

G. DISASTER ASSESSMENT

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G.1. Introduction

Importance of assessment

Assessment is a vital component of the planning and implementation of the response. Assessments provide the information on which the response is designed and adapted. While good assessment information does not guarantee a good response, poor assessment information almost certainly guarantees a bad one.

The use of standard methodologies means that information may be compared with data collected during previous assessments and the work of different assessment teams is complementary.

Purpose of assessment

The overall purpose of an assessment is to assist the government of an affected country, the UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC), and/or the UN Disaster Management Team (UN DMT) in the identification and prioritization of needs for international disaster relief assistance and to facilitate a timely, appropriate response by the international community.

The UNDAC team will normally not have to do assessments itself. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Working Group statement on UNDAC of 2002 states:

“Assessments: Substantive sectoral assessments will normally be made by the host government, UN agencies or qualified members of the IASC family. An UNDAC team may be requested to provide technical support in support of the RC/HC or Country Team.”

UNDAC's vital function is to ensure that the multiple assessments conducted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies and international responders are coordinated and organized systematically without gaps and duplications and that all sectors of humanitarian activity are competently

assessed. Further, the UNDAC team must ensure that the information obtained is collated and made available to all.

In the early stages of an emergency, especially in Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) operations, an UNDAC team may have to do an assessment itself. An UNDAC assessment is not meant to supplant specialist sectoral assessments. In the initial phase of an emergency, a broad analysis is needed, i.e., what are the main problems and who is affected by them. An UNDAC team is able to cover a large area in a short space of time and is well-suited to develop a quick snapshot of field conditions, relief delivery requirements and constraints.

This chapter is intended to help UNDAC teams gather information about the overall situation and key sectors, increasing flexibility and reducing time and expense. It does not eliminate the need for special sector-focused assessments but rather provides a basis for a focused deployment of such.

G 6.1.1. Scope of UNDAC assessment

The UNDAC team focuses, in most cases, on the rapid initial assessment as soon as possible after the impact of a sudden-onset disaster. An UNDAC assessment should help determine the extent of a disaster and its impact on the population as well as needs for international assistance during the immediate relief phase. During this phase, exceptional measures to meet the basic needs of survivors with regard to, e.g., USAR, medical assistance, water and sanitation, immediate food needs, and emergency shelter may need to be taken.

Rapid initial assessment

A rapid initial assessment comprises situation, resource, and needs assessment in the early, critical stage of a disaster and is intended to determine the type of immediate relief response needed.

The assessment provides information about the needs, possible intervention strategies and resource requirements and aims to identify:

- The impact a disaster has had on a society and its infrastructure, and the ability of that society to cope.
- The most vulnerable segments of the population that need to be targeted for assistance.
- The level of response by the affected country, its internal capacity to cope with the situation, and the level of response from the international community.
- The most urgent relief needs and potential methods of meeting them most effectively.
- Coordination mechanisms.
- Significant political, cultural, and logistical constraints.

And:

- Make recommendations which define and set priorities on the

actions and resources needed for immediate response.

- Highlight special concerns regarding the development of the situation.
- Draw attention to geographical areas/substantive sectors needing in-depth assessment.

G.2. Methodology and planning

G.2.1. Keys to successful assessment

Whether one is coordinating assessments or carrying them out, the principles for assessments remain common. Several factors contribute to the design of a successful and accurate assessment.

Collaboration with national/local authorities

The UNDAC team must ensure that close coordination is maintained with the national services and local authorities. Existing equipment, resources and organizational structures should be used to the extent possible. The information obtained through local authorities is normally quite extensive.

Involvement of UN agencies

Within the UN system, a number of specialized agencies have the responsibility and/or capability for a detailed sectoral assessment of needs in accordance with their mandate and operational experience. The UNDAC team must cooperate closely with the representatives and project staff of these agencies.

Identify information that is vital for the users

The users of an UNDAC assessment are normally the government of an affected country, the RC/HC, the UN DMT, OCHA-Geneva, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), decision-makers and emergency practitioners/providers of international relief assistance. The team should determine, in so far as possible, what information is required by these stakeholders and how much detail is necessary for the information to be useful.

Use recognized terminology, standards and procedures

To provide a basis for evaluating the information, the UNDAC team should be careful to follow recognized survey and data collection methods as indicated in Chapter G.3. and use the terminology and standards provided in sectoral reference materials.

Apply standards/indicators

Indicators are observable and measurable and are intended to allow the team to arrive at conclusions about a situation. Commonly accepted indicators build confidence in users of the assessment that the conclusions drawn in the assessment are a reflection of the real situation on the ground. Indicators should be agreed before the team conducts its assessment. This will increase the team's efficiency by limiting unnecessary interviews and focusing the inquiry, thus, indirectly helping to reduce assessment fatigue (see below).

