



# Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA)

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**IASC** Inter-Agency  
Standing Committee



Multi-Cluster/Sector  
Initial Rapid  
Assessment (MIRA)



# Acknowledgements

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The development of the MIRA benefited from a wealth of experience and knowledge gathered from United Nations agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), donor and academic institutions, and other technical bodies. It builds upon decades of field practice, as well as on lessons learnt exercises and existing tools and methodologies.

It reflects a common vision of what is both methodologically sound and realistically feasible in the highly challenging environment in which humanitarian needs assessments take place.



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# ist of acronyms

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|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| ALNAP     | Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance         |
| CAP       | Consolidated Appeals Process                                       |
| CLA       | Community Level Assessment   |
| CERF      | Central Emergency Response Fund                                    |
| CODs      | Common Operational Datasets  |
| DHS       | Demographic and Health Surveys                                     |
| EFSA      | World Food Programme Emergency Food Security Assessment            |
| ERC       | Emergency Relief Coordinator                                       |
| FAO       | United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization                   |
| GPS       | Global positioning system  |
| HC        | Humanitarian Coordinator   |
| HCT       | Humanitarian Country Team  |
| IASC      | Inter-Agency Standing Committee                                    |
| IASC NATF | Inter-Agency Standing Committee Needs Assessment Task Force        |
| ICCM      | Inter-cluster Coordination Mechanism                               |
| IFRC      | International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies   |
| MICS      | Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey                                  |
| NGO       | Nongovernmental organizations                                      |
| OCHA      | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| PSD       | Preliminary Scenario Definition                                    |
| UN        | United Nations   |
| UNDAC     | United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination system         |
| UNDP      | United Nations Development Programme                               |
| UNHCR     | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees                      |
| UNICEF    | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund             |
| UNISDR    | United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction       |
| WFP       | World Food Programme   |
| WHO       | World Health Organization  |

# Summary

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- The Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) is designed to identify strategic humanitarian priorities during the first weeks following an emergency.
- The main benefit of the MIRA is the elaboration, from the onset of the crisis, of a concerted operational picture based on the best information available from primary and secondary sources.
- This picture is expressed through two key products: a Preliminary Scenario Definition, issued 72 hours after the disaster's onset, and a MIRA Report, released after 2 weeks.
- It is consistent with the IASC Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises, which calls for the implementation of a joint assessment during the first two phases of an emergency and, thereafter, for the coordination of in-depth agency and cluster assessments.
- The MIRA is the first step in the humanitarian country team's response to an emergency. Based on its findings, humanitarian actors can develop a joint strategic plan, mobilize resources and monitor the situation and the response. However, the MIRA should not be expected to provide detailed information for the design of localized response projects.
- The MIRA should be carried out by a team of emergency specialists, including assessment and sectoral specialists, drawn from the various clusters/sectors present in the country to ensure that local knowledge is included in the findings. Additional headquarters and regional support may be required, depending on the scale of the emergency.
- It proposes a Framework to guide the identification of information needs and the systematic collection, collation and analysis of secondary and primary data. This Framework forms the basis of the Preliminary Scenario Definition and the MIRA Report templates.
- The Preliminary Scenario Definition and the MIRA Report provide assessment findings at critical intervals of the emergency. The Preliminary Scenario Definition should be included in the initial Flash Appeal whereas key findings of the MIRA Report should be captured in the Humanitarian Dashboard and included in the revised appeal to highlight the evidence on which the appeals are based.
- OCHA coordinates the assessment, supports the compilation of secondary data from the various clusters/sectors and provides information management on behalf of the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator. If OCHA is absent or unable to serve this function, the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator may appoint another agency.
- This manual is 20-pages long and comes with an additional five annexes providing supporting information.



# Overview

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## Rationale and purpose

The immediate aftermath of a sudden-onset disaster is a critical period of time when the humanitarian and donor communities need to make key decisions on how to best support the affected country or region and its populations. However, during that brief period, limited comprehensive information on the disaster's impact, scale and severity is typically available to support the identification of strategic humanitarian priorities. In addition, humanitarian actors often begin gathering information independently and with little consolidation, resulting in an incomplete and sometimes conflicting picture of humanitarian needs. The Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Needs Assessment Task Force (IASC NATF) seeks to address this problem, and to lay down the foundations for a stronger and better-coordinated assessment culture during crises.

Carried out by key stakeholders during the first weeks following a sudden-onset disaster, the MIRA aims to provide fundamental information on the needs of affected populations and to support the identification of strategic humanitarian priorities. It thus enables all humanitarian actors to reach, from the outset, a common understanding of the situation and its likely evolution and to agree immediately on strategies.

Although developed specifically for the early stages of sudden-onset disasters, the MIRA is an integral part of the larger frame of humanitarian assessments. It covers the first two phases of the IASC Assessment Framework presented in the *IASC Operational Guidance on Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises*. The Assessment Framework outlines in five phases, ranging from preparedness to early recovery, all the steps required to improve the coordination of assessments in humanitarian crises and to provide a concise picture and robust understanding of an emergency as it unfolds. The full *Continuum of coordinated assessments* is presented in Figure 2.

Adequate preparedness is essential to the MIRA. During this phase, the capacity of agencies and sectors can be appraised and built up so that it can be used to the fullest when a crisis occurs. The preparedness phase also provides the opportunity to engage with governments and national institutions and to strengthen their involvement and leadership in assessments.

Optimizing the performance of existing assessment coordination structures and mechanisms during a crisis is also fundamental. For smaller-scale crises, it is possible to boost in-country capacity and information management expertise. However, in large-scale crises, additional human resources may be required. In crises-prone regions, agencies could consider having additional capacity in regional offices to support countries when required.

