Needs assessments in emergencies

A short guide

Introduction

- The role of assessment in an emergency is a critical step and ongoing process in determining humanitarian needs and following humanitarian principles.
- Assessments help to identify the most appropriate options for responding to an emergency and are vital in guiding programme design.
- Through assessments, humanitarian organisations gain accurate data about the needs and operating context, and engage with local communities and other humanitarian actors in the affected area.
- Where possible, you should always consider conducting a field assessment in partnership with others, or participate in coordinated assessment eg in conjunction with UNOCHA.
- The purpose of this guide is:
  - To provide a short overview of how to conduct a needs assessment in emergencies
  - To explain how to use Tearfund's needs assessment tools
- For more detailed guidance and additional resources, refer to the annexes of this document.

Why do we do assessments?

- To know more detail about the situation
- To decide what needs to be done
- To determine who has the capacity to respond appropriately
- To determine what we should and should not do

Needs assessments should be the basis for:

- Decision-making
- Planning an appropriate response (programme/project)
- Mobilising resources (staff, funds, media coverage)
- Monitoring and evaluation

Front cover photo: Esther Trewinnard/Tearfund

Sections in this guide

1. Different types of needs assessment

In an emergency context, needs assessment is a continuous process. This means that assessments may be repeated many times with varying levels of depth and with different focus areas. This ensures that the response remains appropriate and relevant even as the situation changes. The fact that there are different types of assessment (Table 1) facilitates this. Typically, a multi-sectoral assessment should be conducted as soon as possible after the emergency. This may lead to immediate implementation of response activities, but this would be followed by more detailed or sector-specific assessment(s) as time and access permit.

	Direct observation	Multi-sectoral	Sector-specific	Secondary data review
Timeframe	24–72 hours after a rapid-onset emergency	72 hours to 15 days	15–30 days	Gathering and analysis of secondary data should start BEFORE other assessments and continue THROUGHOUT the assessment period. See Table 2.
Access to information source	Limited, only able to access 1–2 locations for observation and short interviews	Possible to visit multiple locations and interview a representative sample of informants	Full access	
Type of information source	Local services and government, staff observation	Key informants (eg community leaders or households)	Selected informant(s) with sectoral information	The following are online platforms where you can find secondary data from situation reports, assessment reports, disaster summary sheets and humanitarian profiles: • ReliefWeb • Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System • UNOCHA updates Other secondary data sources may include: data collected by government agencies (eg population, economic and health data); international and local media reports; and satellite imagery.
Importance of assumptions	High Insufficient time to gather full information, so assumptions based on previous experience are required	Medium Assumptions based on indicators and informants, but can be verified from other sources	Low Sufficient time to interview sectoral informants	
Tools	Tearfund Direct Observational Tool in Emergencies Tearfund Five Discussion Questions Tool Needs assessment in emergencies – Good practices & soft skills	Tearfund Initial Rapid Needs Assessment Tool Multi- Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA)[1] – endorsed by IASC and UN Cluster IFRC 2008. Guidelines for emergency assessment See pages 110–123 for 24–72 hour rapid assessment forms Needs assessment in emergencies – Good practices and soft skills	See Annexes 1 and 2 of this document for an Emergency Market Assessment Needs assessment in emergencies – good practices and soft skills	

[1] If possible, please check https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/ to see if there is any updated version.

1.1. Secondary data review

The assessment process should begin with a preliminary rapid review of all available secondary information, followed by a decision as to whether or not a field assessment is required.

What is secondary data?

When an emergency occurs, **secondary data** is information that is readily available because it was collected before or immediately after the emergency by other agencies. This is **in contrast to primary data**: new data that Tearfund collects directly from the field, after an emergency.

When to review secondary data

Secondary data needs to be collated and reviewed as soon as possible following an emergency, beginning BEFORE primary data collection.

Secondary data should be the main source of information during the first few weeks of a crisis. Primary data should be collected to confirm secondary data and fill gaps in the secondary data, not the other way around.

