développement
VCA	vulnerability and capacity assessment
VHF	very high frequency
WFP	World Food Programme

About these guidelines

Eddy Posthuma De Boer/International Federation

1. About these guidelines

1.1 Why is an assessment methodology necessary?

Assessment is a vital element of the programme planning process. It provides the information on which decisions will be made. Whilst good information does not guarantee a good programme, poor information almost certainly guarantees a bad one.

The use of a standard methodology means that the information obtained through the assessment can be compared with data collected during previous assessments.

1.2 Who will use these guidelines?

The guidelines are designed for use by anyone undertaking an assessment, including:

- all members of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement;
- generalists, as no specific technical knowledge is required to use them.

Generalists

Generalists are people without a particular field of specialization, unlike, for example, a water and sanitation engineer or a nutritionist.

Generalists play a crucial role in assessments, especially when a broad analysis is needed of the main problems and their impact. A team of generalists using these guidelines can split up and cover a large area in a short space of time. The guidelines will help them to gather information about the overall situation and key sectors (health, water, sanitation, etc.). The use of generalists increases flexibility and reduces time and expense. But it does not exclude the need for specialists. The results of a general assessment will provide the basis for a focused deployment of specialists.

1.3 How to use these guidelines

These guidelines provide advice on how to carry out an assessment. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) is involved in a wide variety of situations. Each assessment is different, reflecting this diversity. These guidelines do *not* explain every activity for every assessment. They do, however, provide a framework within which an assessment can be organized. By working through the guidelines, you should be able to cover all the main issues required for a successful assessment.

Some parts of the guidelines will be more useful than others, depending on the type of situation that you face. The suggestions presented here can be adapted to suit your particular situation. *Curiosity* and *rigour* are the key attributes of an assessment. These guidelines are intended to help you apply them in the context of an emergency.

Chapters 1 to 3 cover general concepts.

Chapters 4 to 8 (Part 1) focus on the assessment process.
The order of the chapters is roughly equivalent to the order in which tasks are carried out in a real assessment – planning, fieldwork, analysis and reporting. However, assessment is not a linear process and most of these tasks overlap.

Part 1 has been slightly adapted from the International Federation's *Guidelines for emergency assessment* (1st edition, October 2005).

Chapters 9 and 10 (Part 2) focus on the content of an assessment. Part 2 provides guidance on the elements to look at in order to gain a better understanding of an emergency situation. This is known as "the content" of an assessment.

The ICRC has developed summary guidelines on the household economy approach. The International Federation provides checklists on what to look at in two specific time periods: 24 hours after a disaster and 48–72 hours after a disaster.

We suggest that you read the entire document through first in order to understand the structure and to familiarize yourself with the contents. When using the guidelines to manage a real assessment, you will find yourself moving backwards and forwards through the document.

The assessment concept

Kerry-Jane Lowery

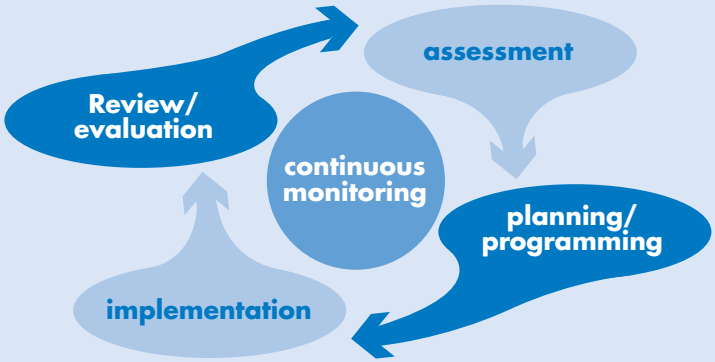
2. The assessment concept

2.1 Project cycle

The project cycle consists of a number of phases (see Figure 1), which can broadly be described as follows:

- assessment: gaining an understanding of a situation in order to identify the problems, their sources and consequences;
- planning/programming: organization of a project/programme's activities;
- implementation: actions taken to assist the population;
- monitoring: continuous observation of the project/programme's progress;
- review: a comprehensive examination of progress of a project/programme carried out by a relevant member of operational management;
- evaluation: an independent, objective and thorough examination of a policy, programme, support service or emergency operation, including its design, implementation and impact.

Figure 1 **The project cycle**



2.2 The aim of an assessment

The aim of an assessment is to understand a situation in order to identify the problem(s), the source of the problem(s) and the consequences of the problem(s).

The purpose of an assessment is *not* to identify an intervention but to find out whether an intervention is needed or not.

2.3 Types of assessment

There are three types of assessment: rapid assessment, detailed assessment and continual assessment (see Table 1).

2.3.1 Rapid assessment

Undertaken after a major upheaval, such as an earthquake or sudden population displacement, a rapid assessment gathers information on the needs and existing capacities of the affected population, possible areas of intervention and resource requirements. A rapid assessment normally takes one week or less. It should be followed by a detailed assessment.

2.3.2 Detailed assessment

A detailed assessment may be carried out for any of the following reasons:

- a rapid assessment has been done, and more detailed information is required to enable recommendations to be made;
- the Movement is considering starting operations in a new area and requires detailed information to inform the decision;
- the Movement suspects that the situation is changing gradually (e.g. a slowly developing drought) and needs more information.

Detailed assessments generally take about one month but could take more or less time depending on the size of the area, the complexity of the issues and the resources available.

2.3.3 Continual assessment

Continual assessment takes place when the Movement has carried out a detailed assessment and is now operational in an area. It involves regularly updating information on the situation and seeking relevant feedback from the beneficiaries in order to facilitate decision-making on long-term activities.

Effective continual assessment helps to spot when changes occur and, when they do, to initiate a rapid or detailed assessment. Information gathered during continual assessment is used as *secondary* information during rapid and detailed assessments.

Indicators

An indicator is a quantitative or qualitative variable that is converted to provide a simple and reliable basis for assessing achievement, change or performance. For example, comparing the price of staple foods with daily labour rates might give a good idea of poverty trends in an urban area.

The indicator approach reduces the need for lengthy interviews and hence reduces the danger of assessment fatigue. Indicators are, however, difficult to define and using them incorrectly can be dangerously misleading.

2.3.4 Differences between the three types of assessment

All assessments are based on the same principle (the identification of vulnerabilities and capacities) and follow the same process (observation, interviews and collection of information). However, the way in which information is collected depends upon the type of assessment.

- **Number of locations visited**. Fewer sites are visited in a rapid assessment than in a detailed assessment, so it is important to choose the sites carefully.
- **Number of people interviewed**. Fewer people are interviewed in a rapid assessment than in a detailed assessment; within this constraint, it is crucial to consult as broad a variety of people as possible.
- **Assumptions**. In a rapid assessment, time in the field is short. In some cases, therefore, you will have to rely on assumptions. Assumptions are based on previous experience of similar emergencies and knowledge of the affected area. In a detailed or continual assessment, there is more time in the field and less need to rely on assumptions.
- **Secondary information**. In a rapid assessment, there is less time to collect first-hand information, so more emphasis is placed on secondary information.

Understanding the context

Even in a rapid assessment, it is important to understand the context, as it may be critical to the welfare of the affected population. For example, the basic needs of displaced people may seem obvious. Under certain conditions, however, the distribution of essential items (e.g. shelter materials) may endanger the beneficiaries, as the items may be attractive to looters.

Table 1

Features	Rapid assessment	Detailed assessment	Continual assessment
Time	About one week.	About one month.	Information collected regularly throughout the operational period.

Features	Rapid assessment	Detailed assessment	Continual assessment
Access to information sources	**Limited** There is not time to visit all locations and talk to full range of informants **or** security and/or safety limits movement and access to people.	Possible to visit enough locations and interview a full range of informants.	Full access.
Typical information sources	Secondary information, local services (health, water, etc.), NGOs, government, affected population/ household visits (small sample).	Secondary information, full range of informants.	Secondary information, selected informants, indicators, Red Cross Red Crescent staff and volunteers.
Importance of assumptions	**High** Insufficient time to gather full information. Must make assumptions based on previous experience.	**Low** Sufficient time to interview full range of informants.	**Medium** Assumptions based on indicators and informants, but these can be verified from other sources.
Type of assessment team	Experienced generalist, with previous exposure to this type of emergency.	Generalist, possibly supported by specialists.	Red Cross Red Crescent staff (generalist) carrying out normal activities.

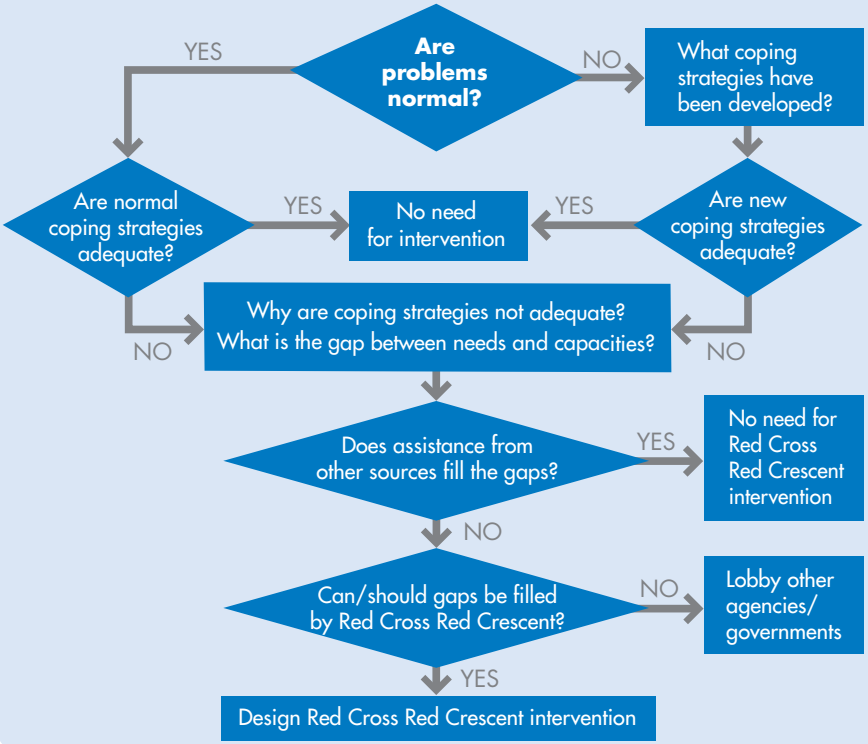
Vulnerability and capacity framework

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

3. Vulnerability and capacity framework

All assessments are based on the International Federation's vulnerability and capacity framework. This consists of an analysis of the problems and people's capacity to address them. A Red Cross Red Crescent intervention may be appropriate if people's capacities are not sufficient to cope with the problems. The process is illustrated by the flowchart in Figure 2.

Figure 2 **Vulnerability and capacity flowchart**



Vulnerability

Vulnerability is defined as the conditions determined by physical, social, economic, environmental and political factors or processes which increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of shocks/hazards.[1]

All people are vulnerable to something (e.g. a farmer is vulnerable to the failure of rains). Do not make assumptions about vulnerability based on experiences elsewhere.

Capacity

Capacity is defined as: "The resources of individuals, households, communities, institutions and nations to resist the impact of a hazard."[2]

Coping mechanism

Coping mechanisms are the adapted/unusual strategies that people choose as a way of living through difficult times.

Coping mechanisms can be classified as:

- Strategies that are *not* damaging to livelihoods (e.g. short-term dietary changes, collection of wild fruits, sale of non-essential assets, migration of individuals for work, extra work hours, use of skills, solidarity, etc.). These are easily reversible.
- Strategies that *may* be damaging to livelihoods (e.g. sale of property, sale of productive assets, large-scale deforestation, child work, prostitution, banditry). These tend to be harder to reverse.

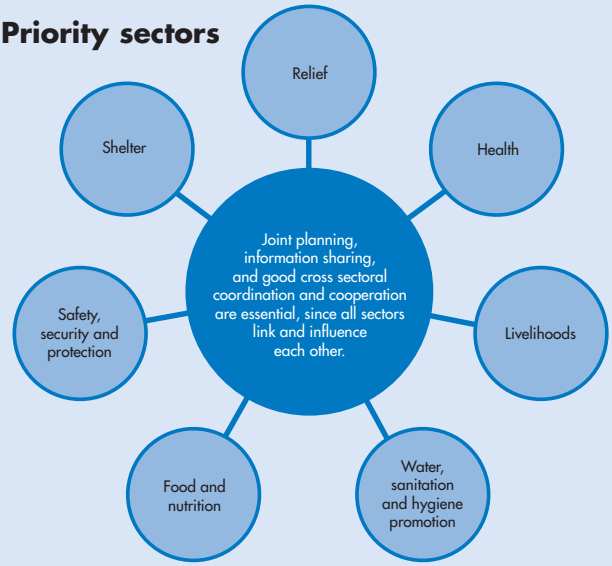
[1] Adapted from Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR), *Living with Risk: A global review of disaster reduction initiatives*, 2004, Annex 1.
[2] International Federation, *VCA training guide,* Geneva, 2008, p. 25.

3.1 Assessment of priority sectors

When carrying out an assessment, you should prioritize the following sectors:

- relief
- health
- livelihoods
- water, sanitation and hygiene promotion
- food and nutrition
- safety, security and protection
- shelter

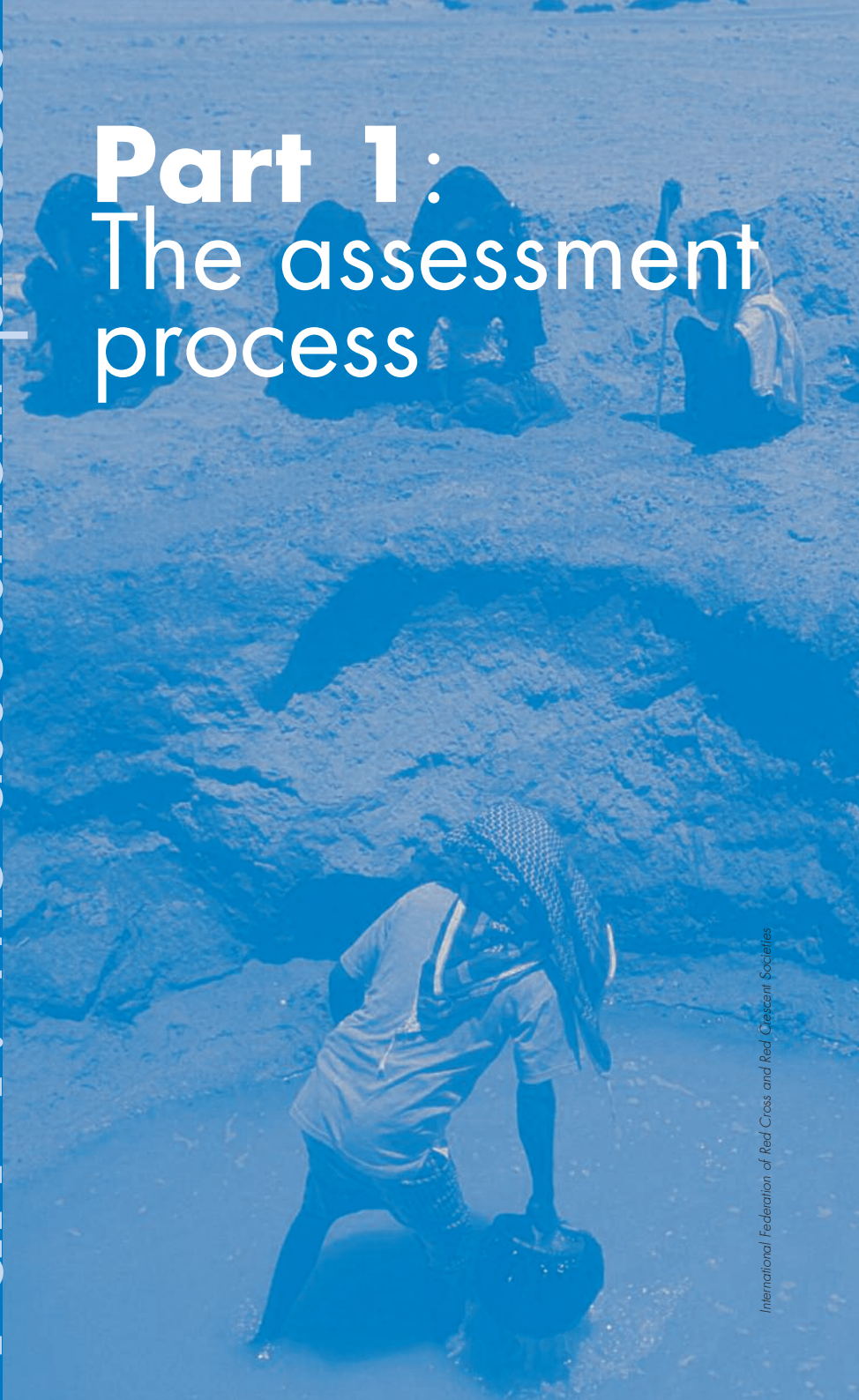
Figure 3 Priority sectors



The outcomes of the assessment will improve the quality of interventions.

It is also important to identify the National Society's capacities and what its role, based on its mandate, is in times of shock/hazard. When collecting this information, the National Society's response contingency plan (if available) should be taken into consideration.