## MIRA process

The MIRA should be carried out under the auspices of the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator and wherever possible, led by the government. The process underpinning the MIRA aims to be sufficiently explicit so as not to be misinterpreted, but flexible enough to be adapted to the specific contexts of each crisis and to minimize delays in the assessment schedule.

The MIRA process is based on five broad stages:

- 1** Initiating the MIRA
- 2** Undertaking the secondary data analysis
- 3** Undertaking the community level assessment

- 4 Conducting the final inter-sectoral analysis and determining strategic humanitarian priorities
- 5 Preparing and disseminating the MIRA outputs

Flexibility is critical. The stages listed above describe a typical situation, but each crisis is different and will demand a certain amount of customization of the assessment process to meet local capacity and needs.

Each of these stages is further developed in Figure 3 on the *Proposed roles and responsibilities of the various participants in the MIRA process* and in Section 3 on the *MIRA approach*.

## MIRA approach

The MIRA approach is articulated around three fundamental and complementary components.

- 1 Focusing on the systematic collation and analysis of secondary information, which plays a crucial role in the early stages of emergencies, the **secondary data analysis (SDA)** is designed to determine the extent of the disaster and the number of affected people and to sketch out the strategic humanitarian priorities. The secondary data analysis proposed by the MIRA approach builds on the body of evidence developed over the last decades to formulate response priorities.
- 2 The **community level assessment (CLA)** is a standardized methodology for the systematic collection, collation and analysis of primary data.<sup>1</sup> It provides a unique opportunity to integrate needs and priorities as perceived by affected communities into the broader assessment of strategic humanitarian priorities.<sup>2</sup> It takes into account the limitations inherent to primary data collection in the early stages of emergencies, such as non-representative sampling due to limited access, and is the essential counterpart of the secondary data analysis.
- 3 Underpinning each step of the approach, the **MIRA Framework** guides the collation and analysis of secondary and community level assessment data and information. It is an agreed upon structure for organizing and analysing the information generated through the MIRA across clusters/sectors. The Framework is essential to align intra- and inter-sectoral information and to support humanitarian actors reach a common understanding on strategic humanitarian priorities. It may also support the identification of information sources in the early stages of the process.

## MIRA outputs

The **Preliminary Scenario Definition (PSD)** is the first output of the MIRA. It is based on secondary data and any primary data available, although the latter may be limited. The Preliminary Scenario Definition should be produced within the first 72 hours following a disaster in order to inform initial response planning and funding appeals, such as Flash Appeals and requests to the Central Emergency Response Fund or to specific emergency response funds. Any Flash Appeal produced at the same time should include the Preliminary Scenario Definition to demonstrate the evidence on which it is founded.

The second output is the **MIRA Report**. It should be produced within 2 weeks of the disaster in order to inform in-depth response planning and revised appeals, where applicable. The Report's key findings should be captured in the Humanitarian Dashboard and included in the revised Flash Appeal as evidence.

1. For the purpose of the MIRA, primary data is in-crisis data collected by the MIRA assessment team in the field, or by others using the same instrument. Primary data is collected through first-hand experience, using questionnaires, checklists, observations, interviews or other methods that involve direct contact with the respondents (adapted from WFP and the FAO). All other data sources that feed into the MIRA Report are considered secondary and can be divided between pre- and in-crisis sources.
2. Hence increasing accountability to beneficiaries.
3. It is important to note these phases are somewhat conceptual in nature, and there is recognition that no sudden-onset disaster operates along an exact timeline.