Indicators that are not accurate reflectors of the actual situation can be dangerously misleading. Indicators should be designed by specialists in the relevant sector. Reference materials such as the publications of UN agencies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and agreed common texts such as the Sphere Project handbook (available in the UNDAC mission software) can provide important guidance on suitable indicators.

Timing of the assessment

An assessment is a snapshot of the emergency situation at a single point in time. Remember situations and needs will change, sometimes dramatically, from day to day. Relief needs are always relative but, as a general rule, rapid initial assessments should be broad in scope and should determine overall patterns and trends. Information that is more detailed can wait until in-depth sectoral assessments are conducted. It is always important to organize and conduct the assessment with the expectation that your findings will be updated and revised as the emergency situation evolves. Others may choose to use your tools and sources.

Determine the best places sources of information

There are often several different sources of information about the emergency. Each source has its own strengths and weaknesses and may be subject to bias. Therefore, it is important in planning the assessment to be clear about which sources you prefer to use.

Be careful of generalisation

An emergency may cover a fairly wide geographic area. It may not be possible to cover the entire area so it is important for the team to ensure that the areas being assessed provide an accurate picture of needs, coping patterns, and priorities. Be aware that what you haven't seen may still be of critical importance and be careful about generalizing from one situation to the entire theatre.

Almost all information has a bias

Bias is a part of doing assessments. Bias may be intentional, e.g., the truth is stretched to create a false impression. It may be a natural part of the point of view of an assessor, e.g., a water/sanitation specialist tends to see water/sanitation problems. It may be contextual, e.g., you go to a water source in the early morning and it is crowded with survivors but if you go in the middle of the day, there is no one there. It may be a result of cultural/language/gender/religious/class differences between the assessor and the assessed. Bias cannot be eliminated but its affects will be minimized through candid discussion amongst team members.

Distinguish between emergency and chronic needs

Virtually all developing countries have long-standing chronic needs in most, if not all, sectors. It is important to design an assessment that will distinguish between chronic and emergency needs. The assessors must differentiate

between what is normal for the location and what is occurring because of the disaster, so that emergency food aid, health care and other assistance can be provided at the appropriate level. Thus baseline information, i.e., what the situation was prior to the disaster is essential to be able to compare vulnerability before and after the disaster, identify the impact the disaster had, and differentiate between chronic and emergency needs.

Significance of assumptions

In a rapid initial assessment, when one's time in the field is short, assumptions are important. They can, at best, be called qualified guesses and are more a question of making them as qualified as possible. Assumptions are based on previous experience of similar emergencies and knowledge of the affected area. Prior knowledge and your assumptions about what you are likely to find may speed your work but it is careful to be clear about your assumptions and be eager to let them go when they prove inaccurate.

Cultural acceptance and community participation

Assistance must be culturally acceptable and appropriate to the needs of the affected population. Community participation in the development and implementation of response measures is essential. Relief delivery systems should be designed so that they may be operated over time with minimal international involvement.

Be aware of the subtle pressures

The assessment team must be sensitive to the situation and the inherent political and economic pressures in the affected country. The team needs to structure its assessment questions so that expectations are not created. It should be clear to the authorities at all levels what the role of UNDAC is. The assessment team must also be aware of the pressures it will feel from the officials of the affected country and others to "identify needs that trigger relief provision". A recommendation of "no additional assistance is required," may be a valid response if an on-site visit reveals that the disaster is not so severe as indicated in third-hand reports and media coverage.