Part 1: The assessment process



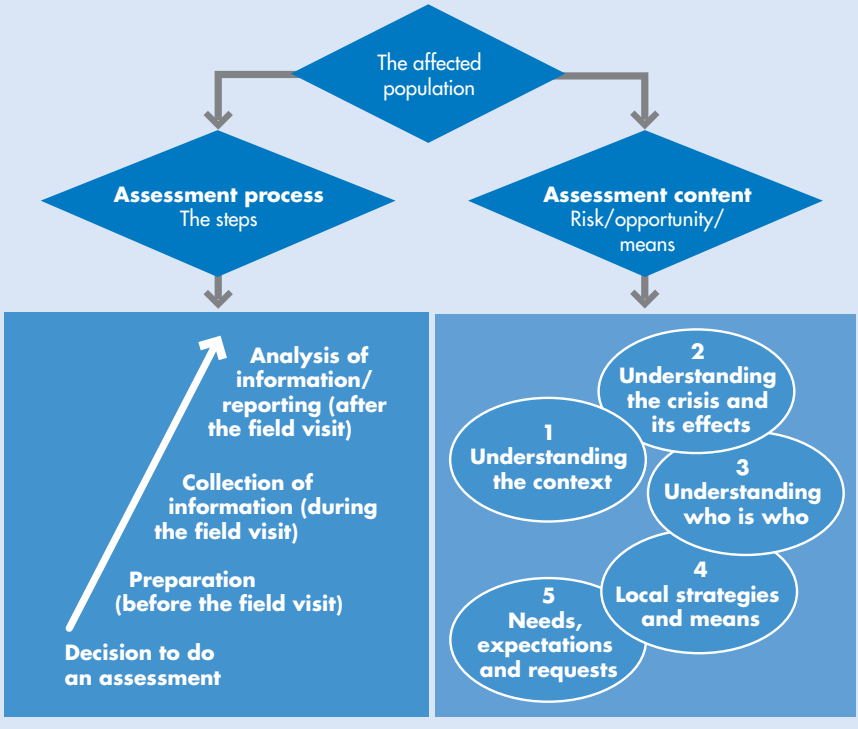
4. Introduction

Assessment should be looked at from two perspectives: the process and the content (see Figure 4). Chapters 4–8 focus on the process.

The assessment process is the way in which an assessment is conducted. It sets out the various steps or methods that should be applied in order to help the quality of the work and the outcome.

There are three major phases of an assessment process:
- before the field visit;
- during the field visit;
- after the field visit.

Figure 4 **Process and content of an assessment[3]**

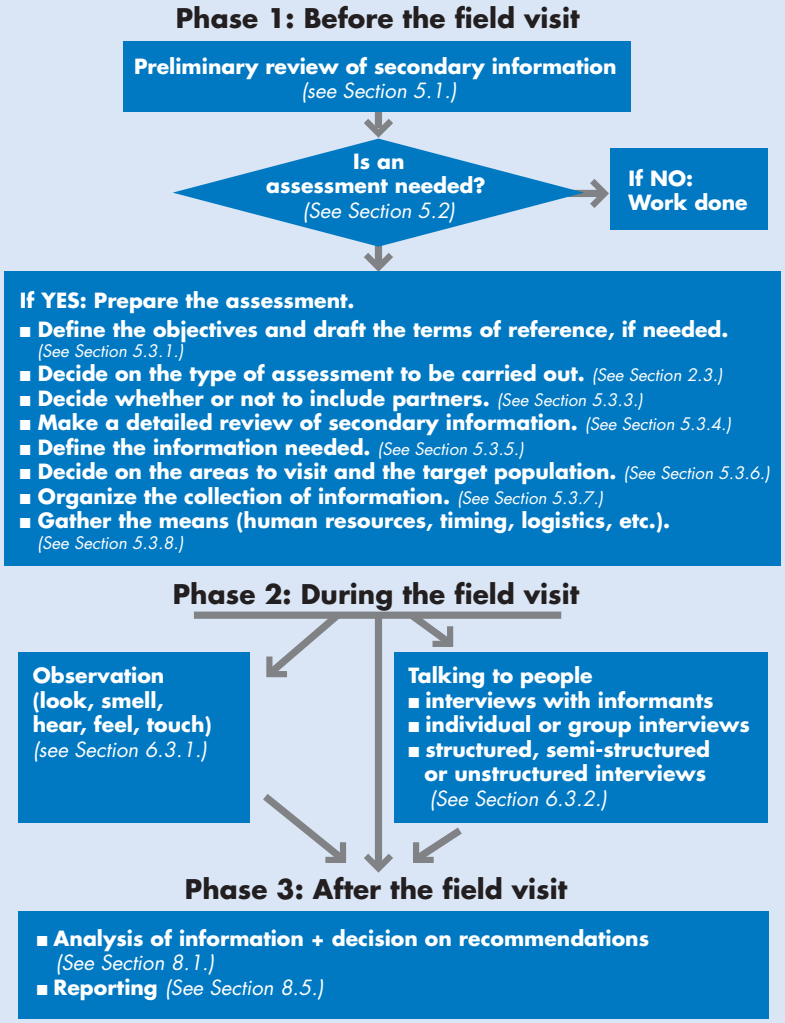


[3] Source groupe Urgence Réhabilitation Développement (URD)

Although the assessment *per se* is done in the field, the work carried out before and after the field visit is of equal importance and will have a clear impact on the overall quality of the assessment.

Figure 5 illustrates the assessment process. Bear in mind that certain activities do not necessarily progress in a linear fashion. "Analysis" and "secondary information review", for example, should be done continuously throughout the process.

Figure 5 **The assessment process**



Before the field visit

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

5. Before the field visit

This section helps you to make the initial decisions:
- Is an assessment needed?
- What are the objectives of the assessment?
- What type of assessment is appropriate?

5.1 Preliminary review of secondary information

Secondary information

Secondary information is information that has already been collected, either by the Movement or by other organizations. Secondary information can relate to an earlier situation or to the current one. It can be in written form (reports, etc.) or oral (discussion).

Conduct a quick review of secondary information to help you decide whether an assessment is necessary. Check media reports; contact representatives of other humanitarian agencies and the government; talk to people who have recently come from the affected area.

Define:
- the nature of the signals that make you think an assessment may be needed;
- the urgency of the situation;
- the gaps in your knowledge.

5.2 Is an assessment needed?

You may decide to carry out an assessment for a number of reasons:

- A shock, or sudden change, has occurred (e.g. volcanic eruption, military offensive).
- You think that an emergency may occur in the future (e.g. growing political instability, drought).
- You need more information about an existing emergency.
- You need more information about a specific situation.
- You need information to complete your guidelines.
- Other reasons.

You may, however, decide that an assessment is not appropriate because:

- Access to the affected area is impossible.
- Existing information (other agency reports, etc.) is adequate.
- Many agencies are already doing assessments in the affected area, and you are confident that they will cover the needs adequately and in a timely manner (avoiding raising false expectations or creating assessment fatigue).
- A decision not to intervene has been taken.

Assessment fatigue

Assessment fatigue may occur when an area has been assessed many times by different agencies. The people are frustrated because they are expected to answer the same questions repeatedly, often with no obvious result. They lose patience with "humanitarian assessments". Under such circumstances, an assessment is unlikely to produce useful information.

5.3 Prepare the assessment

Once the decision to do an assessment has been made, there are certain issues that must be addressed before undertaking the field visit.

5.3.1 Define the objectives and terms of reference

Consider the reasons for carrying out an assessment. Define the objectives of the assessment, the questions that need to be answered and the activities that this will entail. Determine, as specifically as possible, the output required from the assessment team. Be realistic. Gauge the minimum amount of information needed to achieve the required output. Think about who will use the information and what their needs might be. The people who will use the information include some, or all, of the following:

- staff in the delegation, in the Geneva secretariat and in ICRC headquarter;
- fund-raisers;
- communication and media departments;
- lobbyists.

If needed, draw up terms of reference explaining precisely what the assessment team is expected to achieve.

5.3.2 Decide on the type of assessment

Determine the type of assessment: rapid, detailed or continual (see Section 2.3).

5.3.3 Decide whether or not to include partners

Decide whether the assessment will be done on your own, in coordination with Red Cross and Red Crescent partners or with external partners (joint assessment).

Internal partners

Use all available and appropriate Movement resources. If more than one Movement partner takes part in the assessment, consider the capacities of each and define its role. Roles should be based on:

- the specific mandates, operational specialities and potential roles of each partner;
- National Society law and practice in the affected country;

- the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief;
- human and operational resources;
- constraints on specific partners.

Note

If the National Society of the country concerned does not participate in the assessment, it is recommended that its staff members be briefed both before and after the assessment.

External partners (joint assessment)

It may be possible to carry out joint assessments with other organizations (governmental and/or non-governmental). Joint assessments can have the following benefits:

- Cooperation and coordination in the planning and implementation of projects are improved.
- Resources are used efficiently (shared staff and logistics, etc., during the assessment).
- The likelihood of assessment fatigue is reduced.

There are many ways of dividing responsibilities during joint assessments. Two possible scenarios are:

- Tasks are divided according to each agency's areas of specialization. For example, an International Federation Field Assessment and Coordination Team (FACT) assesses water supplies and access to health care, while the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) assesses schooling needs for displaced children.
- Agencies with similar interests carry out the same tasks but in different geographical areas. For example, the ICRC and the World Food Programme (WFP) each carry out a food security assessment in a different, pre-defined geographical area.

Joint assessments are feasible if:

- Participating agencies share common values and operating principles.

- Participating agencies use the same, or compatible, assessment methodologies.

Under certain circumstances, joint assessments are not appropriate. For example:

- Assessments are mandate specific (e.g. ICRC protection work).
- Organizational values and operating principles are not compatible.
- Collaboration could jeopardize the principles of neutrality and impartiality.
- Organizations and/or individuals are perceived as being biased.

Wherever possible when carrying out a joint assessment, establish formal agreements specifying the roles and responsibilities of each organization. If a joint assessment is not feasible, it is still essential to know which other agencies are undertaking assessments. Repeated assessment of the same region can be inefficient and counter-productive and can adversely affect accuracy and security. Reviewing other agencies' assessment reports is an essential component of a secondary information review.

5.3.4 Carry out a detailed review of secondary information

One of the assessment team's first tasks is to undertake a detailed review of secondary information. Look for:

- background information about the area in question;
- information directly related to the issues specified in the terms of reference;
- information about the causes and nature of recent changes.

Secondary information helps to form an initial idea of what the problems might be and is useful when planning the first field interviews. For example, if an agricultural area is affected by drought, you will need to discuss, among other things, crop yields with farmers.

Examples of secondary information include:

- Field assessment reports from the Red Cross Red Crescent or other agencies.
- Media reports.
- Social, economic, political and historical studies by governments, universities and research groups.
- Technical surveys from government ministries, universities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies.
- Red Cross Red Crescent vulnerability and capacity assessments (VCA).
- Government census data.
- Meteorological data.
- Maps.
- Eyewitness accounts (people who have recently come from the affected area).
- Verbal communication with experts on the affected area or the relevant technical issues.

There are many other possible sources. In each situation, consider what information will be useful and where this might be found.

Criteria for secondary information

Decide how accurate and useful the secondary information is likely to be by asking yourself the following questions:

- How was the information collected? What was the methodology used?
- How reliable is the source of information?
- In what way might the information be biased? (Consider the purpose for which it was collected.)
- How recent is the information?
- Is the information based on facts or opinions?

Always include details of secondary information sources in the assessment report.

Key message

Be prepared to have initial ideas contradicted, and look out for the unexpected.

5.3.5 Define the information needed

The information needed will depend on what reliable information is already available and the objectives of the assessment. For example, don't ask about the employment rate if the Ministry of labour already produces reliable statistics on this aspect and don't question people in urban areas about the crop growing cycle in rural areas.

5.3.6 Decide on the areas to visit and the target population

Figure 6 Regions, areas, locations

It is rarely possible to visit the entire region of interest. Representative areas must therefore be selected. Statistical methods for doing this are not normally feasible because of time and access constraints. Use the review of secondary information to identify areas and populations that fit the criteria below.

- **Priority 1: Area and/or population directly affected**
  For example, an earthquake zone, an area of armed conflict, or a population forcibly displaced from their homes.
- **Priority 2: Area and/or population indirectly affected**
  For example, areas economically affected by conflict in a neighbouring region.
- **Priority 3: Area and/or population unaffected or minimally affected**
  The emergency has no significant impact on lives and livelihoods (very useful for comparison with affected areas).

In a rapid assessment, there is normally only time to visit locations and populations in the "Priority 1" category. In detailed and continual assessments, a selection of areas from all three categories should be visited. Sometimes it is impossible to gain access to Priority 1 areas. If this is the case, try to talk to people who have come from these areas.

Note

Explain the reasons for your choice of areas in the assessment report. The list of areas to visit may change after the first field visit.

If, after starting the fieldwork, it becomes clear that you have overlooked certain important areas, these can still be added. However, if you have a set timeframe, this means that other areas will have to be removed from the list.

Sampling methods

Ideally, you should decide which sampling methods you are going to use before going to the field. If need be, you can also decide this when you are on the spot.

If the areas chosen are large, containing many villages or municipalities ("locations"), it may be necessary to undertake a second level of selection. There are two options:

- **Random sampling**. Do this when locations and households' livelihoods are similar. List all the locations and randomly pick the number that you intend to visit.
- **Purposive sampling**. If the locations and/or households' livelihoods differ significantly, choose a variety of locations and/or households reflecting different characteristics (ethnicity, economics, town/village, etc.).

It is generally better to visit more locations and interview less people in each than vice versa.

Caution

In many emergency situations, "humanitarian hubs" develop around key towns. Organizations congregate in these locations and coverage of needs is generally good in the immediate vicinity. However, gaps in coverage often exist between or outside the hubs. When deciding upon the areas and locations to visit, try to include some of these "gap" areas.

Example of random sampling for households

Step 1. Decide how many households to interview.

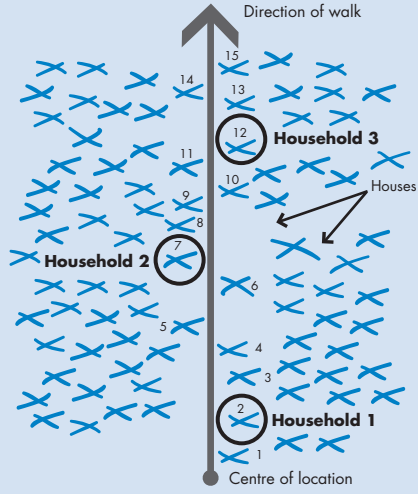
The number of households interviewed will depend on the time available and the size of the community. Carry out a minimum of three interviews in each location, but do more if you have time. Allow one hour for each interview, with 30 minutes between each of them.

Step 2. Identify the households to be interviewed.

Stand in the centre of the location. Spin an object on the ground or throw a pen in the air and see where it lands. Walk in the direction indicated by the end of the bottle or pen until you reach the edge of the location, counting the number of houses that you pass. Divide this number by the number of households that you wish to interview; this gives the interval between houses as follows (see Figure 6):

- You want to interview three households.
- You walk in the direction indicated and count 15 houses as you walk.
- The interval between sample houses is therefore 15/3 = 5 (15 houses counted, 3 sample houses).
- Choose a number at random between one and five; this is the first household that you will interview.
- After this house, walk in the same direction and count another five houses; this is the second household to be interviewed.
- Carry out the same procedure to choose the third and last household.

Figure 7
Random sampling diagram



Alternative approaches to random sampling

- If houses are arranged in streets, pick a street and follow the same procedure described in Step 2.
- If accurate population data are available, households can be picked at random from the list of names.

Example of purposive sampling for households

Use purposive sampling if households differ significantly. For example, you may want to interview some households because they are socially marginalized or because they have distinct livelihoods. There are two ways to take the sample:

- Groups are concentrated in particular sections of the village or town. Carry out random sampling, as described above, for each section.
- Households are scattered across the village or town. If you can identify the households in which you are interested from a village or town census, pick the appropriate number at random from this census. If census data are not available, ask local people to help you identify the required number of households from each group.

5.3.7 Organize the collection of information

Initial checklist

The assessment team compiles a checklist of the information required and the likely sources before going to the field. This is an important part of the assessment process, as it provides a focus for team discussion. Every assessment requires a specific checklist. Standard checklists are not appropriate because:

- Every situation is different.
- The *process* of compiling the checklist is crucial.

Initial checklists should include the following:
- topics to be addressed;
- methods to be used to collect the information;
- people to talk to and how the interviews will be organized;
- locations to be visited;
- the responsibilities of each team member.

More detail on the collection of information is provided in Section 6.3.

Key message

Checklists should not be treated as questionnaires. They are intended as a memory aid. During interviews, refer occasionally to your checklist to ensure that you cover everything. Remain open to new information that emerges from the interviews. The more experienced you become, the less you will need the checklist.

5.3.8 Gather the means (human resources, timing, logistics, etc.)

Structure of the team

Appoint a team leader (if not already done) and decide upon the structure of the team. This could take any of the following forms:
- **generalist(s)**: one or more people with experience but no specific technical background;
- **specialist(s)**: one or more people chosen because of their specific experience and skills;
- **multi-disciplinary**: a group of specialists and possibly generalists representing all aspects of Red Cross Red Crescent work (engineers, health workers, etc.).

The advantages and disadvantages of each approach are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2 Advantages and disadvantages of the three types of team structure

Team structure	Advantage	Disadvantage
Generalist(s)	Team can be assembled quickly (because it is not necessary to look for people with specific skills). Hence useful for rapid assessments.	Lack of specific skills means that follow-up assessments are needed when technical problems are identified.
	Can provide a good overall analysis of the situation.	Technical problems may be overlooked.
	Staff from any discipline can do the assessment; hence appropriate for continual assessment.	In extreme situations, assessment teams may need to provide assistance (e.g., during conflict).
Specialist(s)	Can quickly identify problems in their area of expertise.	May focus too much on own specialist issues and miss the wider context.
Multi-disciplinary	Technical problems can be investigated in detail, thus avoiding need for immediate follow-up.	Difficult to assemble the full range of professions; therefore assessments are not frequent.
	Diverse experiences provide broad basis for analysis.	May not need all technical specialities.
		Difficult to coordinate team (incompatible methodologies, complicated logistics, etc.).
		Large teams can present a security threat and can be intimidating to small communities.