Figure 1. MIRA phases and products<sup>3</sup>

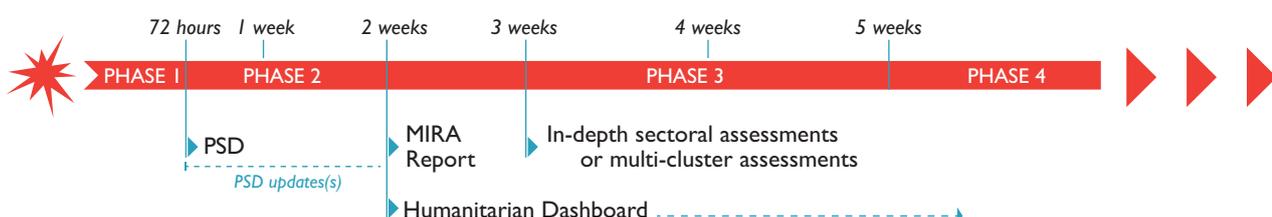
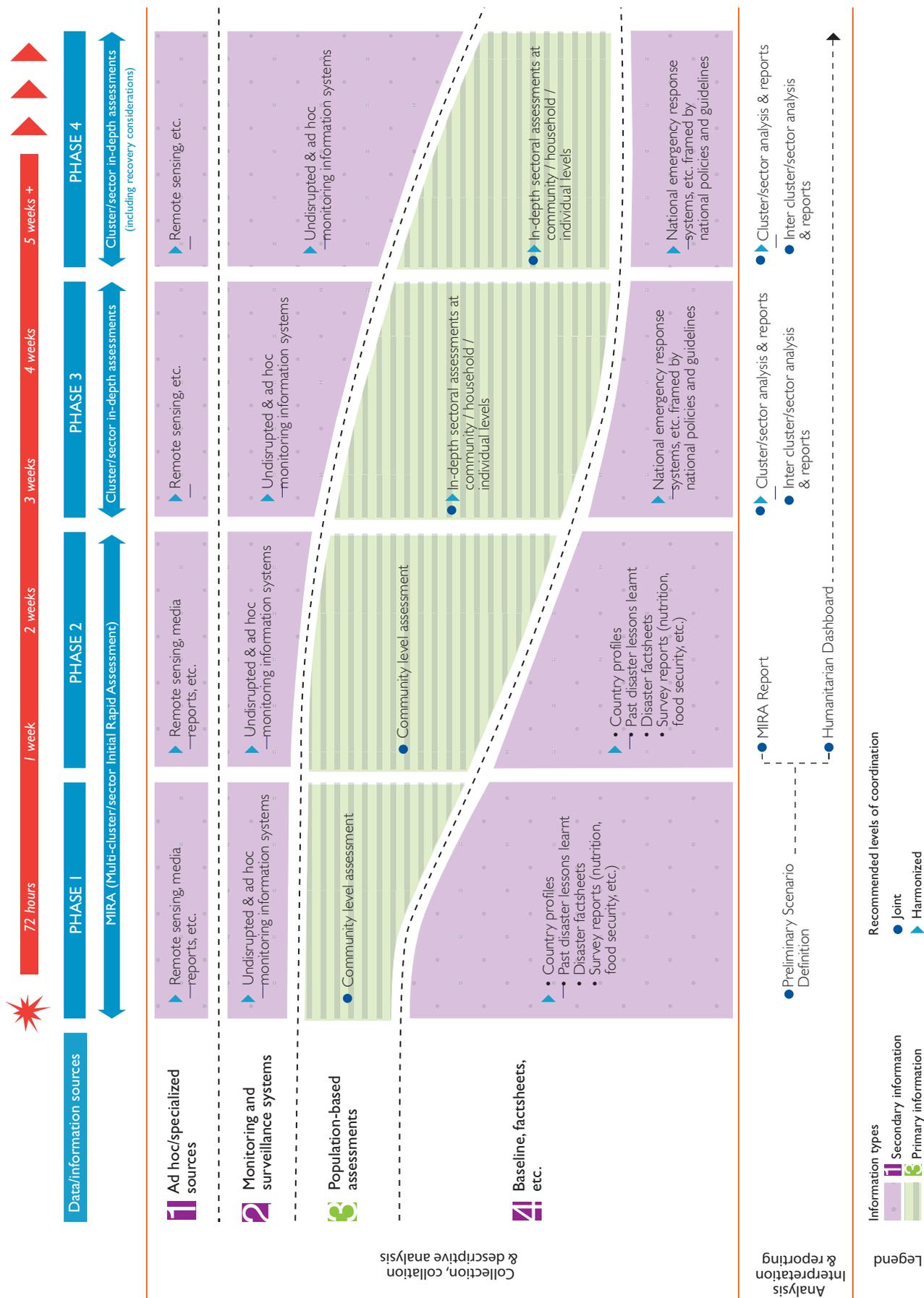


Figure 2. The continuum of coordinated assessments



# 2 Process

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The MIRA process is divided into five broad stages, which cover all the steps from the moment the assessment is initiated to the dissemination of its results. For each step, clear responsibilities must be agreed upon and distributed among the stakeholders.

It is recommended that an assessment coordination structure – such as an assessment and information management working group (AIM Working Group) – be set up to gather all actors, support the design, coordination and harmonization of assessments, and ensure joint analysis and dissemination of results.

Figure 3 provides a simple visual overview of the process over time and lists the main steps under each stage. It also suggests the distribution of roles and responsibilities for each step.

The steps are developed in greater details in Section 3 on the *MIRA approach*.

**Figure 3. Proposed roles and responsibilities of the various participants in the MIRA process**



# 3 Approach

## Initiating the MIRA

### *Define scope, scale and objectives*

The objectives, scale and scope of the MIRA must be identified at the beginning of the process to ensure that all actors agree on and understand the work to be undertaken. Specific items for consideration are:

- **The geographical scope or coverage of the assessment:** which areas will be assessed?
- **The level of assessment:** is information required at district, provincial or national level? The level will vary for each type/item of information and should always be the lowest at which data is needed.
- **The linkages to decision-making and funding mechanisms:** is the assessment expected to inform ongoing decision-making and funding mechanisms? Which ones and how?

However the objectives are not immutable and may be revised according to changes in the situation or if fresh evidence brings a new, more accurate understanding of information needs and gaps.

### *Adapt and agree upon the MIRA Framework*

The MIRA Framework underpins each step of secondary data collation and primary data collection and serves as a tool to support data analysis.

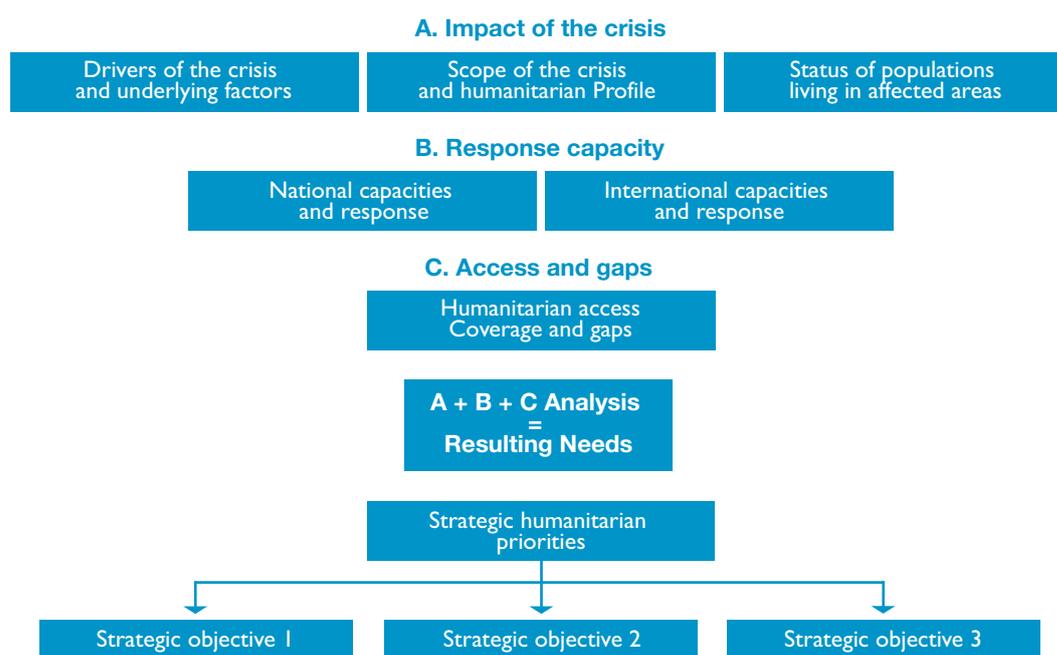
The Framework is based on eight themes:

- 1 Drivers of the crisis and underlying factors
- 2 Scope of the crisis and humanitarian profile
- 3 Status of populations living in affected areas
- 4 National capacities and response
- 5 International capacities and response
- 6 Humanitarian access
- 7 Coverage and gaps
- 8 Strategic humanitarian priorities

Each theme is further divided in key questions. The answers to these questions emerge through the analysis of secondary and primary data. The process of data analysis is supported by the further delineation of the themes in four dimensions: status and impact, vulnerabilities and risks, trends, and information gaps.

The Preliminary Scenario Definition and the MIRA Report use the same eight themes to ensure that evidence clearly supports the conclusions reached during the final inter-sectoral analysis, and to facilitate the easy transferral of the assessment's findings.

**Figure 4. Overview of the MIRA Framework**



**Table 1. The MIRA Framework**

| Themes                                       | Dimensions  |  |   |  |                  |
|--|---|--|---|--|------------------|
|  | Key questions   | Status & impact  | Vulnerabilities & risks   | Trends   | Information gaps |
| Drivers of the crisis and underlying factors | 1. What are the main drivers of the crisis and what are the underlying factors of increased vulnerability?      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the main drivers of the crisis (including environmental, socio-political, climatic and economic factors)?</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the underlying factors (often pre-existing conditions) of the crisis (including environmental, socio-cultural and economic context as well as demographic, governance) that may lead to increased vulnerabilities?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How are the main drivers likely to evolve in the short, medium and/or long term?</li> <li>How are underlying factors expected to evolve in the short, medium and/or long term?</li> <li>How are these trends likely to affect the provision of assistance?</li> </ul> |                  |
| Scope of the crisis and humanitarian profile | 2. What is the geographical extent of the affected area?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which areas are affected?</li> <li>What is the severity and nature of the crisis in each area (e.g. which areas are most affected?)</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the pre-existing conditions in those different areas that may lead to increase vulnerabilities?</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are other areas expected to be affected in the short, medium and/or long term? Which ones and how?</li> <li>Is the geographical extent of the crisis likely to decrease?</li> </ul>   |                  |
|  | 3. How many people are affected?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How many people are affected (ratio male/female)? Where are they?</li> <li>How many girls, women, boys and men affected? Where are they?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify which groups are most at risk?</li> <li>How many are they and where are they?</li> <li>How differently are those groups affected?</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How are the number, type and location of people affected likely to change in the short, medium and/or long term?</li> </ul>   |                  |
|  | 4. What are the main characteristics (mortality, morbidity, dignity & quality of life) of affected populations? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the status of – and impact of the crisis on – mortality, morbidity and dignity/quality of life of affected populations?</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify which areas or groups are most affected and most at risk?</li> <li>How are vulnerable groups particularly affected?</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the predicted evolution in terms of mortality, morbidity and dignity/quality of life?</li> </ul>  |                  |

| Themes   | Dimensions  |   |   |  |                  |
|--|---|---|---|--|------------------|
|  | Key questions   | Status & impact   | Vulnerabilities & risks   | Trends   | Information gaps |
| Status of populations living in affected areas | 5. What is the condition of affected populations in terms of protection?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the status of protection?</li> <li>What was the impact of the crisis on protection?</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify which areas or groups are most affected by and most at risk?</li> <li>How are vulnerable groups particularly affected?</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the predicted evolution in terms of protection?</li> </ul>  |                  |
|  | 6. What is the condition of affected populations in terms of livelihoods?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the status of local livelihoods and income opportunities?</li> <li>What was the impact of the crisis on local livelihoods and income opportunities?</li> </ul>   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the predicted evolution in terms of livelihoods and income opportunities?</li> </ul>                  |                  |
|  | 7. What is the condition of affected populations in terms of access to and utilization of basic services and goods? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the status of access to and utilization of basic services and goods?</li> <li>What was the impact of the crisis on access to and utilization of basic services and goods?</li> </ul>   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the predicted evolution in terms of access to and utilization of basic services and goods?</li> </ul> |                  |
| National capacities & response                 | 8. What are the local coping mechanisms of affected communities?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the known coping mechanisms of local communities and how were they affected?</li> <li>Are they adaptable and sustainable?</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are coping mechanisms weaker for certain areas or groups and which ones?</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How sustainable are known coping mechanisms in the short, medium and long term?</li> </ul>                    |                  |
|  | 9. What are the national/sub-national, private sector, non-governmental and government capacities to respond?       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the existing capacities (both regular capacities and those specifically designed for crisis response) and how have they been affected by the crisis?</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How sustainable are these capacities in the short, medium and/or long term?</li> <li>Can these capacities be expected to scale up, where and how?</li> </ul> |  |                  |
|  | 10. What are their interventions to date in response to the crisis?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have the actors identified undertaken any initial assistance or interventions in response to the crisis?</li> <li>Where, how many people were targeted, reached and covered by the different types of interventions?</li> </ul>            |   |  |                  |
| International capacities & response            | 11. What is the international response capacity and how has it been affected?                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the international response capacity (both regular capacities and those specifically designed for crisis response) and how were they affected?</li> <li>Are there any preparedness and coordination procedures in place?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How sustainable are these capacities in the short, medium and/or long term?</li> <li>Can these capacities be expected to scale up, where and how?</li> </ul> |  |                  |
|  | 12. Which agencies/organizations are operating where and in what sectors of intervention?                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which agencies/organizations are operating where and in what sectors?</li> </ul>   |   |  |                  |
|  | 13. What are their interventions to date in response to the crisis?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What interventions are the actors identified already providing?</li> </ul>   |   |  |                  |