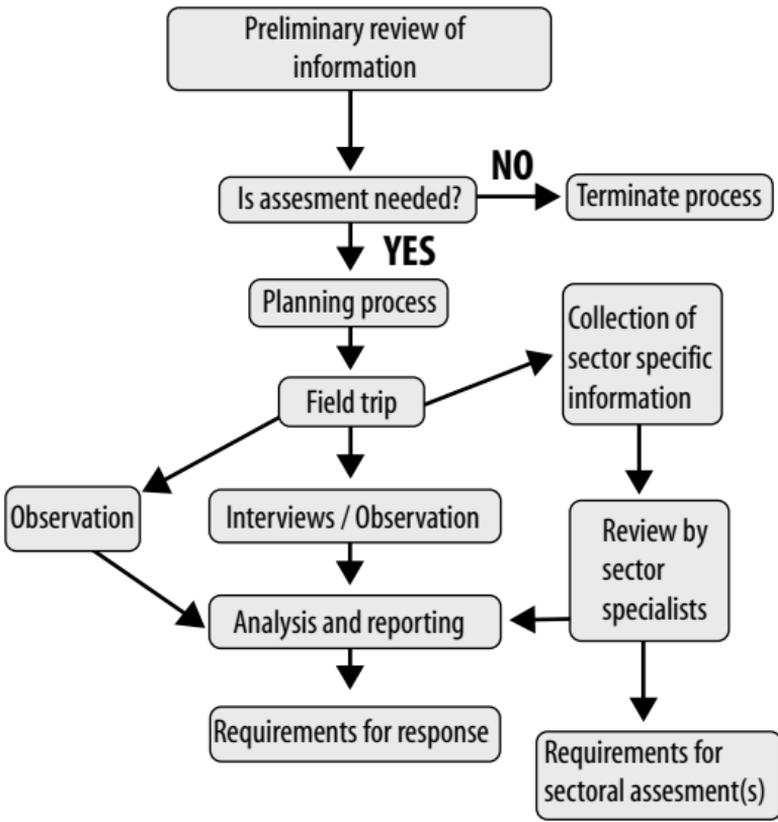
Triangulate for confirmation

It is always advisable to confirm your findings by attempting to get an answer to a question from at least two different sources. If a survivor tells you that there is a malaria outbreak, check with the pharmacy to see what medicines are being used.

Assessment fatigue

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

Flow chart of the assessment process



G.2.2. Planning

An accurate assessment depends on thorough planning, design and preparation. Most information needs may be identified in advance.

In the planning stage, the following points have to be taken into consideration:

- Specific tasks of the team as adapted through discussions with the RC/HC and national/local authorities.
- Initial size and composition of the team and, therefore, a consideration of its competencies and limitations.
- Disaster situation:
 - Type of disaster and expected consequences.
 - Prior knowledge of the area, e.g., size, density, topography.
 - Timing of mission in the evolution of the situation.
 - Possible future developments of the disaster.
- Information available from secondary sources and your assessment of its reliability and credibility.
- Baseline data of the stricken area, e.g., shelter, food security, health, etc.
- Weather/climatic conditions/season.
- In-country logistics, e.g., means of transport, communication, mission support - food, medical, etc.
- Time available.

- Possible information sources in the area.
- Local cultural and other social factors that might impede the assessment.
- Political situation, e.g., security, freedom of movement, access (must be checked with appropriate UN authorities).
- In-country UN presence in the affected area.
- Presence of any other international relief teams.

UNDAC team members should always remember that a field visit for assessment must be planned in detail beforehand to be successful and the objectives should be clearly enumerated. The logistics of the trip must be realistically thought through and planned, especially the time and space factor. Based on consideration of the above factors, one should develop a Plan of Action for the assessment with the following elements.

Precise definition of the field trip

- Area to be visited.
- Locations.
- Route planning.
- Time frame.

Team composition

- Number of participants.
- Gender balance.
- Representation from other agencies, sector specialists.

Distribution of tasks

- Team Leader (assessment team).
- Sector-specific tasks.
- Other responsibilities, e.g., logistics, communications, reporting, media, etc.

Main objectives

- Broad objectives.
- What questions need to be answered?
- Who has the needed information?
- Form of required output.

Data collection issues

- Observation.
- Interviews.
- Surveys.
- Checklists.
- Sampling.
- Indicators and standards.
- Assumptions.

Logistics and organization

- Transport and movement plan.
- Accommodation.
- Communication.
- Supplies.
- Equipment

Security

- Security clearance.
- MOSS compliance.

G.3. Assessment mission

G.3.1. Methods used in rapid or initial assessments

G In a rapid initial assessment, assessors should look for patterns and indicators of potential problems. The team will need to make an early decision about the relative desirability of qualitative and quantitative data. This will depend to a great extent on the purposes for which the assessment is being conducted and who the primary users of the assessment are. The users will, ultimately, specify what information is needed and in what form it should be conveyed. A variety of methods are available from which to choose. Assessments are often based on a combination of observation and semi-structured interviews. Both of these methods require excellent listening skills and are best conducted by multi-person teams where the questioner and the recorder functions can be pre-assigned and where multiple opinions about what has been observed or heard can be shared and the best interpretation selected.

As a preliminary caution, mistakes that are easily made are to collect information that is anecdotal rather than substantive; or to waste valuable time collecting detailed information when representative data would be just as useful.

Assessments reports should include whether the information was observed, reported by a key informant, collected through a survey with a sampling design, whether the information categories resulted from a specific checklist, etc. The information will be more meaningful to those interpreting it (especially with conflicting reports) if a source is indicated.

Observation

Observation is often under-rated as an information source. An enormous amount of information can be gathered very quickly through observation. It gives a “feel” for the situation through sounds, smells and visual impressions.