How to review secondary data

1. First, decide what **questions** need to be answered. For example:
    - What was the situation before the emergency? What is the situation now?
    - Where are the most affected areas?
    - How many people are affected as a proportion of the total population?
    - Who are the most affected groups?
    - Which local, national and international actors might respond and what is their capacity?
    - What is the operational context (security, access and infrastructure) like?
2. Begin to gather secondary data that is useful to answer these questions. Focus on data that comes from **reliable sources**. Consider:
    - Is the information up to date?
    - Who is providing the information and can they be trusted?
    - Why are they providing the information?
3. Try to **triangulate** the data: look for the same evidence from multiple sources. Take more notice of data that can be triangulated.
4. Identify significant information gaps that primary data collection will fill. If there are gaps, use the secondary data to plan a field needs assessment.

2. How to conduct a field needs assessment

2.1. Tearfund's needs assessment tools

	Direct Observational Tool (View tool by clicking here)	**Five Discussion Questions** (View tool by clicking here)	**Initial Rapid Needs Assessment Tool** (View tool by clicking here)
Purpose	This tool helps individuals to record their initial observations systematically in the immediate aftermath of a rapid-onset emergency. Such observations will help to make initial decisions about **the response**.	These questions help individuals to engage in initial conversations with people who have been affected by an emergency. They will help to obtain critical information about the effects of the emergency. This information can then be used to verify observations made using the Direct Observational Tool.	This is a general multi-sectoral assessment to be adapted to context and conducted within 15 days of a rapid-onset emergency. It produces information about the priority needs of affected households. It will inform decisions about **the most appropriate response** to the emergency. For example, proceed with implementation of project activities in certain sectors, or request a sector-specific needs assessment.
Who are they for	For any individual sent to assess the emergency situation *This tool is self-explanatory and straightforward to use. It is especially useful for staff, partners or local churches that do not have previous experience in conducting needs assessments in an emergency context.*	For any individual sent to assess the emergency situation *This tool is self-explanatory and straightforward to use. It is especially useful for staff, partners or local churches that do not have previous experience in conducting needs assessments in an emergency context.*	For team/individuals required to conduct assessments where there is **no** UN- or UN Cluster-coordinated assessment *Training data collectors to use this tool will be beneficial to improve data quality and assessment results.*
When to use	Within the first 24 to 72 hours of a rapid-onset emergency	Within the first 24 to 72 hours of a rapid-onset emergency	Within the first 24 hours to 7 days of a rapid-onset emergency
How to use	1. Use this form to provide an initial assessment of areas that you visit. 2. **Spend time in communal or public places** such as markets, religious buildings, water points and key road junctions to get a basic impression of how people are coping in response to the emergency.	1. Use this form when you have conversations with individuals or groups of individuals in affected communities. 2. **Introduce yourself** and your organisation. Explain your reasons for visiting the community. 3. **Ask the five questions** to ensure that you obtain critical information about the	1. Use this form to assess households that you visit. 2. **Introduce yourself** and explain the purpose of the survey before launching into the questions. 3. **Record basic information about the community** which you are assessing (ie location, population size) and **household-level information** from the informant. 4. **Ask disability screening questions** to identify people at risk of restricted participation.