| Themes                            | Dimensions  |   |   |  |                  |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|--|------------------|
|                                   | Key questions   | Status & impact   | Vulnerabilities & risks   | Trends   | Information gaps |
| Humanitarian access               | 14. What are the logistic considerations in terms of effects of the emergency and options for response?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the main considerations affecting the response (availability and quality of air/road/water transportation networks, telecommunications and storage facilities)?</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which affected areas or groups are most likely to be affected by these constraints?</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How are logistics constraints expected to evolve?</li> </ul>  |                  |
|                                   | 15. What are the security considerations?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the main considerations affecting the local population and the delivery of assistance (armed groups, gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, and UXOs) and where are they?</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are security considerations likely to evolve in the short, medium and/or long term? Where and how?</li> </ul>  |  |                  |
|                                   | 16. How do civil-military relations feature in the context?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are, if any, the civil-military relations?</li> <li>How do they affect the local population and the response?</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are civil-military relations likely to evolve and how?</li> </ul>  |  |                  |
|                                   | 17. What proportion of the affected population (disaggregated by sex and age and according to sector) reachable for humanitarian interventions? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What proportion of the affected population is reachable by humanitarian interventions?</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there groups or areas in need or specific needs (sectors) that are not or not sufficiently reachable? Which and where?</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How is the proportion of the affected population reachable by humanitarian interventions likely to evolve in the short, medium and/or long term?</li> </ul> |                  |
| Coverage & gaps                   | 18. To what extent are the conditions of affected populations (disaggregated by sex and age and according to sector) being addressed?           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What proportion of the affected population is protected and assisted?</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there vulnerabilities in the population that need to be particularly addressed?</li> <li>Do the male and female populations have equal access to aid?</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How is the proportion of the affected population protected and assisted likely to evolve?</li> </ul>  |                  |
| Strategic humanitarian priorities | 19. What are the strategic priorities for humanitarian interventions?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on the information gathered through the above questions, what are the strategic priorities for humanitarian interventions in terms of geographical areas, affected groups and priority cluster/sector response domains?<sup>4</sup></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the priority geographical areas and affected groups to be targeted and how (core areas of interventions – e.g. cash for work; food; provision of health services or drugs)?</li> <li>How are the distinct needs for protection and for assistance of girls, boys, women and men addressed in the priorities?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are these priorities expected to evolve over time? In which timeframe and how?</li> </ul>   |                  |
|                                   | 20. Are there other key issues to be considered (environment, HIV, disability, etc.)?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the key cross-cutting issues to be considered in the prioritization of humanitarian interventions?</li> </ul>   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the influence of cross-cutting issues expected to evolve over time? In which timeframe and how?</li> </ul>   |                  |

4. See also note 26 in *Conduct the process of analysis*.

## Undertaking the secondary data analysis

Secondary data plays a crucial role in the early stages of an emergency, when collecting primary data is limited by human resources, time and access constraints. Secondary data analysis (SDA) uses pre- and in-crisis secondary information to form a clear and up-to-date picture of the situation and promote a common understanding.

The secondary data analysis proposed by the MIRA methodology builds on the body of evidence developed over the last decades to formulate response priorities.

Data collation is driven by the objectives, scope and framework of the assessment. Once begun secondary data collation and analysis should be carried out on a rolling basis as new information becomes available.

### Collate pre and in-crisis secondary information

There are two types of secondary information:

- 1 Pre-crisis secondary information** is particularly important as it helps recognize pre-existing vulnerabilities and risks that may be exacerbated as a result of the disaster. Lessons learnt from similar past events – in terms of priority needs and interventions – are also valuable. Pre-crisis information can also serve as the baseline for assessing the impact of the disaster.
- 2 In-crisis secondary information** includes all the information directly related to the disaster and not collected through the community level assessment. It gives an accurate appreciation of the current crisis situation and, when compared with pre-crisis information, helps assess the impact of the disaster.<sup>5</sup>