It is a good idea to 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 it. You can learn a lot by spending time in communal meeting places, e.g., cafes, tea shops, etc. Look around and talk to people.

Observation is useful for cross-checking. For example, you are told that all the livestock have been lost in the recent floods. Soon afterwards you see a large herd of goats. This does not necessarily contradict the previous information – 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 flood?”

Walking through the area with local people facilitates discussion. The atmosphere is informal and questions are prompted by things that 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 (issues that were not predicted). It is generally a useful idea to have a trusted cultural interpreter with you who can help you understand what you are seeing and clarify your assumptions about what you think you are witnessing, i.e., whether you are understanding.

Observation is the most straightforward approach to assessing infrastructure logistics. Driving along is a sure way of finding out if the road is passable.

Semi-structured interviews

A semi-structured interview is one in which the interviewer knows what information is needed but where the questions are not put in a specific order, or even directly on the subject of interest. The questions will not follow the inflexible format of a questionnaire. These types of interviews may be held with survivors, representatives of survivors or key officials. They may be with individuals, families, or groups of people, either hetero- or homogeneous regarding gender, class, etc. Group interviews are generally known as Focus Groups. In general, key informant interviews provide a valued source of information. Nevertheless, they are inherently biased and the assessor must be aware of these potential biases. The bias is present in both individual situations and in groups. The effects of the group on the participating individuals adds an additional set of biases regarding such things as “group think” and topics that are permissible to talk about in group settings.

Most interviews (both with groups and individuals) are based on the vulnerability and capacity flowchart (see below). You need to understand the problems that people face and the ways in which they cope with them. Some problems are obvious – houses destroyed by flood for example, others, such as the abuse of civilians during war, are less obvious. Even seemingly straightforward issues may be complicated when you examine them closely. When conducting a semi-structured interview you should try to make the interviewee(s) feel relaxed. Address the questions on your checklist but look out for new information. Ask questions in different ways in order to cross-check the information you receive.

Start with general conversation about life in the area, things you see around you, etc. Do not lead straight into direct questions about problems because this may set the wrong tone. You want to hear about positive as well as negative aspects of life in this community. Concentrating on problems gives the impression that your objective is to find out what the international community can give. This encourages people to present “shopping lists” of material requirements.

People will, inevitably, bring up problems without prompting. When this happens, encourage them to explain their concerns and the ways they cope with problems in their own way.

It is normal for people to find it difficult or reluctant to explain all components of their coping strategies because:

- Some components are so integrated into their lifestyles that they do not see them as “strategies.” For example, sharing resources between households.
- Individual components of the coping strategies may contribute very little and people do not think it important to discuss them. When all “small” components are added up, however, they often make a significant contribution to livelihoods.
- Activities may be illegal, e.g., small-scale trading without a licence and people are reluctant to divulge details to strangers. Nor will they go into detail about activities such as prostitution, theft and sale of illicit items.
- People may purposefully withhold information in order to make their situation seem worse than it actually is in the hope that this will encourage the international community to help them.

This emphasizes 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 persist.

Ultimately, one piece of advice covers all situations: Be curious!

Written Surveys

A third way to gather assessment information is through the use of written surveys. These surveys may be administered by team members or completed by respondents themselves. Surveys offer the opportunity for developing quantitative data. Historically, written surveys have not been widely used by UNDAC teams.

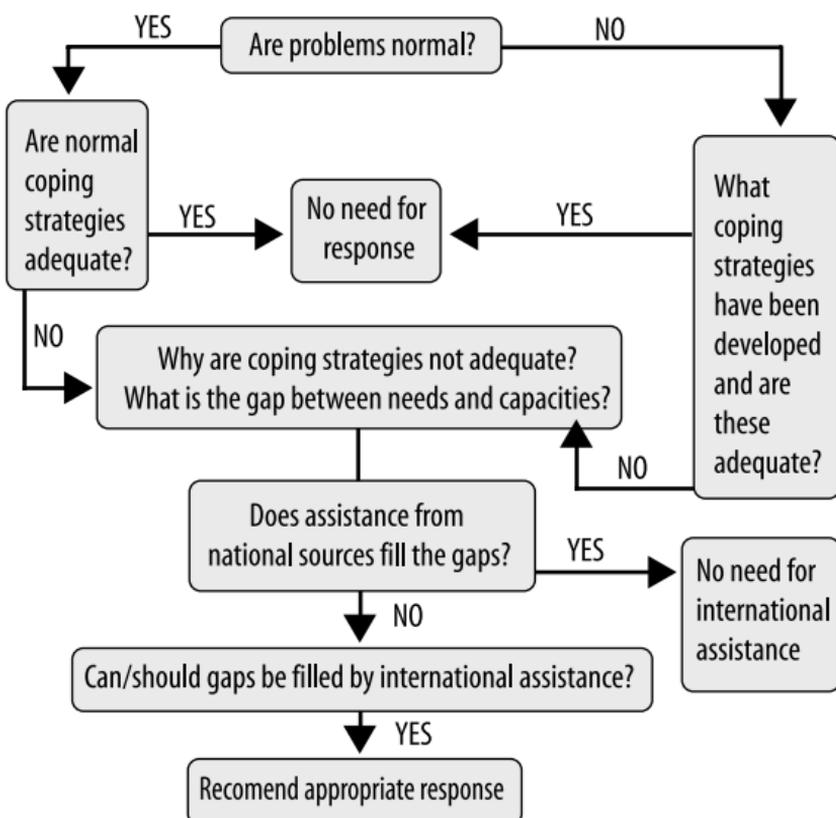
Unlike the semi-structured interview, surveys usually have close-ended questions and responses are limited. There have been, over time, many questionnaires developed for use in disaster assessment. In constructing a survey questionnaire it is essential that the questionnaire be pilot-tested to ensure that it is both valid