	3. **Record basic information** of the community you are assessing (ie location, population size). 4. **Circle pictures** that best describe the situation on the ground. 5. Write down **any additional observations**. 6. **Complete the form** while present in the community.	effects of the emergency. Record the answers. 4. Before you close the conversation, **record basic information** (gender, ethnicity and age) about the person(s) you have been speaking to.	5. **Ask critical issue questions** to find out the informant's perceived needs and preferred modes of assistance. 6. **Ask questions for each of the following sectors**: WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene), food security, shelter/NFIs, livelihoods, markets and protection. You may spend more time on sectors highlighted as priorities by the informant. 7. **Ask communications questions** to find out how the informant would like to receive information about the response and provide feedback.
Things to note	● Your answers should be based on your impressions from visiting the area, village or community. ● This form can be completed without household surveys or interviews. However, any conversations with individuals in the affected area will help verify the data you collect through observation. ● This is a one-page document and you could print off a number of copies before travelling to affected areas and for different members of the team. ● Observations will focus on the following sectors: ○ WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) – availability of and access to safe drinking water ○ Food security – availability of food ○ Shelter – extent of damage to shelter ○ Markets – level of market/trader presence	● These questions are especially useful for staff who do not have previous experience of conducting emergency needs assessment. ● They are contained in a one-page document, so you could print off a number of copies before travelling to affected communities. ● You can be assured that if you ask these five questions in conversations with affected people, you will obtain useful information to feed into early situation analysis and decision-making. ● We expect this should take 10–15 minutes to complete. ● However, these questions do not replace a multi-sectoral needs assessment and should be followed by one, such as the Initial Rapid Needs Assessment.	● Be conscious that every context and community is unique and there will be underlying cultural norms and practices that may be unseen or unknown by you as an assessor. ● Certain questions will require cultural sensitivity and contextual knowledge (eg household sanitation practices, types of staple food) to modify how the question is asked and what multiple choices to provide. ● It may be appropriate to identify community leaders and discuss the assessment with them before conducting household visits. ● Ensure your discussions are inclusive, recognising the need for men, women and children to share their reflections on the crisis. ● Consider the most appropriate time of day to conduct household visits, as there may be certain times when part of the community is absent and this will impact the range of responses and their prioritisation of needs. ● The amount of time needed to cover all questions is approximately 30–45 minutes.

2.2. Methods for information–gathering

Available methods	Tools and 'how to' guides
Key Informant Interviews	IFRC (2008) *Guidelines for emergency assessment*, Chapter 6.3.2 *Humanitarian needs assessment: the good enough guide*, Tool 5
Focus Group Discussions	IFRC (2008) *Guidelines for emergency assessment*, Chapter 6.3.2 *The good enough guide*, Tool 6
Direct observation	IFRC (2008) *Guidelines for emergency assessment*, Chapter 6.3.1 *The good enough guide*, Tool 9
Surveys	*The good enough guide*, Tool 7
Participatory rural appraisal methods – eg transect walks, mapping, seasonal calendars, timelines	ALNAP *Participation Handbook*

2.3. Sampling in emergency contexts

When undertaking field needs assessments in emergency contexts, it is not possible to collect information from every individual/household in the affected population or area. Therefore, it is necessary to select a limited number – or a sample – of individuals or households. The sample size should be big enough to be a representation of the affected population. There are several key considerations to be made when selecting the sample for a needs assessment.

1. **Coverage.** Aim to cover as wide a cross-section of the relevant geographical area as is possible within your resources. Try to avoid only assessing in easy-to-reach locations.
2. **Sample size.** Sample size is the number of completed responses your survey receives. There is no specific number or percentage that is 'ideal' when considering how many surveys to conduct during an assessment. There are many factors that influence what could be considered a reasonable and representative sample size such as type of crisis, context, access and displacement. There are online tools that can help calculate the number of individuals/households to assess, based on the population size of the affected geographical area, in order to get a high probability/likelihood that the sample data is representative of the whole group.[2] In an emergency, aim for as large a sample as you can manage with the time and resources at your disposal. Where there is a choice, it is generally better to visit more locations and interview fewer people in each, than concentrating on a single location with a larger number of interviews. In a protracted

[2] For example, https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/sample-size-calculator/

crisis or where the assessment is used to identify the most vulnerable people, then calculating the sample size will be more important to ensure the results are representative and less likely to be based on chance.

3. **Sampling methods.** There are different methods available for selecting a sample, outlined in the table below. Some are more effective than others, so use probability sampling if at all possible. If non-probability sampling is used, acknowledge this when reporting your results: describe clearly what you have done, and explain why.