The common operational datasets (CODs)<sup>6</sup> are one of the main sources of secondary information. Other sources are listed in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Sources of pre- and in-crisis information**

| Pre-crisis information   | In-crisis information  |
|--|--|
| 1. National institutions (ministries, research institutes, universities, etc.)                                   | 1. National institutions (ministries, local offices of emergency preparedness, etc.) |
| 2. Large survey (DHS, MICS, censuses, etc.)  | 2. Media reports   |
| 3. International development institutions (i.e. World Bank)  | 3. Assessment reports from local and international NGOs                              |
| 4. Sector fact sheets  | 4. Situation reports (OCHA, clusters, government)                                    |
| 5. CODs  | 5. Humanitarian profiles   |
| 6. United Nations as well as local and international NGOs survey reports   | 6. Geospatial data from UNISAT, Google Earth, etc.                                   |
| 7. United Nations global data sets or country portals  | 7. Satellite imagery, UNISAT or private providers                                    |
| 8. Geospatial data   | 8. Social media  |
| 9. Online databases (i.e. EM-DAT <sup>7</sup> , Prevention Web <sup>8</sup> )                                    | 9. Funding appeals   |
| 10. Previous Flash appeals and CAPs  |  |
| 11. WHO country epidemiological profiles   |  |
| 12. ALNAP <sup>9</sup> evaluation reports, After Action reviews  |  |
| 13. DevInfo, <sup>10</sup> World Bank's world development indicators, <sup>11</sup> Millennium Development Goals |  |

A clear time frame and clearly identified priorities are essential for data collation. It is important that all stakeholders are aware of and regularly updated on groups and geographical areas of concern. This will help them prioritize their secondary data collation.

5. Additionally, when compared with earlier in-crisis information, it can help identify the impact of humanitarian interventions so far.
6. The CODs are made available by OCHA within 48 hours of an emergency and cover essential data on seven topics: humanitarian profile, population statistics, administrative boundaries, populated places, transportation network, hydrology and hypsography. The CODs are critical to support the work of humanitarian actors across multiple sectors. For more, see the IASC Guidelines Common Operational Datasets in Disaster Preparedness and Response online at [http://cod.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/default/files/iasc\\_guidelines\\_on\\_common\\_operational\\_datasets\\_in\\_disaster\\_preparedness\\_and\\_response\\_1\\_nov\\_2010.pdf](http://cod.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/default/files/iasc_guidelines_on_common_operational_datasets_in_disaster_preparedness_and_response_1_nov_2010.pdf).
7. The Emergency Events Database EM-DAT of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) can be found at <http://www.emdat.bel>.
8. PreventionWeb serves the information needs of the disaster risk reduction community, including the development of information exchange tools to facilitate collaboration (<http://www.preventionweb.net>).
9. The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) is a collective response by the humanitarian sector, dedicated to improving humanitarian performance through increased learning and accountability. It can be found at <http://www.alnap.org/>.
10. DevInfo is a database system endorsed by the United Nations Development Group for monitoring human development that can be found at <http://www.devinfo.org/>.
11. The World Bank dataset includes 298 indicators, available at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>.

There are two levels of analysis. The first is sectoral secondary data analysis, where data is collated and analysed by sectoral experts (agencies/clusters). The results of the various sectoral secondary data analyses should then be discussed and appraised with the findings of other sectors during a facilitated discussion (see *Conduct the process of analysis* below) in order to compile a common overview called inter-sectoral secondary data analysis.

Secondary data should be systematically organized (or tagged) using the themes, key questions and dimensions provided by the MIRA Framework (the Framework can be used as a template). In addition, secondary information should be ordered around four key variables: date, location, group, and sector.

As data is collated, the following points should be kept in mind:

- **Timeliness:** information and analysis should be provided in time to inform key decisions about the response (e.g. a flash appeal) and the design of subsequent primary data collection.
- **Adequacy:** the information used should be “good enough” – there is not point to seek more detail or precision than needed. The value of the data sought should justify the time spent searching it.
- **Relevance:** only data that can be used should be collected. The information and analysis provided should be relevant to the decisions that have to be made and always support the identification of strategic humanitarian priorities.
- **Coverage and scale:** ideally, data should be collated over the whole affected area. The level of geographical disaggregation should relate to the level at which strategic interventions will be planned. Population figures should be disaggregated by sex, age and geographic areas in order to provide, at a minimum, an overall profile of the situation of the female and male populations for different age groups.<sup>12</sup>
- **Transparency:** it is essential to be explicit about the assumptions made, the sources and methods used and the information relied on to reach the conclusions, as well as about the limits of accuracy of the data used.
- **Objectivity:** a variety of sources should be used when collecting and analysing information so as to provide varied and balanced perspectives for addressing problems and recommending solutions.

The following examples are the most common areas of focus while undertaking secondary data analysis for needs assessment purposes.

**Table 3. Common areas of focus when undertaking secondary data analysis**

| Date  |
|---|
| Pre crisis vs post crisis data  |
| Location  |
| National key indicators vs affected area key indicators<br>Characteristic of different livelihood zones<br>(urban vs rural, mountainous vs riverine)  |
| Group   |
| Total population vs specific sub-groups demographic data<br>(refugees vs residents)<br>Characteristic of different sub-set of socio-economic profiles<br>(farmers vs pastoralists)<br>Characteristics of different vulnerable groups<br>(disabled, food insecure, unemployed, etc.)<br>Characteristics of different categories of the population<br>(women vs men, elders vs youth)<br>Coping mechanisms of the various vulnerable groups |
| Sector  |
| Characteristics of different sectors<br>(water and sanitation, health, food security, etc.)   |

<sup>12</sup> The more disaggregated the data, the more useful it is for identifying at-risk populations, but the heaviest it is to manage.