and reliable (see a research text for definition of these terms). It is always a good idea to pretest the survey with selected individuals to ensure that the questions asked are worded (or translated) correctly and provide the range and type of answers that the surveyors are looking for.

Surveys are attractive because, in addition to tending toward being quantitative, if they are designed and administered correctly, the results may be generalized to more than just the respondents completing the survey. This raises the issue of sampling. It is rarely possible to survey the total affected population so various sampling methods are required to allow for justifiable generalization. Normally, a random sampling or a stratified random sampling procedure is best. Field conditions will dictate the sampling design. It is important that surveys are designed and administered by individuals with social science background and research training.

A specific type of written survey called a Panel Survey is also an assessment methodology option. For this tool, a panel of experts is composed and given a questionnaire. The questionnaire may be closed-ended as in the above descriptions or it may be open-ended as in the Delphi survey technique. The Panel may be sent a series of questionnaires over a period of time to help refine the assessment findings.

Vulnerability and capacity flowchart



G.3.2. General principles by sector

The following are some general descriptions of some of the sectors that might be prioritized in the emergency phase of a disaster.

Urban search and rescue (USAR)

International assistance, normally following an earthquake, with USAR might be required when:

- A large urban area is affected.
- Hospitals and other buildings of more than two stories have collapsed.
- When these buildings are constructed of reinforced concrete or other materials that will leave spaces where trapped victims could survive for several hours.

Spontaneous search and rescue is usually provided by the survivors and local relief teams and succeeds in rescuing those not requiring major resources of equipment and skilled teams. International assistance is, therefore, focused on intensive efforts to locate and extract trapped victims by using cutting and lifting equipment as well as sophisticated, intensive “heavy rescue” techniques. Expertise in disaster medicine is required to supervise and aid in victim extraction and provide immediate care.

Through pre-established alert-routines, e.g., Virtual OSOCCC, numerous international USAR teams will be aware of the emergency and have made their own preparations for deployment simultaneously with the UNDAC team. Due to the time urgency, the need for USAR resources will have to be based on initial assessments performed by the national authorities of the stricken country and any baseline information one is able to obtain from other sources.

Consequently, some USAR teams will arrive and start operations at the same time, or before, the UNDAC team. The initial assessments carried out by the UNDAC team will then have to focus more on where, to what extent, and for how long there is a need for USAR. (See also Chapter H – Urban Search and Rescue.)

In earthquakes, the potential for damaging aftershocks is a continuing threat. When establishing a base for the UNDAC operation and for international relief teams, security and safety considerations are important factors to assess.

Shelter

Emergency shelter might be a priority in an early stage of the disaster. However, permanent reconstruction should be promoted as soon as possible. (See recommended SPHERE project standards for household items, clothing and housing.) Cash contributions for local/regional purchase of traditional housing material for temporary shelter are often preferable to contributions in-kind, purchase of tents, prefabricated housing material or other solutions not adapted to the local context. If possible, materials should be provided that may be reused later in permanent reconstruction. Maximum use should also be made of

materials that can be salvaged from damaged buildings. Highest priority should be given to ensuring roofing.

Individual family initiatives should be encouraged to the greatest possible degree in meeting shelter needs, e.g., through the provision of basic materials, guidance for self-help programmes, etc. Shelter, including communal buildings, should be built by the survivors themselves, provided material support is given. This will help ensure that the housing will meet their particular needs and be culturally acceptable. It will also help reduce their sense of dependency and can cut costs considerably.