Choose the appropriate team structure based on the circumstances surrounding each assessment, especially the type of information you have decided to collect. Other factors to consider include:

- **Language**: If possible, include people who speak the language(s) of the area to be assessed. Include one interpreter for each team member who does not speak the local language(s).
- **Gender balance**: Try to have a mix of men and women in the team.
- **Local representation**: It is sometimes useful to include representatives of the population living in the affected area.
- **Bias**: All people are biased; their perceptions are based on cultural background, experience, professional training and many other factors. Try to ensure a balance in the perspectives of individual team members.

Whenever possible, it is best to use staff (National Society or delegation) already based in the country or area to be assessed. This means that assessments can be done frequently, travel and other costs are reduced, and the links between assessment, project planning and implementation are enhanced.

Key message

Make sure that national staff members are comfortable with the idea of going to the selected sites. For example, they may be from an ethnic group that is not well perceived in a particular area.

Organizing the field trip

Before going to the field, the team leader should make sure that all team members are fully briefed on:

- the terms of reference or what is expected from the assessment ;
- the plan of action, including the methodology to be used and the timeframe;

- working relationships: the responsibilities of each team member, reporting lines, etc;
- logistical arrangements for the assessment (transport, accommodation, etc.);
- security, i.e. the existing situation and procedures to be followed during the assessment;
- other issues relevant to the particular assessment.

Note

It is vital that all people involved in the assessment (including interpreters) participate in the organization of the field trip.

Before going to the field, make sure that:

- The time available (i.e. effective time spent in the field) is adequate to achieve the objectives of the assessment.
- The period (time of the year) is appropriate for such an assessment.
- All logistic and administrative issues have been taken care of.

During the field visit

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6. During the field visit

6.1 Fieldwork: principles

The following principles should be applied during fieldwork:

- **Consult the people affected**. Encourage the people affected by the emergency to explain how they view the situation. Even in rapid onset emergencies it is possible to seek the opinions of local people.
- **Consider the particular needs of different groups and individuals** (men, women, the elderly, children, etc.). People will be affected differently by the emergency and their needs will differ accordingly.
- **Consider the reliability of information**. Information may be "fact" (definitely true), "opinion" (depend upon the perspective of the person giving the information) or "rumour" (based on unverified information).
- **Consider bias**. Everybody is biased. Analysis of information should take into account the potential bias of the informants and of those carrying out the assessment.
- **Seek out marginalized groups and ensure that their interests are taken into account**. Consider who has power and whose voice is not heard. Marginalization may be based on gender, ethnicity, social status and/or many other characteristics.
- **Look for changes and trends that affect society**. Try to understand what is causing these changes.
- **Look out for the unexpected**. Be prepared to have your assumptions challenged. Be alert and try to find out what issues are most important to the people you are talking to.
- **Consider the impact of certain issues on society as a whole**. For example, HIV/AIDS is not just a health issue. In many parts of the world, it has a devastating social and economic impact.

- **Throughout the assessment, think about how the information will be used**. Ask yourself what sort of programme might be appropriate to deal with the issues being raised. Consider the potential positive and negative effects of a programme.
- **Time field visits carefully**. Try to avoid times when people are particularly busy or when there is a holiday or celebration. Some people are absent during particular seasons, and activities and vulnerabilities may vary from season to season.

6.2 Fieldwork: activities

Every day in the field is different and must be planned accordingly. There are a number of basic steps, however, that the assessment team should follow.

Note

The steps described below do not need to be undertaken in the order in which they are listed; some may be carried out simultaneously if the assessment team is large enough. It is often necessary to repeat some steps if contradictions and inconsistencies are found.

Step 1 Plan each day carefully.

Prepare for the day's work (usually the evening before).

- Decide which location(s) will be visited.
- Draw up checklists of the main information required.
- Agree on the ways the information will be collected (these can be amended during the day).
- Define responsibilities (who will do what).

Step 2 Talk to the local authorities.

Talk to the local authorities (and other interested people) when you arrive in a location. Explain who you are, the reason for your visit and how you are going to go about collecting the information. It is sometimes useful to have a pre-prepared sheet consist-

ing of a description of your organization and contact details. This increases transparency and accountability.

Step 3 Use observation techniques.

Take an informal walk around the area accompanied by local people. This will give you an initial impression of the community. Throughout the fieldwork, continue to observe everything around you (see Section 6.3.1).

Step 4 Interview people.

Identify groups or individuals to talk to in order to gather the required information (see Section 6.3.2).

Step 5 Organize team meetings.

All members of the assessment team should meet at given moments during a day in the field, ideally at midday and at the end of the day. This gives them an opportunity to share ideas and agree on amendments to the schedule.

Step 6 Organize a community meeting at the end.

Whenever possible, hold a meeting with representatives of the community when the field assessment has been completed. Explain what you have done, but do not make commitments or promises regarding assistance.

6.3 How to collect information

Information is collected through observation and interviews.

6.3.1 Observation

Observation is often underrated as an information source. An enormous amount of information can be gathered very quickly through observation. Crucially, it gives a "feel" for the situation – sounds, smells and visual impressions. This is, after all, the point of going to the field. Guiding principles of observation include:

- Start the assessment with a walk around the location. During the assessment take the opportunity to observe as much as you can. If you are discussing water, ask to see the water source. If people describe a foodstuff that you do not know, ask to see (and taste) it. You can learn a lot by spending time in communal meeting places (cafés, tea shops, etc.). Look around and talk to people.
- Observation is useful for cross-checking information. For example, you are told that all the livestock has been lost in the recent drought. Soon afterwards you see a large herd of goats. This does not necessarily contradict what you have been told – many explanations are possible – but it does provide the basis for the next line of questioning: "Who do these animals belong to?", "How did they survive the drought?", and so on.
- Walking through the area with local people facilitates discussion. The atmosphere is informal, and questions are prompted by the things you see. This is more natural than referring to a prepared checklist. Very importantly, walking and observing are excellent ways to come upon unexpected information.
- Observation is the most straightforward approach to assessing infrastructure and logistics. Driving along a road is a sure way of finding out if it is passable (but be careful in conflict areas: both landmines and explosive remnants of war may represent security problems).
- Ultimately, one piece of advice covers all situations: Be curious!

Key message

Observation is not just about seeing, but also about hearing, smelling, feeling and touching.

6.3.2 Interviews

Interviews are the backbone of a field assessment. Each piece of information sought should be looked at from three perspectives:

- Who is (are) the best person(s) to talk to regarding this particular information?
- Is it better to talk to the person(s) individually or in a group?
- Which type and technique of interview should be used?

Choose whom to talk to.

Key informants are people who have specific knowledge about certain aspects of the community. They are useful sources of information in rapid onset emergencies where time is limited. Typical examples include farmers, health workers, government officials, members of women's groups, children and young people, local NGO staff, and traders. But anyone who has an interesting perspective and is able to express it well can be included. Look out for such people throughout the assessment.

Key informant interviews are based on the specific knowledge and experience of the informant. If the interviewee is a doctor, the discussion will probably focus on health issues. However, keep in mind that:

- The fact that the informant is a doctor (or an engineer or any other profession) does not mean that he or she is knowledgeable about all aspects of a topic; a hospital surgeon may know little about primary health care issues in rural areas.
- Professional people, because of their social position and contacts with other professional people, may have a good knowledge of the political and social environment and may be able to provide information that goes beyond their field of work.

You will need to use your judgement in order to decide what sort of information the informant can usefully provide. Start the interview with general topics, and then move on to specific areas of interest.

Decide whether to conduct group or individual interviews.

Interviews may be conducted with groups or individuals.

Group interviews allow interaction between people. By encouraging an atmosphere of constructive debate, you can cross-check information and probe issues. For example, one person may say that the most serious problems relate to the quality of health services, but others may not agree. A debate, even if it is inconclusive, can give you an impression of the diversity of problems that affect the community.

Group interviews are useful for two purposes:

- To gather information about a wide range of topics. Assemble a group of people with different backgrounds who, together, can provide a overview of the situation.
- To gain a deeper understanding of particular issues (cash-crops harvest results, functioning of health services for livestock, etc.). In this case, a group of people with similar backgrounds is useful. This type of interview is called a "focus group interview".

When carrying out group interviews, be aware that:

- Some people are naturally more outgoing than others.
- Some people are confident within a group because of their status in local society. Conversely, people from marginalized groups may be reluctant to speak openly, particularly if their views are controversial.

Encourage a relaxed, informal atmosphere; seek the opinions of those who are reluctant to speak. "Manage" the more confident people so that they do not dominate the discussion.

Caution

If the local society is very hierarchical, there will be limits to the diversity that you can achieve in a group. If there is no chance that people will speak freely, or if their free participation may cause problems for them or for others, it is better to convene separate groups in which status is more balanced (or interview people separately).

Individual interviews are useful for three purposes:

- To obtain technical information from people representing specific professions, such as health workers or employees of the water board.
- To gain specific knowledge about a household's livelihoods.
- To delve into sensitive issues that are not appropriate for group discussion (e.g. sexual abuse among refugee populations).
- To save time, when there is not enough time to organize a group interview.

Caution

Before conducting an individual interview, make sure that it will not put the person in a difficult situation. Whenever feasible, clearly explain to the rest of the community why you want to talk specifically to that person and on what topic.

Select the type of interview to conduct.

An interview can be semi-structured (checklist), structured (questionnaire) and unstructured (no points prepared in advance). Semi-structured interviews are advised as they are the best way to get good information. With the help of the checklist, you will be able to cover all the points that you want to raise, while remaining flexible to allow the discussion to take a different direction if need be.

Semi-structured interview

A semi-structured interview is one in which the interviewer selects a few key topics to be addressed and remains open to other possibly relevant topics arising in the course of the discussion.

Structured interviews

Structured interviews or questionnaires are not included in these guidelines because they are not very useful in general assessments. Situations are often highly uncertain, and a flexible process of assessment is required. Questionnaires are based on a fixed set of questions, defined before fieldwork begins. Moreover:

- Using questionnaires to examine complex and/or sensitive information can produce misleading information.
- The design of a good questionnaire demands technical expertise, experience and a good understanding of the context.

Questionnaires can supplement information obtained through semi-structured interviews and observation (particularly in technical fields such as water and sanitation). If a questionnaire is to be used, it should be designed by a specialist in the relevant sector who has a good understanding of the specific emergency context.

Choose an appropriate interview technique.

Most interviews (both group and individual) are based on the vulnerability and capacity framework. Your aim is to understand the problems that people face and the ways in which they cope with them. Some problems are easy to identify, for example houses destroyed by floods; for others, such as the abuse of civilians during war, you may need to dig deeper. Even seemingly straightforward issues may turn out to be more complicated when examined closely.

When conducting a semi-structured interview, try to make the interviewee(s) feel relaxed. Refer to your checklist and look out for new information. Raise topics in different ways in order to cross-check the information you receive.

Start with a general conversation about life in the area, things you see around you, etc. Do not lead straight into direct questions about problems because:

- This sets the wrong tone. You want to hear about positive as well as negative aspects of life in the community.
- Concentrating on problems gives the impression that your objective is to find out "what the Red Cross Red Crescent can give". This encourages people to present "shopping lists" of material requirements.

People will inevitably bring up problems without being prompted. When this happens, encourage them to explain their concerns and how they deal with them. It is normal for people to be reluctant or to find it difficult to explain every aspect of their coping strategies because:

- Some components are so integrated into their lifestyles that they do not see them as specific "strategies". For example, sharing resources between households.
- Individual components of their coping strategies may contribute very little and people do not think it important to discuss them. When all the "small" components are added together, however, they often make a significant contribution to livelihoods.
- Activities may be illegal, for example small-scale trading without a licence or scrap metal collection involving unexploded ordnance, and people are reluctant to divulge details to strangers. Nor are they likely to go into detail about activities such as prostitution, theft and sale of illicit items.
- People may deliberately withhold information in order to make their situation seem worse than it actually is in the hope that this will encourage the Red Cross Red Crescent to help them.

The above constraints emphasize the need for a subtle approach. Direct questions are not appropriate. Instead, probe the issues carefully by asking questions in different ways and looking for complementarities and contradictions in the information you receive. Be sensitive; if people are uncomfortable with your questions, do not insist.

Assessment techniques

Kerryjane Lowery

7. Assessment techniques

7.1 Participatory tools

Following is a range of tools or techniques that can be applied during interviews to encourage interaction with informants and to clarify the information that they provide.

Note

These tools are designed for use with informants who are not accustomed to analytical surveys. Use your discretion when applying these tools; they are not appropriate in every situation. It is up to the assessment team to decide which tools to use in a given situation.

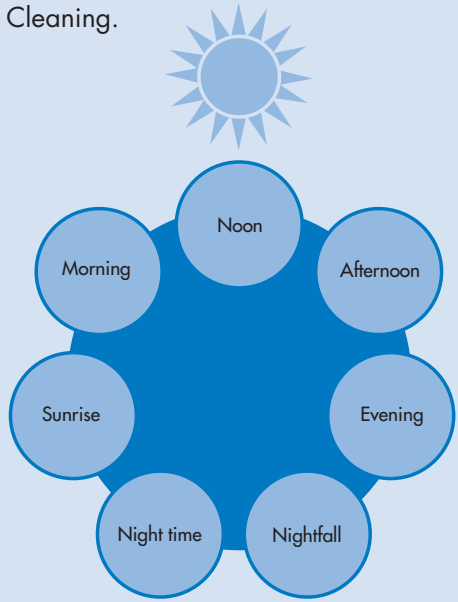
7.1.1 Daily calendar

Daily calendars provide an insight into how different members of a community spend their time and if and how this is changing. They can also help in the choice and the design of programmes. For example, if people spend five hours a day collecting water, it is worth considering initiating a project to improve the water supply. Comparing current daily schedules with previous ones helps identify trends. For example, if people are walking two hours to find firewood, whereas previously they could find it within half an hour, you can conclude that there may be a deforestation problem or the forest may be contaminated by mines or explosive remnants of war. In that case, a project to promote fuel-efficient stoves combined with other relevant activities might be useful.

- It is often interesting to carry out the exercise separately with different members of a household (e.g. children, men and women).
- Ask participants to describe a typical day, giving as much detail as possible about their activities and the amount of time each takes (see Figure 8).

Figure 8 **Example of a woman's daily schedule (Afghanistan)**

Sunrise	Wake up. Fetch water. Care for the children.
Morning	Clean the house. Work in the kitchen garden. Go to the market to buy food.
Noon	Prepare lunch. Men eat lunch. Women eat lunch.
Afternoon	Clean dishes/kitchen.
Evening	Put wood or fuel in bukhari (heater) to warm water. Bathe children. Prepare dinner.
Nightfall	Put youngest children to bed.
Night time	Dinner for men. Dinner for women. Cleaning.



7.1.2 Historical timeline

The aim of a historical timeline is to understand the recent history of the area and its inhabitants by identifying the main events that have affected people's lives. The exercise can be done during a general group interview; the more diverse the group, the broader the perspective on local history.

Figure 9 Historical timeline

Source ALNAP

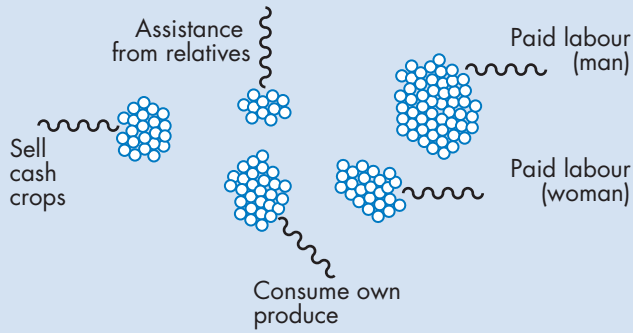
- Draw a line and pinpoint two or three important events that have occurred within living memory. Place them in chronological order on the line.
- Explain that the objective is to fill in the gaps on this line with other past events.
- Ask people to recall significant events of the past (both positive and negative) and when they happened in relation to the other events already identified. Encourage them to explain the causes of the events and their impact.

7.1.3 Proportional piling

Proportional piling is a useful exercise for estimating quantities and proportions, especially when working with people who are not used to quantifying data. For example, you may need to know the proportion of the community that is in each of five livelihood groups or the income that a family receives from several different sources.

- Collect 100 dried beans (or pebbles or anything similar; they just all have to be more or less the same size).
- Explain the objective of the exercise. For example, for income sources, ask household members to describe each source in turn. List these and then ask them to divide up the beans according to the relative importance of each source (see Figure 10).

Figure 10 Proportional piling



In addition to quantifying data, proportional piling is a good facilitation tool. In a group, giving people an activity of this kind can break down barriers. It can also act as a focus for discussion. There is usually a lot of debate about the relative size of the piles, and this encourages participation and enhances accuracy.

7.1.4 Seasonal calendar[4]

Seasonal calendars are a useful tool in rural environments where production varies throughout the year. They can reflect all significant events occurring during the year. Seasonal calendars should ideally be established for a period of 18 months, in order to reflect seasonal cross-over periods. Calendar design is usually based on a normal year, thus facilitating the subsequent deduction of deviances observed during assessment. Whatever the ultimate approach, calendars must indicate the reference year. It is best for seasonal calendars to be made to begin at a significant period of the year (rather than, for example, on 1st January). Seasonal calendars should include a row for each of the following:

- the months;
- the local name for seasons and their meaning in terms of activities and production;
- climatic features (mainly rainfall patterns);

[4] Adapted from Alain Mourey, *Manuel de nutrition pour l'intervention humanitaire*, ICRC, Geneva, 2004, p. 433.