4. **The 'good enough' principle.** You need to decide what is 'good enough' in your context, at any particular stage of the emergency. For example, in the immediate aftermath of the emergency, you may only have time to assess a small sample of households; access to affected areas may be poor, limiting the number of locations that you can visit. You may consider this to be 'good enough'. However, what is 'good enough' will change over time, so you should be ready to increase the coverage of the assessment, increase your sample size, and improve your sampling method whenever it becomes possible to do so.

5. **Sample diversity.** Notwithstanding the 'good enough' principle, you should ALWAYS be confident that men, women, children, young people, the elderly, people with disabilities and minorities are all represented within the sample. Does the affected population contain population sub-groups? Are all groups represented within the sample?

Non-probability sampling methods are those in which different individuals/households do not have an equal chance of being selected because the sample is not picked at random. Convenience sampling and purposive sampling are the most common non-probability methods.	**Convenience sampling (not recommended)** Try to avoid sampling locations, households or individuals because they are the most accessible or convenient. This is called convenience sampling, and it yields samples that are **not representative**. It is not possible to make generalisations about the whole affected population if convenience sampling has been used.	**Purposive sampling or key informants** Individuals are selected for assessment with a specific purpose in mind. You may identify **key informants** – for example, community leaders – who are able to represent the situation and needs in their whole community. However, if you are using this method, make sure that your key informants are well qualified to represent other people's needs. Be aware that some tools are not well suited to key informants. The MIRA and Five Discussion Questions are well suited. The Initial Rapid Needs Assessment is designed to survey households and will be more effective if used with probability sampling (below).
Probability sampling methods are those in which all individuals/households are picked at random from the affected population. This includes simple random and systematic sampling. These methods, followed correctly, will produce samples of people or households who are likely to be representative of the whole population.	**Simple random sampling** Obtain or draw up a list of every household or individual within the area under assessment. Number every household/ individual on the list. Then use a random-number generator[3] to select a sample of your chosen size. If a list of households is not available, see 'Systematic sampling' (right) for a different method of probability sampling.	**Systematic sampling or 'spin the pen'** Stand in the centre of the assessment location. Spin a bottle or pen on the ground. Walk in the direction indicated by the end of the bottle/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 survey. This gives the interval **(n)** between sample houses. Walk back to the centre of assessment location, counting the houses again, but this time interviewing every nth household.

[3] For example, https://www.randomizer.org/

2.4. Data analysis and making recommendations

Data analysis should start as soon as you begin to receive data (secondary or primary), and continue for as long as you are receiving it. Test and revise your analysis against new data as it comes in and new sources as they are identified. The table below contains key questions to ask and answer. It is adapted from a framework for analysis proposed by UNHCR.[4]

Needs of the affected people	What are the humanitarian needs? Which are the most vulnerable groups? How are existing vulnerabilities being aggravated? What risks do affected people face and what are the consequences?
Capacity to respond	What capacities and resources do the affected population have to meet their needs? What is the national response capacity? If a national response is underway, who are the key actors? What is the international response capacity? Who are the key actors? Are there gaps in capacity to respond?
Operational constraints on the response	Access of relief actors to the affected population Access of the affected population to assistance Security and physical constraints

Four different phases of analysis will help to make sense of needs assessment data. These are: description, triangulation, interpretation and anticipation.

- **Description.** Grouping, summarising and comparing data in order to identify trends, patterns, outliers and anomalies. Basic descriptive statistics such as percentage, median, mode or mean can be used (eg 74 per cent of respondents preferred in-kind assistance over cash-based; on average, respondents reported having one meal per day, compared to three meals per day before the emergency).
- **Triangulation.** Comparing the data from at least three different sources or methods. For example, 57 percent of respondents identified access to clean water as one of their top three priority needs: does this correspond with secondary data and assessor observations? If at least two sources agree, you can be more confident in your findings.
- **Interpretation.** Drawing conclusions about what the data shows about the severity of impact on different groups and their most important needs.
- **Anticipation.** Predicting future developments and envisaging different possible outcomes for the current situation. Identifying factors, assumptions, and drivers that might change or exacerbate the crisis for some or all of the population, such as lack of governance capacity, social discrimination or the development of drought or flooding.