“Temporary housing”, usually prefabricated, is to be avoided. In fact, it is rarely replaced. The units are often very expensive, absorbing resources that might be better directed towards permanent reconstruction. Such units and/or the sites chosen for them have often been found unsuitable for local patterns of family life and cultural traditions.

Health

In natural disasters such as earthquakes, there may initially be a significant need for curative care, particularly trauma care within the population. There might also be a need for evacuating patients out of the area as health facilities cannot cope with the influx of cases or the seriousness of the injuries.

A sudden breakdown of infrastructure in a community may lead to a greater risk of epidemical diseases. One should be aware of this already at an early stage and look for indicators of that situation. In order to prevent an outbreak, health services for displaced people should be established based on the concept of primary health care.

Water and sanitation

People can survive longer without food than without water. Providing water demands immediate attention. An adequate quantity of reasonably safe water is preferable to a smaller quantity of pure water. Treatment should be avoided, if possible.

Minimum quantities of reasonably safe water should be provided as close to homes as possible. Safe storage of water should be provided at the community and household levels. Availability will generally be the determining factor in organizing a supply of safe water.

An assessment of available sources of water must be made by specialists. If these sources are inadequate, new sources will have to be developed or water has to be delivered. In an emergency, act first and improve later. Temporary systems to meet immediate needs may be improved or replaced later. Remember, in flood emergencies in developing countries, the flooding of water sources such as wells creates a drinking water problem that must be addressed immediately.

The swift provision of a basic human waste disposal system is better than the

delayed provision of an improved system. The simplest technologies should be applied.

Food and nutrition

Foods prepared locally with local ingredients are preferable to imported foods. If unfamiliar foods or new methods of cooking and preparation have to be introduced to the population, simple nutrition education is important. If possible, organize dried food distribution to allow families to prepare their own meals.

Children, pregnant, breast feeding women, and the sick and elderly are often most vulnerable to malnutrition and have special needs. Cereals should only be provided at the onset of an emergency. Do not include dried/skimmed milk into a general food distribution.

Camp management

A suitable site and adequate shelter are critical during the early stages of emergencies involving displaced people. A lack of either will adversely affect the well-being of displaced people and, in some cases, their protection as well as the delivery of assistance to them.

Avoid high-density camps. One should plan for the long term, since so-called temporary arrangements often last much longer than expected. Camp planning should reflect a decentralized, small community approach, preserving past social arrangements.

Involve the displaced people (for whom the camp will be home) in planning and implementation. Expertise may, however, be required in the fields of geology, settlement, planning, engineering and public health. A familiarity with local conditions in both the displaced population's area of origin and at their present location is important, as is previous experience with similar emergencies.

G.4. Assessment checklists

The following assessment checklist is intended to assist the assessment team in planning, formatting, and conducting a rapid initial assessment. This assessment checklist is divided into major sectors of humanitarian activity. It is meant to be as inclusive as possible of all the types of questions that need to be answered in assessments of various disasters.

To be answered completely, some of the questions would require extensive assessment work to gather primary and/or secondary data, work which the team may or may not have the skills or capacity to perform. However, the information may already exist, e.g., as secondary data and the task of the team may be only to gather assessment information assembled by others and evaluate the information for accuracy, timeliness, and completeness.

An assessment team may also find it necessary to develop new or expanded questions to gather the required information for specific disasters and/or use

only parts of the list. In any case, the checklists are provided as a place to start in thinking about what data to collect.

In some emergencies specific assessment forms may be required. The UNDAC team may then be responsible for developing and distributing them. If a Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC) is being set up, it will be the natural entity for developing forms and processing the information derived from assessments. Assessment forms commonly used are included in the UNDAC mission software.

Nature of Disaster

Information sources:

- Local emergency management authorities (LEMA).
- RC/HC and/or UN DMT.
- Situation reports from other agencies.
- Meteorological or other scientific/monitoring institutions.
- Media reports.

Subject	Indicative information
Main event.	Date and time (local and UTC). Duration. Strength.
Subsequent events and expected developments.	Aftershocks. Weather forecast. Water level rising/falling. Flooding expected to rise/recede.
Affected area.	Name of region, province, and/or district (be aware of conflicting local names). Provide GPS or other map coordinates. Major cities/urban centres/villages. Approximate size of affected area in square km. Topography.
Population.	Estimate total population in affected area. Estimate percentage of affected population. Socio-economic characteristics (rural, urban, agricultural, industrial, nomadic, low-income).

Urban Search and Rescue (USAR)

- Information sources:
- Public officials of affected area/town.
- Local engineers.
- City maps.
- Community leaders.
- USAR teams.