- stockbreeding practices:
  - seasonal feeding variations;
  - livestock migration patterns according to species;
  - breeding seasons according to species;
  - birth periods according to species;
- animal production:
  - milk production;
  - meat production;
  - wool and hide production;
  - animal sales;
- plant or agricultural production (detailed according to the type of crop and its use, e.g. sale, fodder, home consumption, etc.):
  - land preparation and ploughing;
  - sowing and harvest period according to crop;
  - weeding;
  - parasite and pest control;
  - surplus sale/complementary food purchase;
  - seasonal market price variations;
- the calendar of secondary production activities according to: type, location, operator and contribution to the household economy;
- required work intensity and attribution:
  - women;
  - men;
  - children;
- problems:
  - hunger season;
  - cross-over periods;
  - water shortage.

Figure 11 provides an example of a simplified seasonal calendar restricted to 12 months for ease of illustration.

Figure 11 Example of a seasonal calendar[5]

Security	**J**	**F**	**M**	**A**	**M**	**J**	**J**	**A**	**S**	**O**	**N**	**D**
Low income				x			x	x	x			
High income	**X**	**X**	**X**								**X**	**X** **X**
Immigration and migration	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X** **X**					**X**	**X** **X**
Burglaries				x					**X**			
Crop planting season						**X**	**X**	**X**				
Drug trafficking		**X**	**X**	**X**					**X**	**X**		**X**
Vehicle accidents				**X**					**X**			**X**
Domestic violence	**X**	x	x	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	x	x	x
Harvest time	**X**	**X**										**X**
Rainfall period						**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**			
Health	**J**	**F**	**M**	**A**	**M**	**J**	**J**	**A**	**S**	**O**	**N**	**D**
Flu, coughs, colds	**X**										**X**	**X**
Stomach illness (vomiting, diarrhoea)	**X**					**X**	**X**	**X**				**X**
Conjunctivitis			**X**	**X**	**X**							
Water-borne disease (fungi, sores)						**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**			
Head lice	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Hazards	**J**	**F**	**M**	**A**	**M**	**J**	**J**	**A**	**S**	**O**	**N**	**D**
Hurricane						**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	
Forest fire	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**							
Agricultural fire						**X**	**X**	**X**				
Floods							**X**	**X**	**X**			
Fire												**X**
Temperature (high-low)	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**						x	x	x

X = high x = low

[5] International Federation, *VCA toolbox*, Geneva, 2007, p. 96.

7.1.5 Pair-wise ranking[6]

Pair-wise ranking (also called paired ranking) is a participatory method used to define priorities or to determine relative importance. For example, several informants may be asked to indicate their problems or needs in order of priority, and the assessment team can then verify the consistency of the answers. Alternatively, economic status categories can be defined and described in terms of means and occupation, whilst differences between poor, average and well-off households can be established. Proportional piling may then be used to attribute population percentages to each wealth group.

Pair-wise ranking is also a very useful method to define preferences or order of importance. For instance, to determine the importance of food sources (i.e. the issue), informants are asked to indicate the different sources they rely on. These different issues, or sources, are then entered in the rows and columns of a matrix; the heading of column 1 is identical to that of row 1, that of column 2 is identical to that of column 2, and so on. Issues are then compared to one another once, and informants asked to state their preference; for example, "Do you prefer issue 1 or issue 2?" or "Which is more important: source 1 or source 2?". The answer is then recorded in the corresponding box. The issue, or source, that is most frequently selected is the most important (i.e. it has the highest priority); this permits the ranking of all issues or sources by order of importance (See Figure 12).

[6] Adapted from Alain Mourey, *Manuel de nutrition pour l'intervention humanitaire*, ICRC, Geneva, 2004, p. 429.

Figure 12 Pair-wise ranking – example of food sources

Food source	Production	Purchase	Gathering	Gift
Production		Production	Production	Production
Purchase			Gathering	Purchase
Gathering				Gathering
Gift				

In the example in Figure 12, totals are as follows:

- Production was found to be more important three times: 3.
- Gathering was said to be more important twice: 2.
- Purchase was said to be more important once: 1.
- Gift was not once said to be more important than another source.

In other words, the most important food source in the opinion of this group is clearly its own production, followed by gathered and then purchased foods. This group appears to rely on gifts only minimally.

7.1.6 Stakeholder analysis[7]

The following method is adapted from Serge Ghinet (Ghinet, 1997).

Humanitarian action evolves in a diversity of contexts in terms of vulnerability to crises, social and functional dimensions, and diverging interests and issues at stake. By looking at these different factors, it is possible to identify the different stakeholders in a given environment.

[7] Adapted from Alain Mourey, *Manuel de nutrition pour l'intervention humanitaire,* ICRC, Geneva, 2004, p. 426-427.

The general objective of stakeholder analysis is to ensure that operations take place in the best possible conditions. To this end, the interests, activities and needs of stakeholders need to be identified and taken into account in dialogue with them, so that mutually beneficial arrangements can be reached.

On a practical level, this involves:
- identifying the affected people and groups in a specific environment;
- defining who does what, when, how, where and why;
- identifying individual interests;
- understanding power relations;
- defining the need for assistance;
- understanding operational strengths and opportunities.

Stakeholders can be:
- individuals;
- interest groups;
- local authorities;
- services.

Stakeholders are identified according to different criteria:
- their features:
  - social status (their position in the social structure);
  - identity (their image in a system of communication and exchange);
  - project (its purpose or objective as determined by circumstances and available resources);
  - power (their ability to influence other stakeholders);
- their function and role within the social system under consideration;
- their interests;
- the issues at stake for them arising from specific events, and especially from humanitarian action.

Stakeholder analysis is conducted for each of the above parameters, based upon an analysis matrix. Stakeholders determine the

columns, and the issues determine the rows. Figure 13 shows an example of stakeholder analysis matrix relating to a general food distribution (GFD).

Figure 13 Stakeholder analysis matrix – example of a GFD

Issues	Persons displaced by war	Farmers' association	Tradesmen	Authorities	Garrison
Inclusion in the GFD	Yes (they are hungry)	No	Yes (to control it)	Yes (to show goodwill)	Yes (to sell it)
Ensure GFD delivery	Yes	(depends on timing and harvest)	No (if they cannot control it)	Yes	Yes
Prevent GFD delivery	No	(depends on timing and harvest)	Yes (if they cannot control it)	Yes (if tradesmen pay them enough)	Yes (if tradesmen pay them enough)
Avoid negative GFD side-effects	Yes (if this ensures GFD) continuation	Yes	Yes (the GFD may cause a drop in the price of basic commodities)	Yes (to avoid unrest and pressure)	(depends on how such side-effects affect their role and influence)

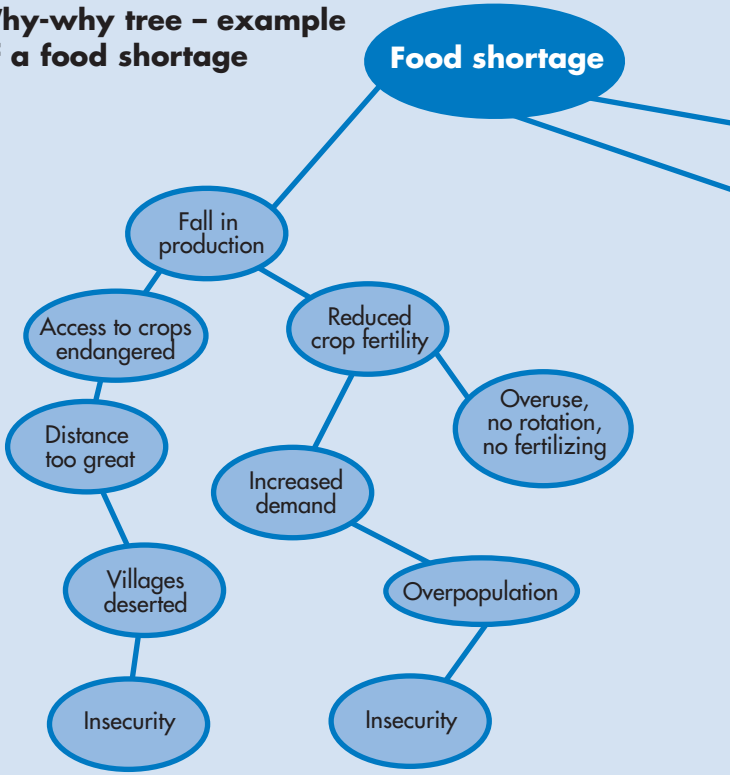
The above simplified matrix does not include such stakeholders as the humanitarian agency involved in the GFD, donors, and third parties that support the war effort. Stakeholders must be analysed in this example according to their relevance to the GFD; necessary negotiation must be undertaken in order to ensure the smooth delivery of the planned food assistance, i.e., its acceptance by all stakeholders. Here again, participatory dialogue is the only possible approach.

7.1.7 Why-why tree

The why-why tree allows for a participatory debate on the underlying causes of a specific problem. It also facilitates the prioritization of such causes. It clearly illustrates the relationship between the cause and effect. By going to the roots of an issue, this tool makes it possible to better define objectives and to choose appropriate intervention strategies.

Figure 14 provides an example of a why-why tree in a context where the main problem is a food shortage. By looking at the real causes of the food shortage, it becomes clear that a seed distribution, for example, would probably not be an appropriate response, despite what may have been thought earlier.

Figure 14 **Why-why tree – example of a food shortage**

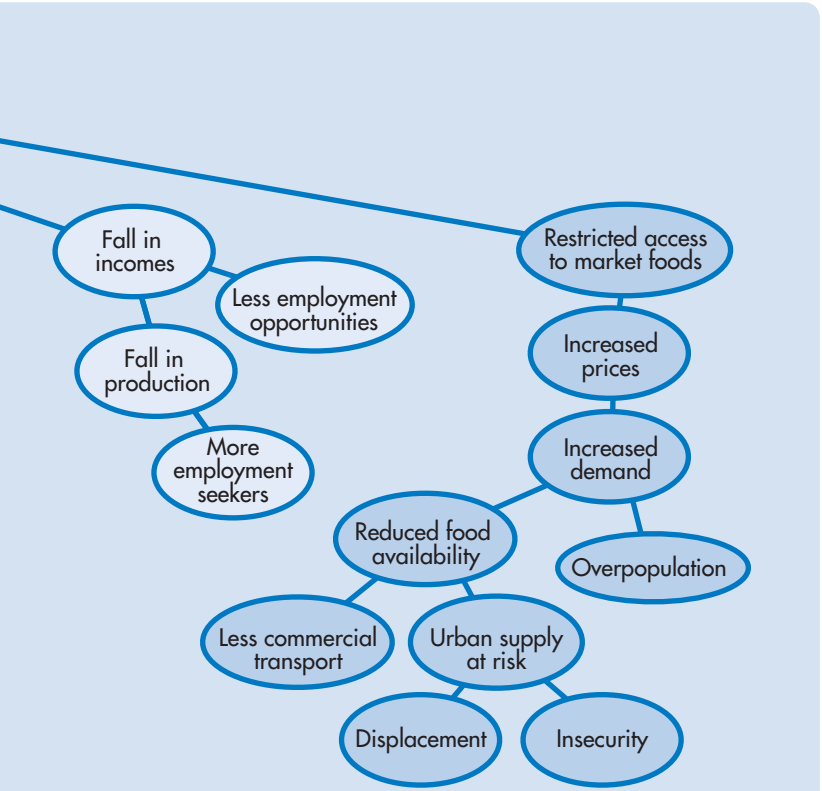


7.1.8 Capacity of people's organizations

This is a tool for organizational analysis. It can help a community to identify the people's organizations that are important to it. People's organizations include religious institutions, schools, financial committees, hospitals, coordinating bodies and local government.

It is useful to:

- identify the various types of support available to people, which can gradually help build up local capacities
- determine the kind of organizational support a people's organ-



ization needs in order to address problems and risks and to build up its management capacity.

Conduct a semi-structured interview. Use guiding topics such as:

- History of the people's organization.
- When and why was it formed.
- Number of active and passive members.
- Membership trend (number increasing or decreasing?).
- Attendance meetings.
- Decision-making processes.
- Are its committees functioning?
- Does the group have a community development plan?
- What has the group contributed to the community so far?

After the field visit

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

8. After the field visit

8.1 Analysis

Analysis is the process whereby information from all the different sources is synthesized to enable you to answer the following questions:

- What are the main problems?
- Who is affected by these problems?
- What are the capacities of the affected population? How well can they cope with the problems?
- Is other assistance currently available to the affected population?
- Is there a need for the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement to intervene? If so, what type of intervention is required?

Key message

Analyse information continuously throughout the assessment. Do not leave analysis until the end of the assessment.

The one exception to this rule concerns analysis of sectoral information. If the team does not include specialists, information relating to a particular sector should be analysed whenever possible by the relevant specialist after the assessment is over.

Once it comes to the project design in a specialized field, consultation with specialists is required.

This section provides advice on:

- resolving inconsistencies in the information that you collect;

- summarizing information;
- synthesizing information from different sources in order to reach conclusions;
- making recommendations for the future;
- drafting an assessment report.

8.1.1 Inconsistent information

In any assessment, you will be faced with the problem of inconsistent information. This arises when informants provide different answers to the same question.

For example:

- One person tells you that the water source runs dry for two months of the year, whilst another tells you that it never runs dry.
- One person tells you that all the animals from the village are dead. Another tells you that half of the animals are alive and grazing far away.

There are some measures you can take to minimize and resolve such inconsistencies. The first is to think about the information *as you collect it*. This helps to spot inconsistencies. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the new information support or contradict secondary information?
- Does information gathered from one informant support or contradict information from another?
- Is the information collected by different members of the assessment team consistent?
- Does the information "make sense"? For example, if someone tells you that the crop yield was zero, yet you see freshly harvested corn in the village, there is an inconsistency.

Asking yourself these questions leads you to think of new questions to ask community members or to look for alternative information sources to clarify the situation. Observation is often useful.

Note

As a general rule, try to verify important information by comparing input from at least three different sources. These sources should be as diverse as possible. If several different sources provide the same information, it is probably correct. This process is called triangulation.

The second measure is to discuss findings regularly with other team members.

- **During fieldwork**. Meet at least once during a day in the field (normally at midday). Compare information, discuss inconsistencies and agree on modifications to the schedule of interviews.
- **At the end of each day**. After each day in the field, discuss the information that has been gathered and the conclusions you have drawn.
- **After the fieldwork**. At the end of the fieldwork, the team meets to agree upon final conclusions.

The third measure is to consider the reason for the inconsistencies. There are three common possibilities:

- **Perception**. There is not always a "correct" answer. People's interpretation of events depends upon their individual circumstances.
- **Access to information**. Some people are better informed about a particular subject than others.
- **Misrepresentation**. Sometimes people purposely provide misleading information.

Decide whether an inconsistency will affect the assessment conclusions and the proposals for future programmes. If the discrepancy is not critical to future programmes, try to resolve it but do not spend too much time on it. If you cannot resolve it, you should include a note of explanation in the final report.

If the inconsistency *does* significantly affect final conclusions, try to resolve it by:

- deciding which of the three above-mentioned reasons (or combination of reasons) is relevant;
- considering why the information differs;
- estimating the confidence you have in each of the sources (perhaps one source is more credible than another);
- checking the information – either talk again to the original informants or identify new informants who might be able to clarify the issue.

If these measures do not resolve the discrepancy, you will have to make a judgement. In this case, the team leader decides upon the conclusion, based on discussions with the team and after consideration of all the available information. It is essential that:

- Conclusions based on judgements are clearly identified in the assessment report, together with details of the assumptions made in reaching these conclusions.
- Recommendations for follow-up are made.

8.2 Summarizing information

Information will be collected from many different sources. If it is to be useful, it must be summarized. This section provides guidance on summarizing information from the various types of interview.

Information must be summarized from general to specific. The following classification can be followed:

1. Secondary information will be used to describe the global situation/problem/reason why an assessment was done. Include in the reporting all relevant secondary information that was reviewed.
2. Group interviews and individual interviews with key informants will provide general information about livelihoods and the overall situation in the area visited. Summarize the information as briefly as possible.

3 Household interviews will provide more specific information about livelihoods and the identification of wealth groups (poor, average, better off). For each location visited, summarize household conditions. Highlight changes and trends. If there are big differences between households within a location, provide separate information for each type of household.

Examples of topics to be included in the summary

For broader understanding

Location	
Approximate number of individuals or households (specify)	
Is this year good, bad or normal?	
If the year is bad, what are the main reasons?	
Main income sources in a normal year	
Effect of the emergency on income sources for rapid and detailed assessment or effect of the intervention on income sources for continual assessment	
Details of coping strategies	
Could coping strategies have negative short- or long-term effects?	
Is current income sufficient to cover all needs?	
Other important points	

For more specific understanding

Location.	
Number of households visited.	
Approximate number of households of this type in location.	
Condition of housing (satisfactory, unsatisfactory, unacceptable). Give brief details if unsatisfactory or unacceptable.	
Diet (main sources of food and changes from normal).	
Use of water (adequate quantity, storage, etc.).	
Health (illnesses and availability of treatment).	
Asset sales. Do people sell household possessions? If so, which ones?	
Women's roles and responsibilities. How are these changing?	
Children's lifestyles. How are these changing?	
Size and composition of households (average number of men, women and children).	
Other important issues.	

8.3 Synthesizing information

This section describes a three-step process for synthesizing information from different sources and presenting the conclusions in a format that is useful to programme planners. Each step consists of a table, together with notes explaining how to complete it. This process is based on the vulnerability and capacity framework.