[4] UNHCR *Needs Assessment Handbook* page 44

An assessment team must make clear strategic recommendations to decision-makers for the most appropriate response to the emergency. At a minimum, the assessment team must answer and provide recommendations which answer the following critical questions:

- Should Tearfund respond and why?
- What should the response strategy be? What specific programme interventions should be pursued, and why?[5]
- What special considerations do we need to take into account in the programming strategy regarding cross-cutting issues including gender and protection?
- What are the operational requirements to implement the recommended programme?

The findings will feed into the response decision-making framework.

[5] As articulated in Tearfund's *Disaster and humanitarian specialisms* paper, Tearfund offers Resilient Livelihoods, WASH, Gender/Protection and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in all humanitarian responses. And other sectoral responses are integrated depending on the needs.

3. How to coordinate with others during needs assessment

A coordinated needs assessment (CNA) is an assessment that is planned and carried out by a group of humanitarian actors. The results of a CNA are shared with the whole humanitarian community to promote a common understanding of the situation, the needs of affected communities, and the response required.

Large-scale coordinated needs assessments tend to be coordinated by a government agency, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), an assessment working group, or a cluster. Assessment teams should always consider participating in a CNA if one is being coordinated by these actors, because it reduces the 'assessment burden' on communities.

Smaller-scale coordinated needs assessments may also be achievable through NGOs working in partnership with one another, and sharing methodologies and resources. Before beginning a field assessment, a Tearfund team ought to communicate with other actors in the humanitarian community to learn what assessments are being planned.

Being an effective partner[6] in a CNA means two things:

- You are not passive. You are actively involved in developing the assessment process on behalf of the organisation and encouraging other organisations to do the same. This will help to ensure that the CNA is useful and relevant.
- You use the outputs of the CNA, and incorporate the findings into the recommendations that you make.

[6] *Humanitarian needs assessment: the good enough guide*

4. How to ensure sensitivity, inclusion and participation

Assessments can place a burden on the disaster-affected communities and infrastructure, or can even make them more vulnerable in conflict situations if there is poor coordination among the many humanitarian agencies conducting assessments. The following ‘Dos and Don'ts’ can help avert negative impacts:

DO…

- Participate in coordinated assessments when appropriate, and share plans and results with other agencies, UN and local authorities.
- Inform the local community and local authorities well before an assessment takes place. Share assessment objectives, plans and results with the community, and clearly communicate the organisation’s mandate.
- Involve vulnerable groups and a wide range of women, men, elderly, children and people with disabilities who are affected by the disaster.
- Hold separate discussions with different groups to create space for individuals and groups to speak openly eg local officials, community groups, disabled people’s organisations (DPOs), men, women and local staff. Ask these groups for their opinions on needs and priorities.
- Ensure the assessment team is gender-balanced as much as possible and that women are interviewed by female assessors.
- Provide appropriate assistance at the same time as assessing if at all possible.
- Feed back the results of the needs assessment to the community.

DON’T…

- Duplicate the work of other agencies as this will contribute to assessment overload.
- Put communities or staff at unnecessary risk.
- Continue assessing without providing assistance, if assistance is urgent and is able to be provided.
- Be a humanitarian tourist (visiting and observing with no purpose or assistance).
- Make promises that cannot be kept or raise expectations unnecessarily.

5. Cross-cutting themes

Environment

Below are some points to help ensure environmental concerns are addressed in the assessment:

- Assess coping strategies that impact the environment such as over-exploitation of common resources (eg wood for fuel and/or construction, water sources).
- Understand the potential short- and long-term impacts of the humanitarian response on the environment and its negative impact on livelihood and economic recovery and sustainability. Identify ways to protect and preserve the natural environment from further degradation in all responses.
- Understand the impact of the disaster on the environment; assess damage and potential for secondary environmental hazards such as toxic chemical spills and their potential effects on housing and settlements and impact on the local economy and livelihoods.
- Identify appropriate sites for water supply, toilet facilities and solid waste management that will have the least negative impact on the environment.
- For further information and guidance, see Tearfund's Rapid Environmental Assessment Tool.[7]