## Analyse pre and in-crisis secondary information

When analysing secondary information, it is necessary to:

- Compare the situation prior to the crisis with the in-crisis situation as well as with international standards or other relevant thresholds.<sup>13</sup> Experience and lessons learnt from similar situations can be used to identify risks and the likely evolution of the crisis.
- Make a clear difference between the crisis-related impact and pre-existing vulnerabilities (underlying factors) that are exacerbated by the crisis or that will increase the vulnerability of affected populations or the crisis impact on them. Pre-crisis information provides very useful insights on how the disaster may have affected the livelihoods, systems and infrastructures.
- Cross-analyse key data and use additional information sources to understand or make reasonable inferences about unmeasured conditions or situations. This helps understand better not only what is happening and where it is happening but also why it is happening.
- Look at the differences between groups (including males and females), sub-groups, sectors and places. A “more or less” type of analysis can be useful: what are the most affected groups? What are the most affected areas? What are the sectors requiring immediate interventions? What are the key issues? Areas, groups and interventions should be prioritized. Finally, the differential impacts on potentially vulnerable groups (including women, children, older people and persons living with disabilities) should be identified.
- Identify constraints, information gaps and needs for further assessment. It is important to always consider what is missing.
- Use assumptions, judgment and “educated guesses”<sup>14</sup> to overcome the “known unknowns”.
- Evaluate the reliability, credibility (i.e. level of bias, source’s credentials, data collection method, confidence intervals, etc.) and the usefulness of the data (i.e. information sufficiently recent and relevant to the analysis of secondary data, level of disaggregation, etc.).<sup>15</sup>
- Conduct a sectoral analysis before combining and consolidating findings into a cross-sectoral analysis.

Additional principles on secondary data analysis are provided in Annex 1 on *Principles on secondary data analysis*. Details on the process of secondary data analysis can be found in *Conducting the final inter-sectoral analysis and determining strategic humanitarian priorities*.

## Undertaking the community level assessment

The community level assessment (CLA) deals with the collection and analysis of primary data. It focuses mostly on qualitative information and provides a unique opportunity to assess the needs and priorities as perceived by affected populations (including female and male members) into the broader assessment of strategic humanitarian priorities. The community level assessment suggests limiting the number of sites assessed in order to increase the quality of the assessment.

Anchored in a specifically designed modular Investigation Form (see Annex 2 on *Customizing the community level assessment Investigation Form*), it relies on assessors<sup>15</sup> to conduct direct observation and interviews with generalist and specialist key informants.<sup>16</sup> The community level assessment includes a systematic appraisal of the situation by the field team following each visit (first level of analysis) to capture more informal (and unstructured) elements of the field assessments (e.g. informal observations and discussions with affected people).

### Customize and pilot test the Investigation Form

The Investigation Form is built around five core modules:

- 1 Identification Module
- 2 Generalist Key Informants Module
- 3 Specialist Key Informants Module
- 4 Direct Observation Module
- 5 First Level Analysis Module

13. See SPHERE Standards and the EU ECHO’s Initial Needs Assessment Checklist (INAC) for example.

14. ACAPS (<http://www.acaps.org>).

15. Information can be inconsistent. Important information should be verified by comparing inputs from at least three different sources (triangulation).

16. Assessors are meant to be experienced investigators who can use their expert judgment to appraise the situation, as opposed to data collectors. The skill of the assessment team to integrate large quantities of very diverse data and to produce a cogent analysis is essential.

17. Questionnaires, checklists, interviews, etc. are called data collection tools or instruments.

By combining the various Modules and/or their components, the Investigation Form can be easily adapted to specific contexts and varying time/resources constraints. Annex 2 provides options to adapt the modules according to needs (see Figure 6 on *Suggestion of modular approach between Phases 1 and 2* in Annex 2).

As access to resources and affected areas increases, modules that were left out of the community level assessment can be reintroduced to reinforce the weight of primary data in the overall assessment<sup>18</sup> while ensuring the continuity of the information gathered.

Once the Investigation Form has been customized according to the context, extra time is needed to pilot test it. Initially, questions and observations should be kept opened to capture comments from both key informants and assessors. Based on the findings of the pilot, the Investigation Form may be refined.

### Define sampling and site selection

In most instances, primary data can realistically be collected only at the level of communities during the first two weeks following a major emergency. Given the time, access and logistics constraints, collecting meaningful quantities of data at household or individual levels is often unrealistic.<sup>19</sup>

As time constraints normally do not permit random or statistically representative sampling, a sample of sites that represent a cross-section of typical regions and affected populations is generally selected. Such sampling is known as purposive sampling and includes considerations such as:

- **Urgent need:** at the height of a crisis, data collection is a quick exercise limited to areas showing the greatest needs or where vulnerabilities<sup>20</sup> are believed to be the highest.
- **Accessibility** of the sites.
- **Gaps in existing knowledge:** locations about which little is known, or key information is lacking will be selected, particularly where there are no relief agencies operating yet.

The sampling size or the number of visited sites is determined by the availability of staff, time and logistical support, as well as by the geographic spread of the disaster and the heterogeneity/homogeneity of the population. Other practical criteria linked to programme response may also guide the selection.

Purposive sampling cannot represent the whole disaster-affected population and its results cannot be generalized beyond the target population. Its purpose is to understand the most pressing issues, concerns and needs, to provide ground-truthing<sup>21</sup> for the findings of the inter-cluster secondary data analysis, and to integrate the perception of affected communities in the prioritization of humanitarian interventions.

### Collect primary data

Before fieldwork begins, all team members, including translators and drivers, should be briefed on:

- The objectives and methodology of the assessment;
- The techniques and tools that will be used;
- The schedule as well as the communication, security and emergency procedures; and
- The administrative and logistic arrangements, such as transport and accommodation.

Each assessor should be thoroughly familiar with the data collection process and the information elicited by each question. Each should have received notes to explain key terminologies and outline site sampling.<sup>22</sup>

There are two main methods to collect primary data:

- 1** **Direct observation**, where the observer is looking for a specific behaviour, object or event, or, conversely for its non-existence. For example, the observer is looking to see whether or not the population uses soap before and after meals. To guide a structured observation, a checklist is normally developed to function both as a reminder and a structured recording tool.