8.3.1 Step 1

Problem	Normal or new?	If normal, how often does problem occur?	If new, when did problem start?

Problem ranking: Did all informants agree about the ranking of problems? If not, give details (which problems were considered most severe by each group of informants).

Other comments on information in the table:

Notes

List all the problems identified during the assessment. Be specific. *Do not* say that the problem is "floods". *Do* say that the problems caused by the floods are, for example:

- loss of life;
- injury;
- destruction of houses;
- contamination of drinking water;
- other.

List each of these as a separate problem in the table. Rank the problems in *approximate* order of severity (the most severe first).

Note whether each problem is "normal" or "new". A normal problem is one that happens every year (e.g. a "hunger period" before the harvest). A new problem is one that has resulted from the current emergency (e.g. contamination of water supplies after floods).

For "normal" problems, note how often the problem occurs (e.g. once a year or once every three years). For "new" problems, note when the problem started (with a date, when possible).

8.3.2 Step 2

Problem	Affected population (description number)	Needs	Coping strategies	Assistance received from others

Location(s) of affected population(s).

Is this their normal residence? If it is not, why were they displaced? When were they displaced?

How accessible are the locations? Give details of constraints linked to seasons, infrastructure (roads, airports, etc.), security and political factors.

Do any of the coping strategies have negative consequences on people's current welfare and/or long-term livelihoods?

Are some people excluded from assistance? If so, why?

Notes

Identify the population affected by each of the problems identified in Step 1. Describe each population. For example: "the people who live near the river"; "the residents of village X"; "the members of clan Y"; or "children in village Z".

Estimate the number of people in each affected population, based on the information collected during the assessment.

It is often difficult to estimate numbers, as information from sources differs.

- If estimates from different informants are reasonably close, take an average of the estimates. For example, informant A gives an estimate of 500 people, informant B estimates 550 and informant C estimates 575. The number used for the final report is the average of these figures: (500 + 550 + 575)/3 ≅ 540.
- If estimates from different sources vary greatly, you will have to judge which source is most reliable. For example, informant X gives an estimate of 500 people, informant Y estimates 1,500 and informant Z estimates 1,600. You know that informant X is more reliable than the other two. You might, therefore, use a figure of 700 (or 800 or 900 or another average depending on your assumptions).

Estimates are fine in the framework of an assessment. But should an intervention effectively take place, more detailed calculations must be made.

Explain the needs that result from each of the problems. For example:

- Problem 1: The well has run dry. The people need a source that provides at least 15 litres per person per day within 500 metres of their homes.
- Problem 2: People are unable to access enough food. They need a supplement of 50 per cent of their food needs for three months.

Wherever possible, quantify needs. For example, each household needs a supplement of 75 kg of grain per month.

Describe existing coping strategies related to each problem and affected population.

For example:
- Problem: water point is dry.
- Affected population: village X.
- Coping strategy 1: women and children walk three hours to alternative source.
- Coping strategy 2: people wash themselves less frequently.
- Other coping strategies.

Describe assistance that people *currently* receive. Assistance may come from within the community or outside it. It may come from traditional systems or ones set up specifically to address this problem. For example:
- Traditional systems: religious groups within the community always provide some help to the poorest.
- Specific systems: relief is provided by an international agency that is responding to this emergency.

8.3.3 Step 3

Affected population	Needs	Do coping strategies and assistance cover needs?	Percentage of needs covered by coping strategies (A)	Percentage of needs covered by assistance (B)	Percentage gap in need coverage (100-A-B)

Explain how percentages were calculated.

Notes

For each affected population, list the needs that were identified in Step 2.

Indicate whether existing coping strategies and current assistance are sufficient to cover needs (yes or no).

Where possible, estimate the extent to which coping strategies and assistance cover these needs. For example:

- **Problem**. Houses have been destroyed in floods.
- **Coping strategies**. People buy building materials, salvage materials from their wrecked houses and obtain materials from relatives or kinships. Through a proportional piling exercise (see Section 7.1.3), you estimate that these strategies cover about 65 per cent of needs. *(A)*
- **Assistance**. The municipality gives some building materials. This covers 10 per cent of needs. *(B)*
- By combining their own coping strategies with assistance from the municipality, the people are able to cover approximately 65+10 = 75 per cent of their needs for building materials.

- There is a "gap" in needs coverage of 100–75 = 25 per cent of needs *(100-A-B)*. This might be covered by the Red Cross Red Crescent.

8.4 Assessment report

For each assessment, compile a report structured according to the headings agreed within your delegation. The amount of detail included under each heading will depend on the circumstances of each assessment.

It is important to present the conclusions of the assessment as clearly as possible. The use of a standard format helps readers to find information quickly.

Note

Keep the assessment report as short as possible, but make sure no important information is omitted.

The assessment team is not expected to produce a complete programme design. However, ideas from the team are extremely useful to programme planners. There are three possible conclusions from the assessment (see Vulnerability and capacity framework, Section 3):

- There is no need for an intervention (the capacity of the affected population is sufficient to withstand the problems).
- There is a need for intervention, but the Red Cross Red Crescent is not the appropriate agency to make this intervention.
- There is a need for intervention and the Red Cross Red Crescent is the appropriate agency to make it.

If you conclude that the Red Cross Red Crescent should intervene, write a brief summary of how it should intervene.

Note

An assessment can lead to a precise project proposal or may remain just as a recommendation. In the latter case, the collection of more in-depth information will be required before a project can be designed.

8.4.1 Analysis and reporting tools

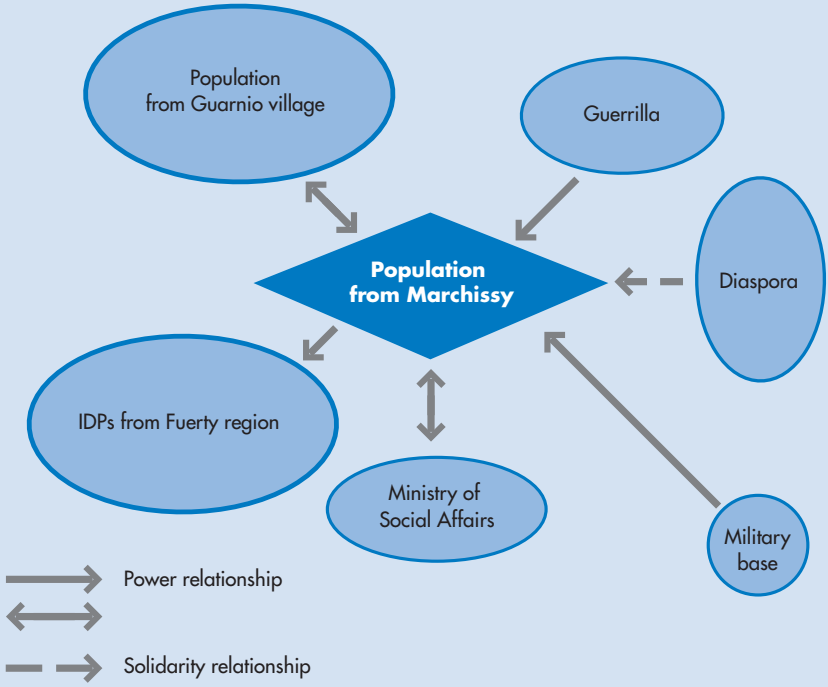
There are some tools that can help in analysing and/or reporting important information. These visual supports are generally easier to read and understand than a long text/explanation.

8.4.1.1 Diagram of interactions

The diagram of interactions shows the relationships (power and solidarity) between a given group of people and other stakeholders. You can either create the diagram directly with the people you are interviewing or collect all the information first and recreate the diagram afterwards. This can serve as an excellent annex to a report.

Place the category of people of interest in a circle in the middle of the diagram. Then add a circle for each stakeholder, sized and positioned according to its importance/influence. Then draw arrows corresponding to the type of relationship. Figure 15 shows an example of a diagram of interactions.

Figure 15 Diagram of interactions



8.4.1.2 SWOC analysis[8]

This tool enables analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints (SWOC) of a given programme. It comprises a four-box matrix, each box corresponding to one trait. Figure 16 shows an example of a GFD.

[8] Alain Mourey, *Manuel de nutrition pour l'intervention humanitaire*, ICRC, Geneva, 2004, p. 449.

Figure 16 SWOC analysis matrix – example of a GFD

Strengths	Weaknesses
■ Distributions regular ■ Ration adequate ■ Appropriate distribution method ■ Appropriate distribution frequency	■ Ration monotonous, discourages the appetite of small children ■ Occasional insecurity on the way home ■ Beans difficult to cook
Opportunities	**Constraints**
■ Monitoring of the health status of children ■ Registration for the therapeutic feeding programme ■ Vitamin A supplementation ■ Discussion sessions regarding developments	■ The attitude of armed groups ■ Distance between dwellings and distribution point ■ Heavy load to carry home

The resulting SWOC analysis provides the basis for enhancing strengths, investigating opportunities, resolving, where possible, weaknesses and constraints, and explaining the inevitability of some of the latter.

8.4.1.3 Graphs[9]

Graphs are widely used in a humanitarian setting; they are useful for showing distributions, the evolution of a given characteristic (malnutrition, the price of basic food commodities, etc.) or the relationship between two varying characteristics. They commonly comprise a horizontal axis (x-axis, or abscissa), which usually reflects the independent variable, and a vertical axis (y-axis, or

[9] Alain Mourey, *Manuel de nutrition pour l'intervention humanitaire*, ICRC, Geneva, 2004, p. 430.

ordinate), which reflects the dependent variable. Two-axis graphs may be represented in different ways; graphs may also be used to reflect proportions, by subdividing a given area (pie charts, horizontal, vertical or aggregate column charts, etc.). Figure 17 shows the evolution of staple cereal prices over time.

Figure 17 Evolution of maize prices on market X in 2000

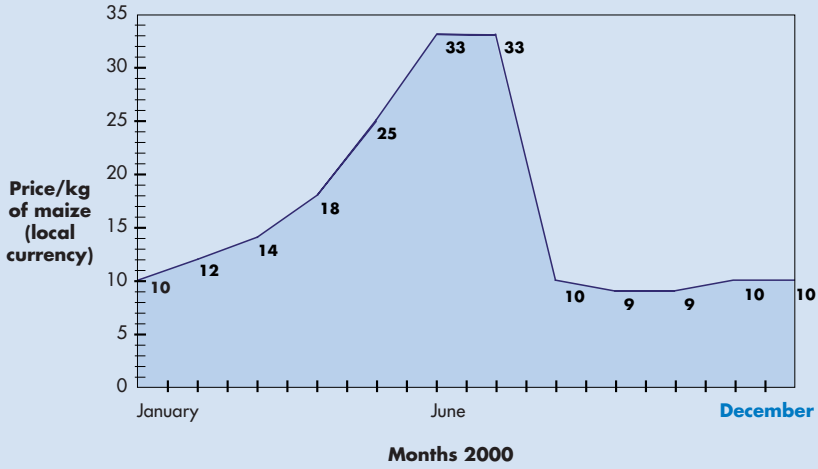


Figure 17 shows a substantial (more than three times) and steady increase in maize prices between January and June 2000, with an abrupt drop in August. These developments warrant explanation in the report. Nowadays, most computers are equipped with software for producing quick and easy graphic illustrations.

8.4.1.4 Maps

Maps help to visualize a space and how that space is occupied. Like graphs, maps are a common tool in humanitarian action. They usually show physical features such as overland routes, dwellings, administrative boundaries, infrastructure, waterways (hydrography) and relief. It is best to keep them as simple as possible for field use and to restrict them to those elements that are necessary. A map can be produced (either because an appropriate one does not exist or to suit specific purposes) by using a compass and a mile counter, or even just by observation. Figures 18, 19, 20 and 21 shows different sample maps.

Figure 18 Food economy zones

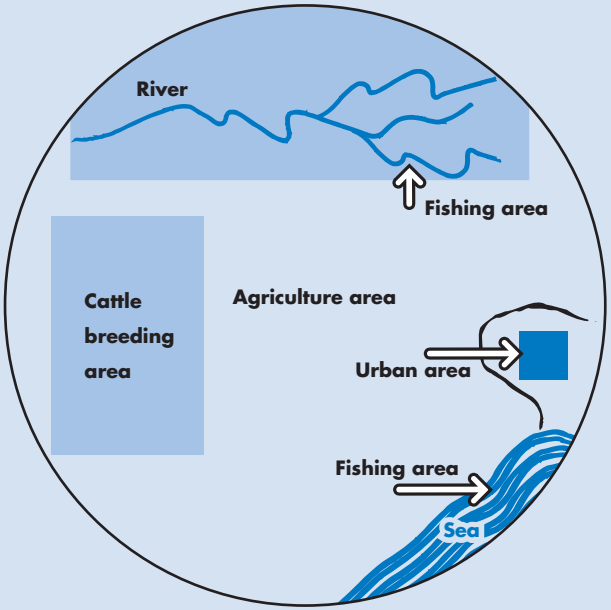
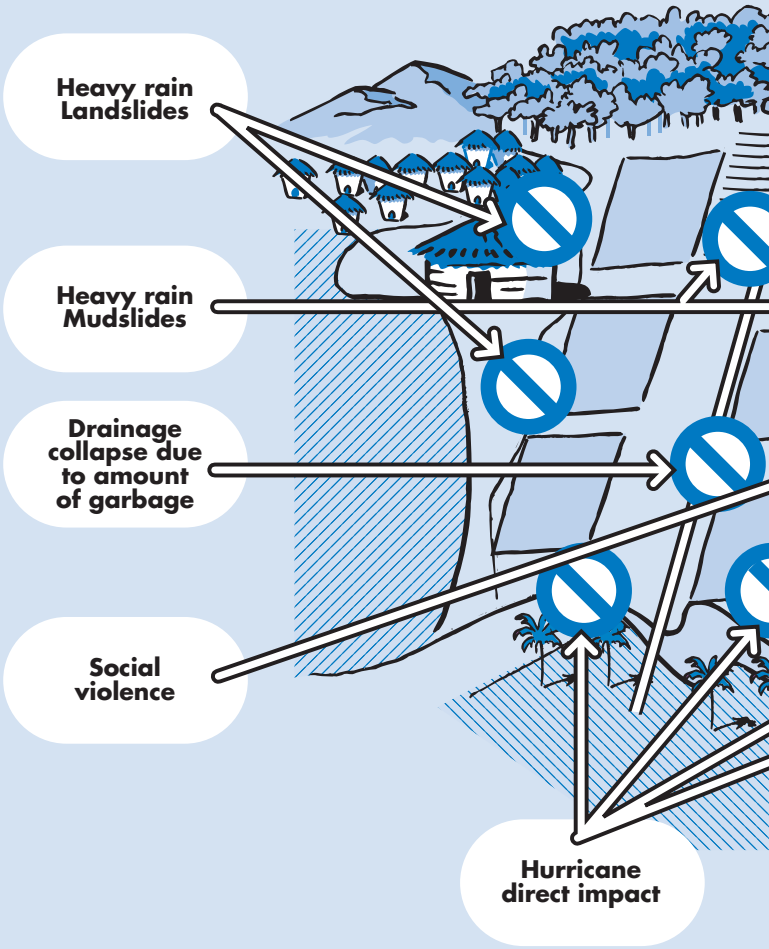
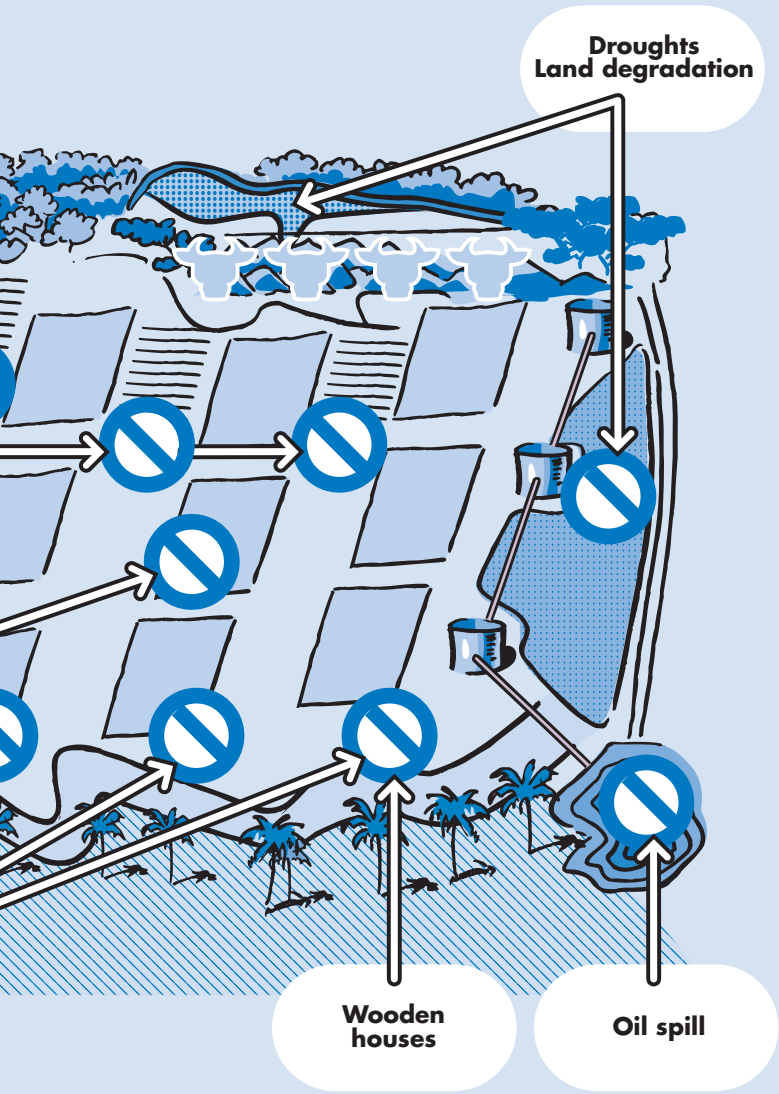