Protection

Below are some points to help ensure the needs of vulnerable groups are addressed in the assessment:

- Assess access to humanitarian assistance for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people living with a physical or mental health disability, women, and people from particular ethnic or social minority groups.
- Enable equal participation of women and men and all age categories in planning, decision-making and local management to help ensure the entire affected population has safe and easy access to appropriate assistance and services.
- Where appropriate consider if 'reasonable accommodation' needs to be made to ensure access and participation of people with disabilities to the process, eg transportation assistance to discussions, sign language interpreters; use larger font written resources/ posters etc.
- See if 'disabled people's organisations' (DPOs) exist in the location and ensure their participation with the needs assessment process.
- Assess the psychosocial needs of all vulnerable groups, remembering that feelings of loss, trauma, confusion and fear can be more damaging for older people; consider the stigma attached to mental health and make sure you create a safe environment for people to discuss sensitive issues.

[7] Appendix 6 Tearfund's Rapid Environmental Assessment Tool in 'Thinking Beyond Response'

Conflict

The word ‘conflict’ covers many different situations. Conflict can be open and obvious, or more subtle and hidden. It may involve countries or regions, or may be more localised within communities or even households. Every conflict, regardless of the type or level, possesses certain dynamics that can either drive the conflict, making it worse, or strengthen dynamics that can contribute to peace. In responding to an emergency we interact with these conflict dynamics and run the risk of exacerbating the conflict, making violence more likely. Without knowing, we might be doing harm. It is therefore vital that we analyse both the context, so that we begin to understand these dynamics, and our actions, to see how we are influencing these dynamics. This ensures that our actions are ‘conflict sensitive’ and that we do not accidentally cause harm. For further information and guidance, see Tearfund’s Conflict Sensitivity Assessment.[8]

Gender

- In emergency situations, men and women have different needs, interests, vulnerabilities, capacities and coping strategies. Widespread armed and ethnic conflict also has a gender dimension: women and girls are more vulnerable to sexual violence, intimidation and abuse.
- Ensure assessments gather the perspectives of women, men, girls and boys. It may be important to hold separate discussions with women and with men in order that they can speak freely about their needs, capacities and vulnerabilities.
- Ensure the assessment team is gender balanced as much as possible. In some cultures it will be inappropriate for men to interview female community members.
- Consider the time and place of the assessments to ensure that women are able to attend in safety and security.
- For further information and guidance on how to do a rapid gender assessment in emergencies, visit Care International’s online resource.[9]

[8] https://learn.tearfund.org/~/media/files/tilz/topics/dmt/disasters_2019/disasters_and_conflict_resources/conflict_sensitivity_assessment.pdf?la=en
[9] https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/images/documents/rapid-gender-analysis/GIE-Guidance-Note-Rapid-Gender-Analysis.pdf

6. Reporting

Preliminary findings

Preliminary updates on the humanitarian situation and initial assessment observations should be shared with key stakeholders as quickly and as regularly as possible.

Final report

The assessment team should prepare and finalise a formal assessment report detailing the main findings and recommendations. The report should be as user-friendly as possible. Clearly define key terms to avoid misunderstanding. Start with an executive summary, highlight key points, use bullet points, identify your sources in footnotes and include visual aids, for example, maps and graphs.

Basic report outline

- Executive summary and recommendations
- Methodology
- Background
- General humanitarian overview
- Technical sectors
- Cross-cutting issues
- Response by other actors/stakeholders
- Key findings
- Recommendations/priorities

A written assessment report is not the only way to communicate your findings. You may need to create other products, such as briefing notes and slide presentations. Different users require different levels of detail in different formats.

In sensitive situations, it may be necessary to prepare two versions of the assessment report: the complete assessment report for internal use only, and a second report to share with external stakeholders. The external version would usually exclude sections relating to the set-up of operations or other internal considerations. The reports must be approved for public use by the Country Director before sharing with others.