Subject	Indicative information
Predominant building and construction material.	Masonry buildings (adobe, brick, concrete blocks, stone masonry). Reinforced concrete structures (frames with brick infill, frames with load bearing masonry walls, bearing walls, prefabricated structures). Steel frames. Timber structures. Roof covering, e.g., tiles, lightweight asbestos, cement, metal sheets, etc.
Number or percentage of buildings destroyed.	No significant damage. Major damage (structure is not habitable, major repairs required).
Destruction and extent of damage to types of buildings.	Public buildings, e.g., religious facilities, schools, community centres, etc. Multi-family housing. Single-family housing. Industrial buildings/clinics/hospitals.
Damage that include hazardous materials (HAZMAT).	Presence of gas, chemical, or other possible lethal substances.
Response.	How many teams, national and/or international, and where are they working? Which areas are not covered by USAR teams?

Shelter and personal/household items

Information sources:

- Aerial surveys.
- Local authorities.
- Communities.
- Observation.
- SPHERE handbook.
- USAR checklist.

Subject	Indicative information
Shelter requirements.	Climate factors: need to resist rain, wind, sun, cold.
Physical status of existing shelter.	Description, percentage not adequate according to requirements (from above). Reasons for inadequacy, e.g., earthquake damage, temporary shelter, etc.
People lacking shelter.	Number of people/households lacking adequate shelter.
Essential household items.	Proportion of affected population lacking adequate essential items.
Fuel.	Do people have access to fuel for cooking and heating? Where does fuel come from? Is fuel collection damaging environment?

Health

Information sources:

- Ministry of Health.
- Local clinics.
- Community health workers.
- Humanitarian organizations (national and international).
- Women in communities.
- SPHERE handbook.

Subject	Indicative information
Level of destruction of health services.	Status of health care: facilities, equipment, medicines, supplies, vaccines, number of staff.
Injuries.	Type of injuries – lethal and non-lethal. Infections and other disaster-related injuries.
Can the surviving facilities in the disaster area cope with the caseload of injured patients?	Have arrangements been made, or are they required, to bring specific types of equipment/ services/medicaments to the disaster area from other medical centres? Has there been any damage to specific medical equipment or installations of key importance for treating disaster victims, e.g., x-ray facilities following an earthquake. Is any action being taken to evacuate injured patients to emergency medical centres outside the disaster area? If yes, provide details.
Access to health services for affected population.	Proportion of population that has access to medical, surgical, gynaecology, obstetrics, mother and child health services; distance from nearest health centre. Groups/individuals excluded from access.
How is the national health system organized?	Ambulance system? Referral system available and/or functioning? Evacuation routines.
Other health actors.	List.
Availability of drugs.	Are drug sales regulated? Are drugs available on the open market? What are the implications for safety?
Measles coverage.	Problem if less than 90% immunization coverage for children aged 6 months to 12 years.
Expanded program on immunization coverage.	Problem if less than 85% coverage.

Subject	Indicative information
HIV prevalence.	Data on prevalence at current time.
Tuberculosis.	Does a national policy exist? Does a directly observed treatment, short course program exist?
Sexually transmitted infections.	Do treatment protocols exist?
Reproductive health.	Is there widespread access to such services or knowledge?
Any additional existing (endemic diseases)?	Description.
Mental health assessment, i.e., those affected by current disaster.	Are support systems intact? For example, families, spiritual/social network, government, etc. Are the affected people able to resume normal activities? Are they actively engaged in other activities?

Water and sanitation

Information sources:

- Ministry of Health.
- Ministry of Water.
- Local water authority.
- Local clinics.
- Humanitarian organizations (national and international).
- Communities.
- Observation.
- SPHERE handbook.

Subject	Indicative information
Level of destruction of water and sewerage facilities.	Status of facilities, equipment, materials, number of staff.
Quantity and quality of water.	At least 15 litres per person per day. In extreme cases: 5 litres per person per day for drinking and cooking. Details of source (is it obviously contaminated)? Is water treated and/or chlorinated?
Water transport and storage.	Means of carrying and storing (can water be contaminated)? Distance and time to water point no more than 500m walking distance. Household water storage. Availability at institutions.
Defecation and urination.	Are there toilets or open defecations? Are there signs of defecation near dwellings? No more than 20 people per latrine or toilet, no more than 50 m from dwellings.
Women's use of communal facilities.	Safe and/or culturally acceptable? Give details.
Hand-washing and/or bathing facilities.	Do facilities exist? Are they used? Is soap available? Are facilities secure and private for women and girls? 50 people per bathing facility.
Diarrhoeal disease.	Normal/increasing/decreasing.
Acute watery and/or bloody diarrhoea.	Normal/increasing/decreasing. If increasing, details of age group and area. Encourage authorities to isolate area.
Disease-carrying vectors (flies, mosquitoes, body lice, rodents).	Are such vectors present? Are there breeding grounds (stagnant water, refuse)?