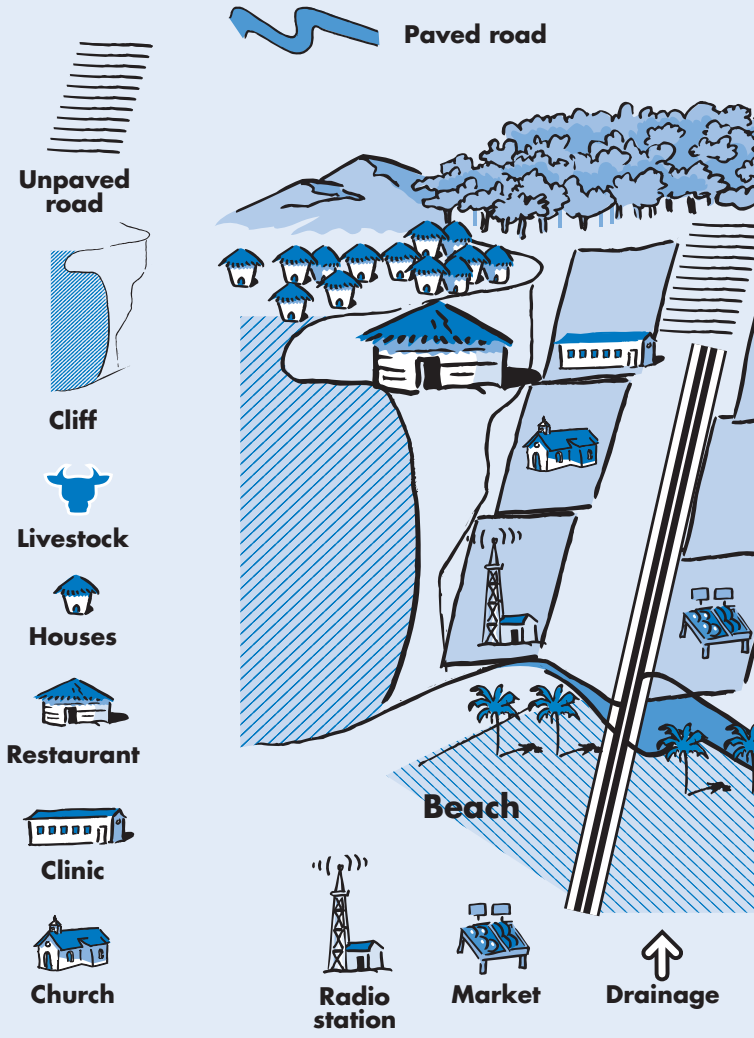
Figure 19 **Hazard/risk map**[10]
Example (from *Make that Change*)

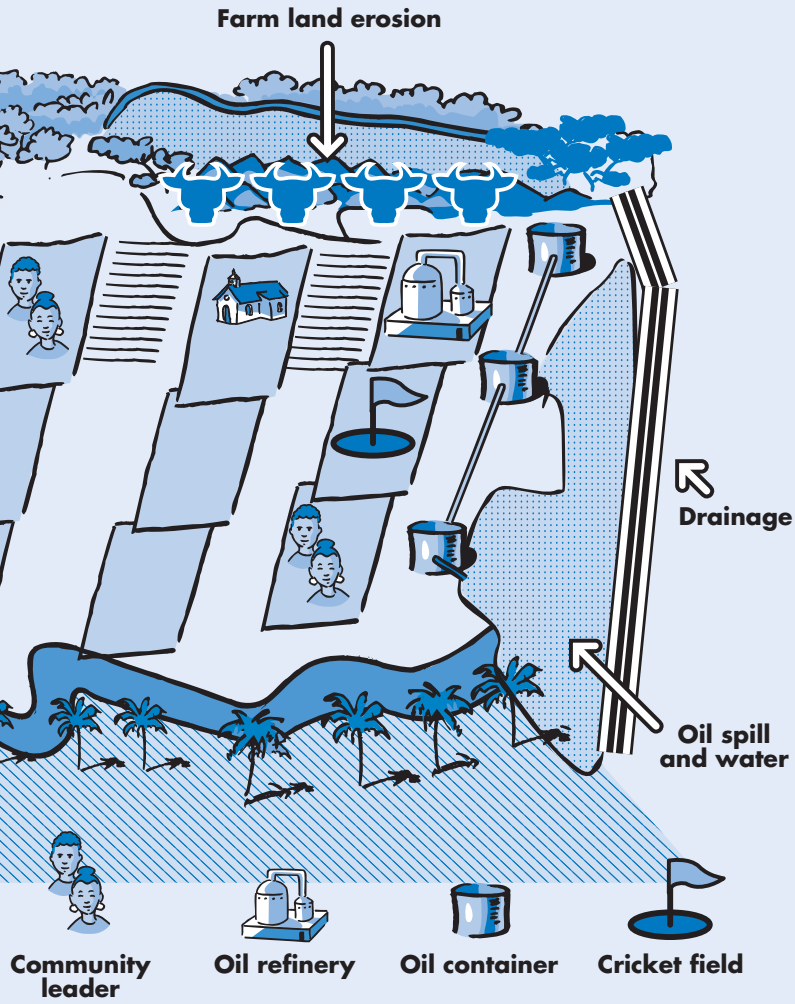




[10] International Federation, *VCA toolbox*, Geneva, 2007, p. 78-79.

Figure 20 **Spatial map**[11]
Example (from *Make that Change*)

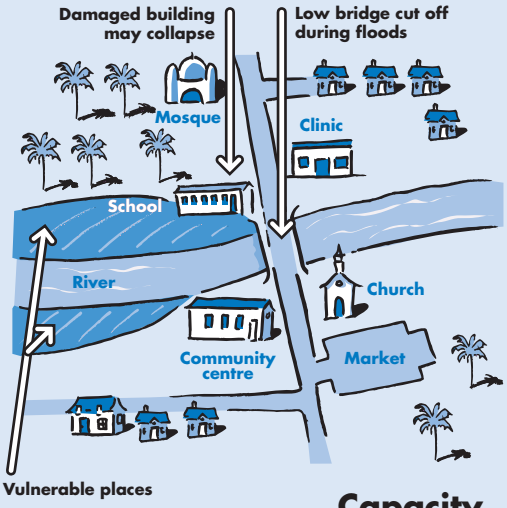




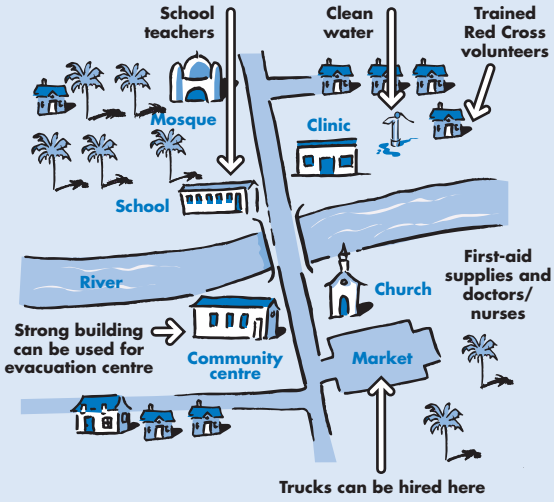
[11] International Federation, *VCA toolbox*, Geneva, 2007, p. 80-81.

Figure 21 **Spatial map**[12]
Example (from Indian Red Cross Society, *Training of Trainers Curriculum for Community Based Disaster Management*)

Vulnerable places



Capacity



[12] International Federation, *VCA toolbox*, Geneva, 2007, p. 82-83.

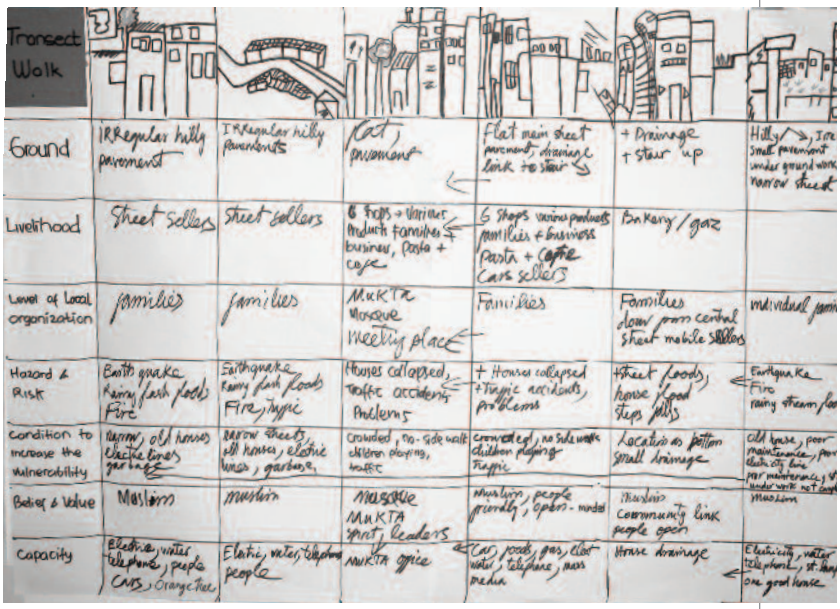
8.4.1.5 Transect walk

A transect walk involves walking through the community to observe the people, the surroundings and the resources. It is used to note the sites and topography of the area and to understand inter-relationships in their natural surroundings.

A transect walk is usually done early in the research process because it gives an overall view of the community. Thus, it enables to observe things that may require further investigation later on during interviews.

Write down what you see and hear as you go along (See Figure 22). Later this can be transferred to a transect diagram (See Figure 23).

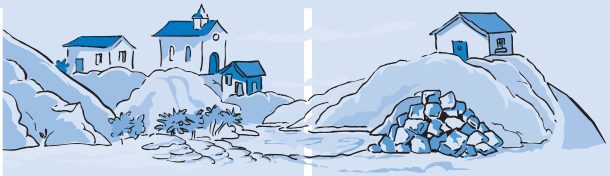
Figure 22 Transect walk – Recorded information[13]



Transect walk, VCA, Izmir, Turkey, 2006

[13] International Federation, *VCA toolbox*, Geneva, 2007, p. 89.

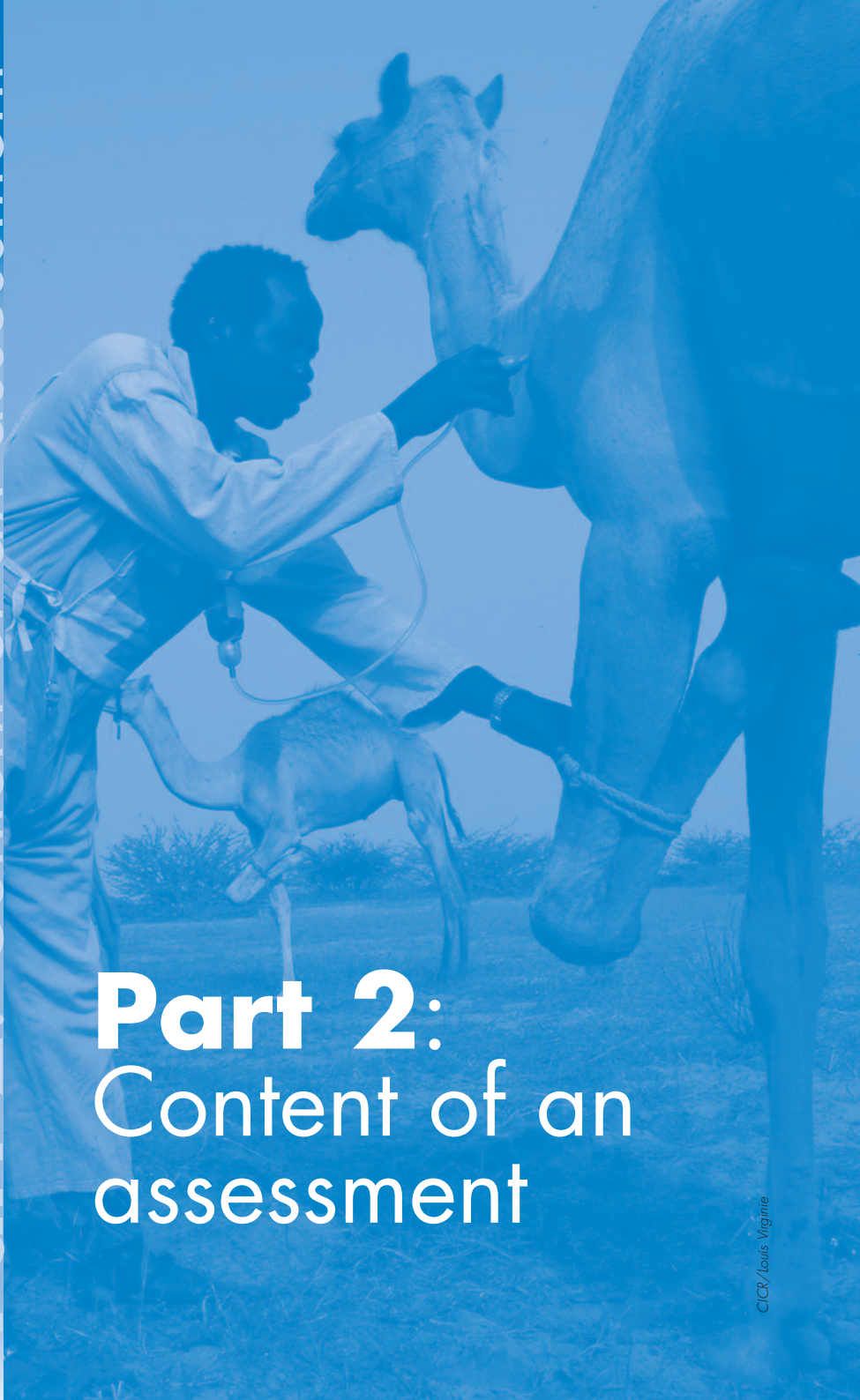
Figure 23 Transect walk – transect diagram[14]
Example (from *Make that Change*)



Type of ground	Hilly, slopy, valley	Rocky, hilly, valley
Livelihoods	Irrigation, farming, settlements, health, school, hay storage, water harvesting	Settlements, farming, soil erosion control measures, water harvesting
Risks/hazards	Soil erosion, water contamination, mosquito breeding	Erosion, mosquito breeding, unprotected dam
Conditions that increase vulnerability	Slopy ground, stagnant nature of water, deforestation, use of artificial fertilizer	Stagnant nature of water, slopy ground
Beliefs and values	Church, aloe for medicine	Aloe for traditional medicine
Capacities	Rocks, catchments, food production, water pump, water harvesting	Dam, catchments, food production
Natural environment	Water, aloe and eucalyptus trees	Aloe, water

Hilly, slopy, valley	Hilly, slopy, valley, flat	Hilly, slopy, rocky, flat
Irrigation, farming, settlements, grazing, water point, water harvesting, soil and water conservation	Farming, grazing, firewood collection	Farming, grazing, soil and water conservation activities
Erosion, poor sanitation at water point, open well	Erosion, soil degradation, contamination of underground water, depletion of underground water	Soil erosion, soil degradation, contamination of underground water, depletion of underground water
Unprotected spring, deforestation, slopy ground, use of artificial fertilizer, overuse (pressure) on water point	Deforestation, slopy nature of the ground, overgrazing, use of artificial fertilizer	Deforestation, slopy nature of the ground, overgrazing, use of artificial fertilizer
Church, aloe for traditional medicine	Aloe and eucalyptus for traditional medicine	-
Road access, rocks for construction, soil erosion control measures, food production, potential catchments	Road access, rocks for construction, soil erosion control measures, food production, potential catchments	Rocks for construction, road access, soil and water conservation measures, food production, potential catchments
Grazing area, water well, rocks	Aloe, eucalyptus trees	-

[14] International Federation, *VCA toolbox*, Geneva, 2007, p. 90-91.



Part 2: Content of an assessment

ICRC/Louis Vigrnie

Part 2: Content of an assessment

Part 2 focuses on the content of an assessment. It provides guidance on those elements that should be looked at in order to gain a better understanding of an emergency situation.

The **content** of an assessment relates to how people are coping after a crisis or a shock. This can be determined by a comprehensive and integrated review of the context, the crisis or shock, the agencies involved, the problems faced by the populations directly or indirectly affected, and the response strategies they have put in place.

It goes without saying that most of the information is obtained by talking to the communities concerned using a participatory approach.

In Part 2, the ICRC covers the household economy approach, while the International Federation details the elements to look at 24 hours and 48–72 hours after a disaster. While Part 1 (process) tackles issues of common interest to both organizations, the information in Part 2 (content) is relative to the work of each organization.

The household economy

CICR/Moeckli Olivier

9. The household economy approach

9.1 Definition of household economy

The household economy is the sum of the ways in which households access, strengthen and maintain their cash and in-kind incomes to cover their essential needs (food, cash income, and assets such as savings, livestock, land, etc.).

9.2 The household economy approach

The household economy approach aims to study if and how households manage to cover their essential and non-essential needs. Ultimately, it shows whether or not a given population is economically insecure and therefore in need of assistance. It is done by comparing a normal, baseline year (reflecting the usual conditions when the population is able to cover its essential needs) and the year in question, especially after a crisis or shock. The comparison makes it possible to determine if the population is worse, the same or better off than in the past.

9.3 Steps in data collection

Using the data collection methods described in Part 1 (process), follow the steps below to build up a clear view of the situation.[15]

[15] J. Seaman et al., *The Household Economy Approach: A Resource Manual for Practitioners*, Save the Children Fund, London, 2000.