Be prepared to defend any conclusions you draw and recommendations you make. You can indicate what you think is the most suitable response but you should primarily present the evidence to allow decision-makers to draw their own conclusions. It can be useful to think about how your findings can be used to support the full range of organisational requirements: logistics, human resources, monitoring and evaluation, fundraising etc.

Indicative budget

In some cases the Terms of Reference (ToR) will request that the assessment reports should include an indicative budget showing the programme and operational costs of the recommendations put forward by the assessment team.

Annex 1: Emergency Market Assessment in Annexes 1 and 2 of the Initial Rapid Needs Assessment

Analysis of market assessment data

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Step 1: Determine whether affected people have access to markets</th></tr>
<tr><td>Select as appropriate.
▢ Access to markets is non-existent (nobody has access)
▢ Access to markets is partial (some people do not have access)
▢ Access to markets is complete (everybody has access)
If access is non-existent or partial, explain the reasons why:</td><td>If access to markets is non-existent and the reasons cannot be overcome soon → Stop the market assessment and recommend in-kind assistance.
If access to markets is complete → Cash and voucher assistance (CVA) may be feasible. Go to Step 2.
If access to markets is partial → Estimate what percentage (%) of the population are unable to access markets and identify the reasons why they cannot. Then:
● If the reasons can not be overcome AND/OR the % of the population affected is high → Consider in-kind assistance.
● If the reasons can be overcome OR the % of the population affected is low → Cash and voucher assistance (CVA) may be feasible. Go to Step 2.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Step 2: Determine if the commodities that the affected population say they need are available, partially available or unavailable in the markets</th></tr>
<tr><td>See definitions below and select as appropriate.
Commodity 1: ▢ Unavailable ▢ Partially available ▢ Available
Commodity 2: ▢ Unavailable ▢ Partially available ▢ Available
Commodity 3: ▢ Unavailable ▢ Partially available ▢ Available

<u>Definitions:</u>
Unavailable – commodity stock levels are very low and cannot be restocked to a higher level within two weeks.
Partially available – the amount of stock that is already available or will be available within 2 weeks is less than what is needed by the affected population / Traders are not certain about their capacity to re-stock at the same level as demand.</td><td>If the commodities are unavailable → Recommend in-kind assistance.
If the commodities are available → Cash and voucher assistance (CVA) is likely to be feasible. Go to Step 3.
If items are partially available → Estimate how long it will take for stock levels to improve. Also consider when an intervention (whether in-kind or CVA) needs to take place. Then:
● If you are certain that stock levels will not have risen by the time of intervention ie the need is extremely urgent → Recommend in-kind assistance.
● If it is possible that stock levels might improve in time for an intervention ie the intervention is not life-saving → Cash and voucher assistance (CVA) may still be feasible, given time. Go to Step 3.</td></tr>
</table>

Available – the amount of stock that is already available or will be available within 2 weeks is enough to meet the demand of the affected population.	

Step 3: Is cash or voucher assistance feasible?

You should only have reached this step if:

- access to markets is full, or partial but can be overcome/does not affect many people AND markets are functional or partially functional

Recommend cash and voucher assistance unless:

- beneficiaries prefer in-kind assistance. Please note that it is very rare for people not to prefer cash if the market is functional and they understand what they will receive. Make sure you understand their reasoning and they understand what they will receive.
- there is very high potential for cash and voucher assistance to cause or create conflict
- cash will pose significant security risks for beneficiaries and staff

Annex 2: Sources of further information

Extended guides to needs assessment

Humanitarian needs assessment: the good enough guide

UNHCR needs assessment handbook

IFRC 2008. *Guidelines for emergency assessment*

ALNAP *Participation handbook*

Tearfund sector-specific needs assessments

Conflict Sensitivity Assessment

Rapid Environmental Assessment (Appendix 6 in 'Thinking Beyond Response')

Needs assessment in emergencies – Good practices and soft skills

Research and learning

Lessons learned: needs assessments in Cox's Bazar

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