Food and nutrition

Information sources:

- Ministry of Health.
- Nutrition surveys.
- Demographic health surveys.
- Local clinics.
- Humanitarian organizations.
- Communities (particularly women).
- SPHERE handbook.

Subject	Indicative information
Food consumption pattern.	<p>Describe the normal food consumption pattern of the affected population, specify unacceptable food.</p> <p>Availability (market, stocks, variety, price, and trends in pricing). Is there a government/agencies distribution?</p> <p>Are households able to prepare food for family meals and for small children?</p>
Nutrition information.	See SPHERE handbook for indicators.
Risk of malnutrition due to inadequate care.	<p>Change in composition of households, e.g., large numbers of separated children or orphans.</p> <p>Normal infant feeding practices (bottle feeding, breastfeeding, manufactured complementary foods).</p>
Nutrition intervention or community-based support already in place prior to disaster.	<p>Mandate, policies and experience of relocation of commodities and programmes.</p> <p>Local community capacity to participate in the food distribution and their coping mechanism.</p>

Logistics

Information sources:

- Transport authorities.
- Military entities.
- Observation.
- Community.
- Transport companies.

Subject	Indicative information
What is the status of roads connecting the affected area with main supply centres?	Describe condition of road, including seasonal factors, travel times and appropriate vehicle types.
Possible bottlenecks.	Bridges, landslides, tunnels, intersections in towns, etc. Suggest secondary options.
Are there some areas that are not accessible by road?	Give locations and suggest transport options.
Where is the nearest airport, seaport, railway station?	Location (GPS-coordinates) and name, current condition, elevation, operational 24-7, usable runway lengths and condition, usable aircraft types, operational navigational and communication facilities, cargo handling equipment (forklifts, scissors lift, cargo dollies, trucks with drivers and hand-labour), and customs arrangements. Give details of condition of road leading to airport and routines for movement of cargo.
Are warehouses and/or storage facilities available?	Size, condition, ownership, capacity, and loading/un-loading equipment.
Who will receive and take responsibility for goods dispatched to the area?	Give details of receivers.
Commodities available locally.	Give details of available fuel, construction materials, including estimate of quantity that can be procured.
Local transport capacity.	Give details of availability and price of rental.

Subject	Indicative information
Communications.	<p>Do telephone and/or radio systems exist? What is their reliability/usefulness?</p> <p>Is there cell phone coverage? If yes; what system, i.e., roaming or procurement of scratch cards?</p>

G.5 Analysis and information sharing

Analysis

Analysis is the process whereby information from all the different sources is synthesized to enable you to answer the questions posed in the vulnerability and capacity flowchart (see G.3.1.)

One should analyse information continuously, throughout the assessment process. Do not leave analysis (except analysis of sector specific information) until the end of the assessment mission.

Dealing with inconsistent information

In any assessment one will be faced with the problem of inconsistent or conflicting information. This occurs when informants provide different answers to the same questions. 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 the animals are alive and grazing far away.

Consider the reasons for inconsistencies. These are three common possibilities:

- Perception. There is not always a “correct” answer. People’s interpretation of events depends upon their own circumstances and point of view.
- Access to information. Some people are better informed than others.
- Misrepresentation. Sometimes people purposefully provide misleading information.

There are some steps to follow in order to minimize and resolve inconsistencies.

Think about the information as you collect it. This helps you identify inconsistencies. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the new information contradict secondary or baseline information?
- Does information collected by one informant support or contradict information from another?
- Does the information collected by different members of the assessment add up? Is it logical and consistent? Does the information “make sense”?

Asking these questions leads you to think of new questions to ask or to look for alternative information sources to clarify the situation. Triangulation is critical. As a general rule, try to verify important information by comparing inputs 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.

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Discuss findings regularly with other members of the team. Take a step back from time to time during the assessment mission to compare information, discuss inconsistencies, and agree to modifications to the schedule of interviews. At the end of the fieldwork, the team meets to draw up final conclusions. Decide whether the inconsistency will affect the assessment conclusions. If the discrepancy is not critical, try to resolve it but do not spend much time on this. If you cannot resolve it, make a judgement and include a note explaining this in the assessment report.

Information sharing

It is important to remember that every action in an emergency response can later have a direct effect on the manner and cost of transition, rehabilitation and recovery. Recommendations on relief provisions should ensure that relief contributes to development.

The recommendations of the UNDAC team may assist transition and long-term recovery efforts of an affected country. Relief programs can either set the stage for rapid recovery or prolong the length of the recovery period.

Recommendations should be simple, support the use of local materials and systems and be sustainable by the affected country.

See also Chapter F - Information Management.