Step 1 Assess the household economy

Food and income are generally obtained through own-food production, purchases, salaries, hunting, backyard gardening, etc.

Gather information on the types of activities/means to obtain food and income, the frequency of these activities, and the members of the household who participate in these activities. Estimate how much income each activity contributes to the household's earnings. Define the household's expenditures.

Step 2 Identify livelihood zones

Livelihood zones are geographic areas where the majority of households share the same economic dynamic (e.g. agro-pastoralists, cash-crop farmers, etc.). Livelihood zones may overlap with another one (e.g. employees and self-employed persons in a city or pastoral and farming activities in a rural area).

Identify the various relevant livelihood zones in a selected area.

Step 3 Identify wealth groups

Wealth groups are groups of households that have similar resources and capacities to exploit various food and income options within a livelihood zone.

Identify the key factors that differentiate wealth groups (poor, average, better off).

Step 4 Understand links to markets and observe market changes

Knowing what the "normal" links between communities and their different markets are helps to understand and predict the available options in times of crisis.

During a crisis, observe changes both in the labour market (more or fewer job opportunities, lower or higher wages, etc.) and in prices of key commodities and/or access to them. Identify the rea-

son(s) for those changes (conflict and/or damage to infrastructure, etc.).

Step 5 Calculate the effect of the shock/hazard

The consequences of a shock/hazard on a household in any location will depend on the specific combination of:

- the magnitude and nature of the shock/hazard (scale, severity, duration);
- the economy of the household;
- opportunities to compensate for loss of income;
- choices that households make owing to the particular circumstances;
- degree of market dependency;
- external and environmental factors.

It is important to analyse the consequences that a particular shock/hazard, such as insecurity, displacement, drought, floods, etc., can have on a household's ability to access essential needs. This requires looking into its coping mechanisms, vulnerability level and/or level of resilience.

Coping mechanisms are the adapted/unusual strategies that people choose as a way of living through difficult times.

Coping mechanisms can be classified as:

- Strategies that are *not* damaging to livelihoods (e.g. short-term dietary changes, collection of wild fruits, sale of non-essential assets, migration of individuals for work, extra work hours, use of skills, solidarity, etc.). These are easily reversible.
- Strategies that *may* be damaging to livelihoods (e.g. sale of property, sale of productive assets, large-scale deforestation, child work, prostitution, banditry). These tend to be harder to reverse.

Vulnerability is defined as: "The conditions determined by physical, social, economic, environmental, and political factors or processes which increase the susceptibility of community to the impact of shocks/hazards[16]." All people are vulnerable to something (e.g. a farmer is vulnerable to the failure of rains).

Vulnerability can be reduced by increasing and protecting livelihoods and decreasing the degree of exposure to hazard.

It is important to distinguish between shocks/hazards originating from outside the community (those that affect all people in the same locality) and shocks/hazards that principally affect only individual households (e.g. the breadwinner is HIV positive, discrimination, etc.).

Resilience is the ability to reduce, prepare for, resist and recover from shocks/hazards. A totally vulnerable household means a household without any resilience to face a shock/hazard; a household that can absorb a shock/hazard is a household with an appropriate level of resilience.

The longer the shock/hazard lasts, the more the sources of income and coping mechanisms are at risk, to the point that they may all be lost. All that remains then is work capacity and even that can be weakened by hunger and failing health. When households lose their assets, they lose their means of living.

People who have a good wealth status can be affected by a shock or hazard as severely as those with a bad wealth status. In that case, both are similarly vulnerable. The main difference will be their capacities to cope. A formerly rich household may be less able to cope (as it is not used to poverty).

Determine for how long a household can keep on with the chosen coping mechanisms.

[16] Adapted from Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR), *Living with Risk: A global review of disaster reduction initiatives*, 2004, Annex 1.

- Which of the existing food and income options can be expanded under the current circumstances?
- What additional options can be pursued?

Step 6 Analyse the external environment.

The external environment/factors influence the vulnerability and resilience of households. They include laws (written or customary), existing infrastructure (roads, etc.), and services (credit, schools, etc.). They are represented by the various institutions.

Institutions

Institutions can mean both membership organizations and invisible "rules of the game". They include:

- **formal membership organizations**, such as cooperatives and registered groups;
- **informal organizations**, such as exchange labour groups or rotating savings groups;
- **political institutions**, such as ministries, laws and regulations – including land tenure;
- **economic institutions**, such as markets, private companies, banks or the tax system;
- **socio-cultural institutions**, such as kinship, marriage, inheritance, religion.

A good policy/institutional environment makes it easier for people to secure and protect livelihoods, while a bad policy/institutional environment may exacerbate vulnerability conditions.

Local institutions influence the household economy approach directly, by determining which activities are legal/illegal and appropriate/inappropriate for women and men, by creating incentives to pursue certain activities and choices over others and by influencing perceptions of the effectiveness of particular strategies

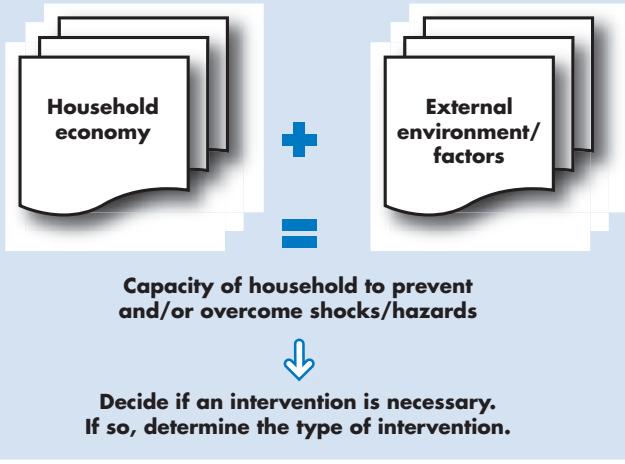
in achieving desired outcomes. Local institutions also affect household livelihood strategies indirectly through their influence on access to and control of household assets.

Governance is about much more than government and involves power in the much broader sense in that it is exercised by all actors and stakeholders in a given situation, including the private sector, civil society and international organizations. This wider "power system" also affects people's capacities to take precautions against hazards and their rights to express their needs and to have access to the relevant technical knowledge and preparedness measures that can reduce their vulnerability.

Step 7 Analyse the capacity of the population and the intervention options.

Analysis of all the above-mentioned points enables us to assess the capacity of the population to prevent and overcome shocks/hazards. The result of the analysis will determine if an intervention is necessary and, if so, what sort of intervention.

Figure 24 Analytical process



9.4 Checklist for assessment

The following checklist provides some of the key elements to look at when carrying out an assessment in order to better define the household economy and the external environment. Not all the elements need be included every time: the choice will depend on the objective of the assessment and the situation at hand. By the same token, other relevant elements not listed can be added.

Livelihoods

- livestock and yield (milk, meat, skin);
- cultivated acreage and yield;
- tools (hand tools, agricultural tools);
- means of production for craft and trade activities (equipment, facilities, other resources);
- inputs for production (seeds, fertilizers, chemicals for crop production, fodder, drugs for livestock, wood for carpentry, spare parts for mechanics/plumbing);
- storage facilities;
- availability of commodities (supply/trade for household or as inputs to production);
- access to markets.

Shelter and housing

- essential household items;
- proximity to services.

Transportation

- transportation resources;
- access to transportation.

Communication

- communication resources (telephone, radio, television, computer);
- access to communication services and media.

Natural resources

- right to access and use land;
- availability of fishing resources;
- water availability and accessibility (human consumption, livestock, irrigation from sources, wells, ponds, boreholes, etc.);
- natural energy availability/accessibility (wood, dung, etc.);
- recreational space;
- pollution- and hazard-free environment.

Human capacities

- labour force availability (within the household);
- skills;
- knowledge;
- learning and training;
- experience.

Financial means

- availability of salaries (daily, weekly, periodically, wage rates, etc.);
- self-employment;
- price of commodities (for the household or as inputs to production);
- access to credit;
- remittances;
- debts/savings;
- public safety nets (subsidies, pensions);
- insurance coverage.

Social dynamic

- education system;
- governmental and private services (health, sanitation, support services to crops and livestock production, libraries, recreation);
- media;
- social networks (kinship and family, church associations, work networks, other local associations);
- social coping mechanisms;
- local civil society organizations (non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations).

Political environment

- adequacy and applicability of state and customary laws;
- security and stability;
- access to local decision-making and political processes (formal and informal, through good governance, transparency, forums for community input, vibrant political parties, etc.);
- access to legal redress.

Rapid onset disaster

CICR / Maeckli Olivier

CICR/Ana Gerlin Hernandez Bonilla

10. Key elements to look for after a rapid onset disaster

The following checklists aim to help identify the information that should be collected as a priority when carrying out a rapid assessment in the first 24 hours and 72 hours after a rapid onset disaster,[16] such as a major flood or earthquake. The checklists contribute relevant information for early recovery assessment needs and prepare the ground to continue the assessment process in a more detailed manner for 1 to 30 days after a disaster.

During a rapid assessment, it is important to focus on the *changes* between the situation *before* the disaster and the situation *after* the disaster. Therefore, assessments in emergencies place people and their livelihoods at the centre of the action and determine how one or more of the five components generating vulnerability[17] are affected.

The analysis of the information gathered should facilitate a clear understanding of:

- The degree of people's livelihood **resistance and resilience**, enabling them to survive and adequately meet their basic needs. This will help to understand and determine their well-being status and any income-generation concerns.
- People's **existing level of well-being** in terms of health (including mental health), nutrition, water and sanitation, employment, housing, etc.

[16] Another checklist for carrying out a food security assessment, especially, but not exclusively, in slow onset disasters (e.g. drought), can be found in *How to conduct a food security assessment: A step-by-step guide for National Societies in Africa*, International Federation, 2006.

[17] Terry Cannon, *Reducing People's Vulnerability to Natural Hazards*, April 2007.

- The level of **self-protection**, which is linked to having adequate means to ensure the protection of people, the home, goods and means of production, as well as having skills and techniques which contribute to such protection.
- The conditions of **social protection**, which in general is provided by local institutions and which involves precautionary measures that people cannot arrange by themselves.
- **Governance**,[18] which refers to the way in which power is exercised in the management of financial, social and national resources to respond to the situation.

Once rapid assessments have been completed, decision-makers are better equipped to facilitate actions that save lives, protect vital needs, support basic social services and preserve livelihoods.

In early recovery assessment, the main purpose is to find out how the disaster has impacted on:

- people's means of making a living, including their assets and activities (livelihoods);
- people's ability to safely and adequately shelter themselves (beyond the first days/weeks);
- health, including the effects of trauma on people's ability to recover;
- access to key services such as health, water and sanitation, electricity, transport, education, etc.;
- people's vulnerability and strategies for coping with the disaster.

The assessment should also facilitate better understanding of:

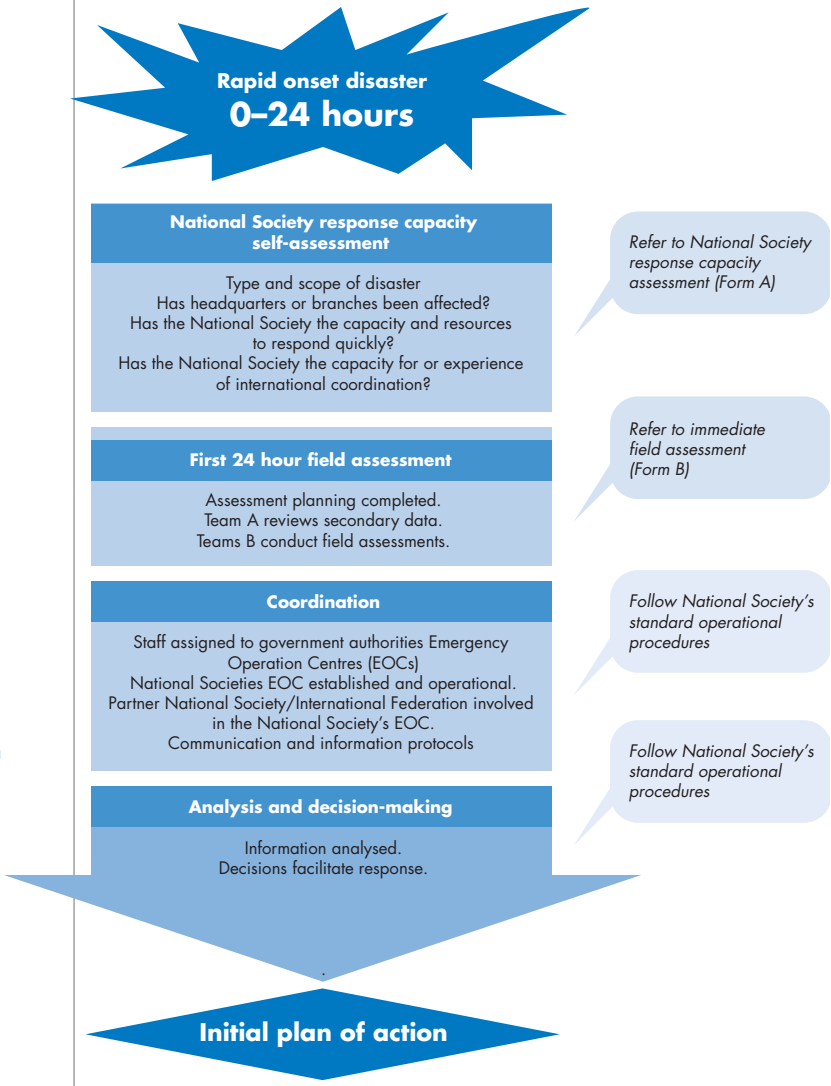
- the interaction of livelihoods, shelter, health and access to key services in terms of reducing or increasing people's vulnerability and ability to cope;
- people's own assessment of their key needs and highest priorities;
- the capacity and interest of International Federation members to respond, particularly the National Society of the affected country;

[18] World Bank, *Governance and Development*, Washington D.C., 1992 (non-official translation).

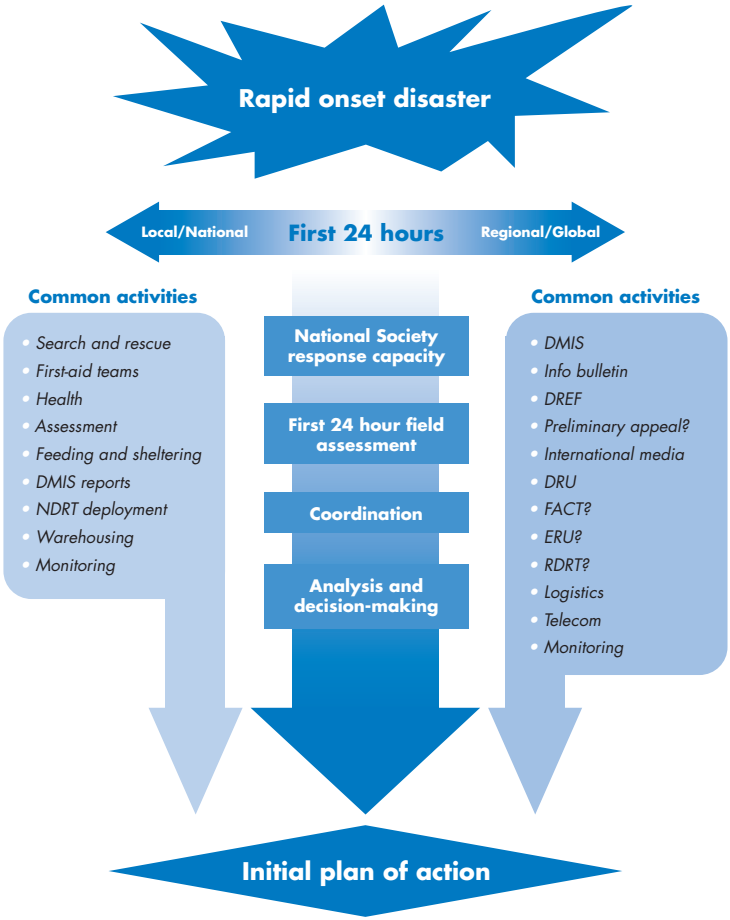
- whether there are any stakeholders, policies or processes that may positively or negatively affect the ability to respond to the priority needs identified by the affected communities;
- what other organizations are doing, so that programmes or activities are not duplicated.

The following formats for 24 hour assessment and for 72 hour assessment have been divided into two main categories:

- the institutional conditions to respond after a disaster;
- the community conditions and capacities to cope with the disaster.


Rapid onset disaster
0–24 hours
National Society response capacity self-assessment
Type and scope of disaster
Has headquarters or branches been affected?
Has the National Society the capacity and resources to respond quickly?
Has the National Society the capacity for or experience of international coordination?
Refer to National Society response capacity assessment (Form A)
First 24 hour field assessment
Assessment planning completed.
Team A reviews secondary data.
Teams B conduct field assessments.
Refer to immediate field assessment (Form B)
Coordination
Staff assigned to government authorities Emergency Operation Centres (EOCs)
National Societies EOC established and operational.
Partner National Society/International Federation involved in the National Society's EOC.
Communication and information protocols
Follow National Society's standard operational procedures
Analysis and decision-making
Information analysed.
Decisions facilitate response.
Follow National Society's standard operational procedures
Initial plan of action

Parallel actions related to response while assessment process starts



First 24 hours

National Society response capacity self-assessment form (A)

NS/branches GPS coordinates (if available):

1 National Society	Expected scope of the disaster? Does the National Society have experience in managing a disaster on the same scale or worse? ❑ Yes ❑ No		
2 Headquarters Describe conditions: ❑ No damage ❑ Minor damage ❑ Moderate damage ❑ Destroyed			
3 Branches Describe conditions: ❑ No damage ❑ Minor damage ❑ Moderate damage ❑ Destroyed			
4 Human resources Explain availability at headquarters and branch levels after the emergency	Staff	Volunteers	Other
5 Ability to fund the response operation	Hours/days	Week(s)	Month(s)

6 Telecommunications Describe conditions	Land line	Mobile	HF/VHF/ SMS	Comments
Fully operational				
Partially operational				
Not operational				

7.a Warehousing and relief goods. ❑ Fully operational ❑ Partially operational ❑ Not operational	**7.b Do you have stocks available to meet current beneficiary needs?**	**7.c If yes, for how many people and for how long?**

8 Coordination with others and actions of others Describe conditions	With local authorities and other NGOs	National authorities – EOC and UN agencies	With the Movement (National Societies, International Federation, ICRC in-country)
9 Are there any safety or security issues to highlight?	In general, before the disaster	During and after the disaster	
10 Other			

Minor damage: Building can be safely occupied but needs minor repairs.
Moderate damage: Building cannot be safely occupied and requires major repairs.
Destroyed: Obviously destroyed and requires rebuilding.
Note: If necessary, sketch a map to show location.

Experience coordinating international response without assistance? ❑ Yes ❑ No
Capacity to respond quickly ❑ Yes ❑ No

First 24 hours

Rapid field assessment form (B)

Type of disaster:
GPS coordinates:

1 Geographic area		Approximate number of inhabitants	
2 Community assessed		Approximate number of inhabitants	
3 Name of assessment team leader:		**4 Name of contact person in the community and contact info:**	
5 Date	**6 Time**		
7 Persons	# Injured	# Dead	# Missing
8 Homes affected	# Minor damage	# Moderate damage	# Destroyed
9 # of families (provide % if number is not possible within 4 hours)	**Currently known** displaced *evacuated*	**Projected** displaced *evacuated*	
10 How are people being sheltered? Shelter/host families/ camps/other	Describe shelter situation		

Describe damage and access

11 Status of roads/ best way to access affected area		
12 Conditions/access of (as applicable): • Rail • Bridges • Water facilities • Sewage systems • Schools • Health facilities • Electricity • Telephones • Airport • Seaport		**Concerns for:** Hazardous materials Toxic spills Oil spills Mines/ERW Other:

(Observation) Describe livelihood losses

13 Effect on urban settings (if applicable):	Commercial buildings	Businesses/ factories	Government buildings
14 Brief description of livelihood groups and how they are affected (secondary information)			
15 What are the specific physical losses in agriculture? (if applicable)	Crops/gardens	Animals (e.g. livestock, poultry, etc.)	Tools
16 What are the specific physical losses in fishing? (if applicable)	Boats	Nets	Tools

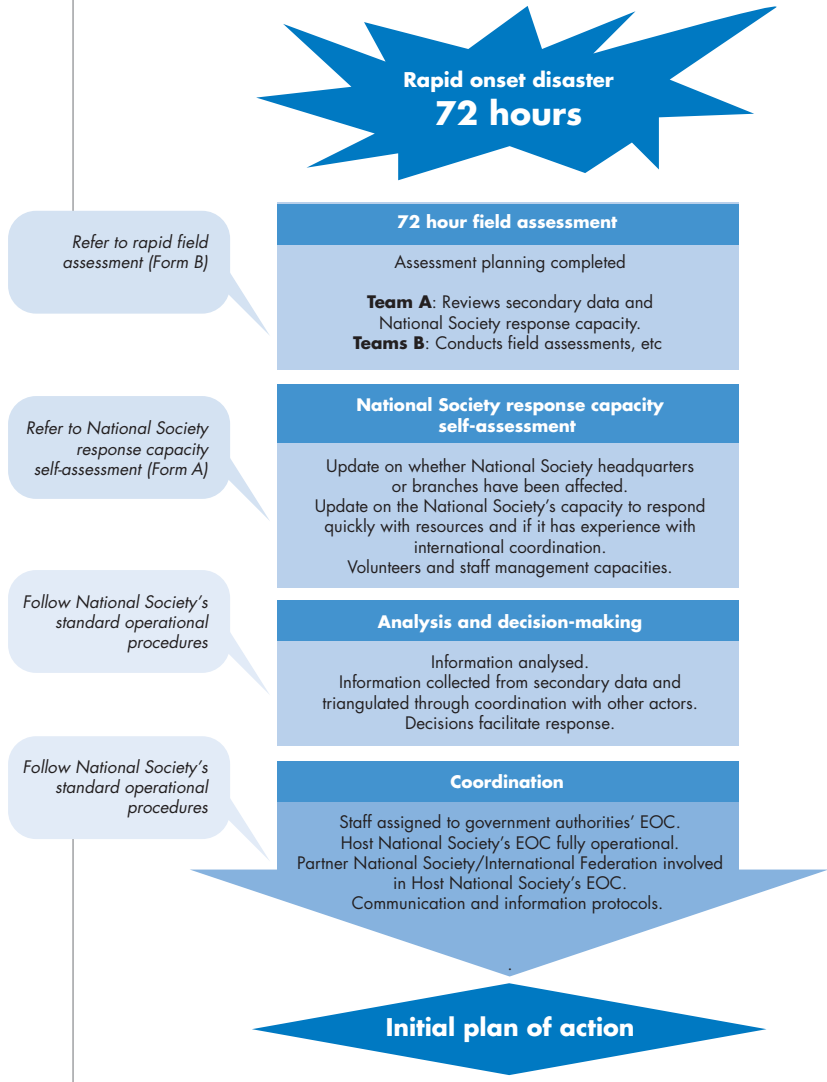
17 Answer the following questions

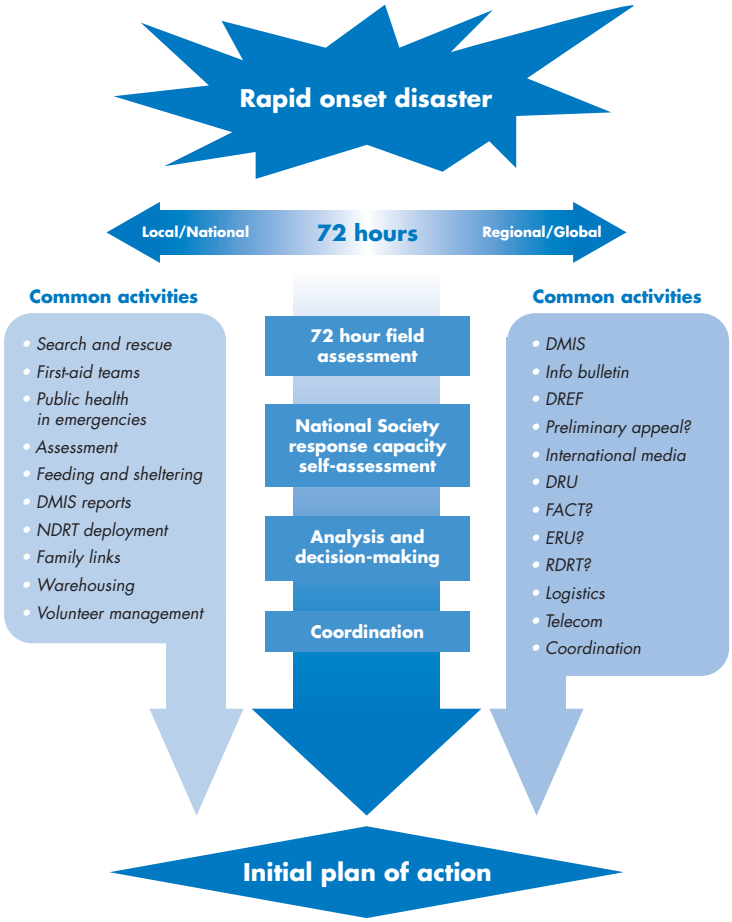
a Is the local government active in the disaster response? ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Don't know

b Is the community responding to the disaster? ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Don't know

c Are NGOs responding in the disaster area? ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Don't know
Who?

Minor damage: Building can be safely occupied but needs minor repairs.
Moderate damage: Building cannot be safely occupied and requires major repairs.
Destroyed: Obviously destroyed and requires rebuilding.
Note: If necessary, sketch a map to show location.


Rapid onset disaster
72 hours
72 hour field assessment
Assessment planning completed
Team A: Reviews secondary data and National Society response capacity.
Teams B: Conducts field assessments, etc
Refer to rapid field assessment (Form B)
National Society response capacity self-assessment
Update on whether National Society headquarters or branches have been affected.
Update on the National Society's capacity to respond quickly with resources and if it has experience with international coordination.
Volunteers and staff management capacities.
Refer to National Society response capacity self-assessment (Form A)
Analysis and decision-making
Information analysed.
Information collected from secondary data and triangulated through coordination with other actors.
Decisions facilitate response.
Follow National Society's standard operational procedures
Coordination
Staff assigned to government authorities' EOC.
Host National Society's EOC fully operational.
Partner National Society/International Federation involved in Host National Society's EOC.
Communication and information protocols.
Follow National Society's standard operational procedures
Initial plan of action


Rapid onset disaster
Local/National
72 hours
Regional/Global
Common activities
Search and rescue
First-aid teams
Public health in emergencies
Assessment
Feeding and sheltering
DMIS reports
NDRT deployment
Family links
Warehousing
Volunteer management
72 hour field assessment
National Society response capacity self-assessment
Analysis and decision-making
Coordination
Common activities
DMIS
Info bulletin
DREF
Preliminary appeal?
International media
DRU
FACT?
ERU?
RDRT?
Logistics
Telecom
Coordination
Initial plan of action

First 72 hours

National Society response capacity self-assessment form (A)

National Society/branches GPS coordinates (If available):

1 National Society	**What is the scope of the disaster compared with the first 24 hours?** ❑ Less than expected ❑ As expected ❑ Greater than expected Comments:
2 Describe what has changed from the 24 hour report at headquarters or branches in terms of conditions and capacities: ❑ No damage ❑ Minor damage ❑ Moderate damage ❑ Destroyed	**Headquarters level**: Structural/infrastructural, staff, volunteers, other: **Branch level**: Structural/infrastructural, staff, volunteers, other: **Capacity to fund the operation?** For how long and for how many people?
6 Telecommunications Describe what has changed	**In general**: Land line Mobile HF/VHF/SMS
7 Warehousing and relief goods ❑ Fully operational ❑ Partially operational ❑ Not operational	What relief items or services (with specifications) will you need in the first four weeks of the response? What is the priority of goods, individual items or packages? How many do you need and will you be able to distribute? Where will you need them? What is the likely priority of delivery by village/area, etc.?

8 Coordination with others and actions of others Describe what has changed	With local authorities and other NGOs	National authorities – EOC and UN agencies	With the Movement (National Societies, International Federation, ICRC in-country)
9 Describe what has changed in terms of safety or security issues	**In general, before the disaster**	**During and after the disaster**	
10 Resources required? Has the National Society requested and agreed on any of the following?	FACT: ❑ Yes ❑ No RDRT: ❑ Yes ❑ No ERU: ❑ Yes ❑ No DREF: ❑ Yes ❑ No	Cash: ❑ Yes ❑ No Logistics: ❑ Yes ❑ No	

Minor damage: Building can be safely occupied but needs minor repairs.
Moderate damage: Building cannot be safely occupied and requires major repairs.
Destroyed: Obviously destroyed and requires rebuilding.
Note: If necessary, sketch a map to show location.

Experience coordinating international response without assistance? ❑ Yes ❑ No
Capacity to respond quickly ❑ Yes ❑ No

First 72 hours
Field assessment form (B)

Type of disaster: **GPS coordinates:**

1 Geographic area		Approximate number of inhabitants	
2 Community assessed		Approximate number of inhabitants	
3 Name of assessment team leader:		**4 Name of contact person in the community and contact info:**	
5 Date	**6 Time**		
7 Persons (Update)	# Injured	# Dead	# Missing
8 Homes affected (Update)	# Minor damage	# Moderate damage	# Destroyed
9 # of families (Update) (provide percentage if number is not possible within 4 hours)	**Currently known** displaced evacuated	**Projected** displaced evacuated	

(Observation) Describe conditions

10 How are the means of communication functioning?
Land line, mobile phone, VHF, HF, etc.

11 Relief	
What are the climatic factors?	Is the current shelter resistant to rain, wind, sun, cold?
What is the physical status of existing structures?	How many people lack adequate shelter?

What is the immediate risk to life? How many are at risk? Which social groups are most at risk and why?	What is the customary provision of clothing, blankets and bedding for women, men, children and infants, pregnant and lactating women, and older people?

What did a typical household used to have?

12 Food and nutrition

Is food available in the disaster area? ❑ Yes ❑ No What kind?	Is there enough food for the potential number of people potentially affected? ❑ Yes ❑ No Explain:
Is this food accessible to all the affected people, or do only a few have access?	Explain:
Do people have access to cooking facilities? **Utensils**: ❑ None ❑ Few ❑ Many **Fuel**: ❑ None ❑ Few ❑ Many **Pots**: ❑ None ❑ Few ❑ Many **Other**:	Do people have access to a safe place to prepare food and eat it? ❑ Yes ❑ No Describe:

What are people's dietary habits (main food products they normally consume)?

Are there specific groups that face difficulties in obtaining food in this site? If so, who and why?

13 Health

What was the health and nutritional situation of the people before the disaster? Explain:	**Is there a health emergency?** What is its nature? How is it likely to evolve?

How many people have been experiencing serious trauma or other psychological effects since the disaster?	**Describe access and conditions to health facilities:**
Is any disaster-related problem affecting health facilities? Equipment: Medicines: Consumables: Vaccines: Number of staff:	
What health activities should the Red Cross Red Crescent engage in to supply needs/resources?	Number and kind of specific health target/vulnerable population
14 Safety, security and protection	
Have families been separated? threats? ❑ Yes ❑ No Approximate number: Has registration of affected people been undertaken? ❑ Yes ❑ No	Are there any potential security
Have families been separated? Numbers: Locations: Details of registration process: Are there unaccompanied minors?	Explain:
Restoring family links Is there any need for restoring family links? ❑ Yes ❑ No	Explain:
Are people subject to: Physical abuse: Sexual abuse: Gender-based or psychological intimidation: Insecurity: Discrimination: Are people taking risks or is access to basic needs blocked by weapon contamination (mines/ERW)?	Explain:

15 Water and sanitation

Is the incidence of diarrhoeal diseases above normal? Is it increasing or decreasing?			
Water supply Are people getting enough water for: Drinking ❑ Yes ❑ No Bathing ❑ Yes ❑ No Cleaning ❑ Yes ❑ No	Are people using unsafe water source as alternatives? Why?	How is water carried and stored in household?	Do people treat water at home by: Filtering ❑ Yes ❑ No Boiling ❑ Yes ❑ No Chlorinating ❑ Yes ❑ No
Excretal disposal Where do people defecate/urinate at present?			
Hand washing Are there adequate hand washing/bathing facilities at key points and are they used? Is soap or an alternative available?			

16 Sheltering

Impact on people's homes and key services:

Houses:	❑ low	❑ medium	❑ high
Water:	❑ low	❑ medium	❑ high
Sanitation:	❑ low	❑ medium	❑ high
Electricity:	❑ low	❑ medium	❑ high
Health:	❑ low	❑ medium	❑ high
Community centres:	❑ low	❑ medium	❑ high

If homes have been severely damaged or destroyed, where are people living?

On the site of their former homes?
❑ Yes ❑ No
Approximate numbers:

With friends or family?
❑ Yes ❑ No
Approximate numbers:

In camps? ❑ Yes ❑ No
Approximate numbers:

Do people use their homes for productive activities? ❑ Yes ❑ No Have they lost access to this space to produce goods? ❑ Yes ❑ No	**Did people use their homes to store:** Tools or equipment? ❑ Yes ❑ No Provide shelter or food for animals? ❑ Yes ❑ No
Are they unable to run small businesses? ❑ Yes ❑ No Has the disaster affected their productive activities? ❑ Yes ❑ No	How has the disaster affected this use? Explain:
Shelter requirements – factors: Need to resist heavy rain: ❑ Yes ❑ No Need to resist heavy wind: ❑ Yes ❑ No Need to resist hot weather: ❑ Yes ❑ No Need to resist cold weather: ❑ Yes ❑ No	**Describe the physical status climatic of shelters:**

17 Livelihoods

What are the main types of activities households use to make a living? (e.g. farmer with smallholding, office worker, wage labourer, remittances, a combination of activities, etc.)	What were the main sources of income and food prior to the disaster?
What are the main agricultural activities? Who does what on the land and who owns it?	What has happened to households that run shops? What were the main sources of income and food prior to the disaster?

Have communities lost key items (assets) that they need for their work (e.g. fishing or farming equipment, means of transport, tools or equipment, etc.)? Explain:

Have important environmental assets been damaged or destroyed which may affect people's future ability to make a living?	Briefly explain:

Update damage and access

11 Status of roads. Best way to access affected area		
12 Conditions/access of (as applicable): • Rail • Bridges • Water facilities • Sewage systems • Schools • Health facilities • Electricity • Telephones • Airport • Seaport		**Concerns for:** Hazardous materials Toxic spills Oil spills Mines/ERW Other:

17 Answer the following questions

a Is the local government active in the disaster response? ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Don't know

b Is the community responding to the disaster? ❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Don't know

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The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary Service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

ICRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Movement in situations of conflict. It also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles.
Etablished in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

www.icrc.org

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies promotes the humanitarian activities of National Societies among vulnerable people.

By coordinating international disaster relief and encouraging development support it seeks to prevent and alleviate human suffering.

The International Federation, the National Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross together constitute the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

www.ifrc.org

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