18. Likewise, as secondary data is produced, particularly in-crisis data, it needs to be integrated into the secondary data analysis in the form of updates.

19. Attempts to do so have contributed significantly to the failure of past early needs assessments.

20. Population size, density and influx, reported shortage of food and/or water or risks of epidemics and malnutrition.

21. Ground-truthing is the process of sending field teams to gather data to complement data collected at a distance.

22. Technical brief: direct observation and key informant techniques for primary data collection during rapid assessments. ACAPS, June 2011, p 11.

**2 Key informant interview**, where an individual with prior knowledge of the affected community – typically a local leader, whether civil, government or religious – is questioned to gather key information on the impact of the disaster and on priority community needs. Since community leaders and specialist key informants in position of authority are generally men, it is important to ensure that a balanced number of women and men are interviewed so that the needs of both can be reflected, enhancing the accuracy and impartiality of the assessment.

Further information on direct observation and key informant interviews is provided in Annexes 3 and 4.

### Conduct first and second level analysis of community level assessment information

The last two modules of the Investigation Form support a structured debriefing by field teams after each visit to help capture more informal (and unstructured) elements (discussions, observations). This systematic appraisal constitutes the first level analysis of the community level assessment. Using their expert judgment, team members assess the situation (identifying priority needs, concerns, groups, etc.) based on formal and informal elements<sup>23</sup> of the visit, and justify or expand on their conclusions. This will strengthen further the analysis and interpretation of primary data at the central level.

Second level analysis should take place with all field team leaders. It brings together information from the various sites in order to identify the most recurrent issues and compare the situation between sites, females and males, population groups, etc.

Clusters/sectors can also carry out sector specific analysis if required. To this end, data gathered through the community level assessment (apart from sensitive data) should be shared with the wider community.<sup>24</sup>

## Conducting the final inter-sectoral analysis and determining strategic humanitarian priorities

### Conduct the process of analysis

Once the inter-sectoral secondary data analysis and the second level analysis of the community level assessment have taken place, MIRA participants convene to conduct the final inter-sectoral analysis and identify strategic humanitarian priorities. This analysis requires a discussion among all relevant actors and consensus around key findings and resulting decisions.

The MIRA Framework, which is designed as a logical step-by-step analysis plan leading, should be used to analyse the information and identify strategic humanitarian priorities.

#### Box 1. Importance of the MIRA Framework in the final inter-sectoral analysis

The MIRA Framework will greatly influence the identification of strategic humanitarian priorities. It is therefore essential that all participants be familiar with it and that consensus be reached on its structure from the start of the process, as suggested by the MIRA approach.

The final inter-sectoral analysis is carried out through a facilitated discussion that brings together the key MIRA participants.<sup>25</sup> During the discussion, intra- and inter-sectoral data, information and knowledge are shared and consolidated in a structured manner in order to build a common understanding of the situation.<sup>26</sup>

- I. The facilitator begins by redefining and ensuring a common understanding of the scope of the analysis among all participants. In order to identify the strategic humanitarian priorities, the discussion first focuses on the following questions: where does the humanitarian community need to respond in priority? Who should be protected and/or assisted in priority and which are the priority cluster/sector response domains?<sup>27</sup>

23. Informal elements should be captured in the form of written comments to support the interpretation of the data by non-team members.
24. This will also ensure greater transparency.
25. They include senior humanitarian decision-makers, humanitarian country team members, cluster coordinators, sectoral experts and field team leaders.
26. At this stage, it is likely that a large part of the data, information and knowledge will be derived from secondary sources (see Figure 2 on The continuum of coordinated assessments). The role of primary data will usually be to validate or disprove the assumptions made on the basis of secondary data analysis.

27. Cluster/sector response domains refer to the typology of interventions delivered in each sector, for instance hygiene promotion, food transfers, non-food items and child health.

2. The facilitator then directs the discussion along the eight themes listed in the MIRA Framework using the corresponding key questions and sub-questions.
  - Each theme is discussed in the order in which it appears in the Framework and according to three dimensions: status and impact, vulnerabilities and risks, and trends.
  - Trends require participants to anticipate on the “worst” and “most likely” evolutions of each theme in the short-, medium- and long-term. The compilation of anticipated trends will form the basis of scenario building.
  - For each question, participants are also requested to key out information gaps, which are critical pieces of information when identifying strategic humanitarian priorities.<sup>28</sup>

### *Build consensus*

The facilitator aims at building consensus on each theme and question before moving on to the next one. In order to reach consensus, participants should provide evidence to support their position and indicate their level of confidence in their analysis and interpretation. It is essential that the evidence provided, including information gaps, be recorded with the conclusions.

When no consensus can be reached, the facilitator will record both diverging views and supporting evidence and the discussion will continue on to the next theme.

Conversely, some themes and questions – including those on which no consensus was reached – may be reconsidered at a latter stage, as new evidence is uncovered during the discussion. The conclusions should then be amended accordingly.

#### **Box 2. Elements to keep in mind while conducting the analysis process**

- What has changed since the emergency started, when comparing pre and in-crisis data?
- How has the situation changed?
- Who has been affected and how?
- Is the situation likely to change further? How, for whom and where?
- Is there anything that has stayed the same? Is this expected to change? What would bring about that change?
- What is important about one group, one time, one place when compared to another? Are there differences? Are there similar patterns across different groups?
- What do we know, how do we know it, and how well do we know it? Where does the evidence come from and how strong is it? Is it reliable, why and what is the next level of detail required? Are the sources of information telling a consistent story? Do they make sense?

#### **Box 3. Applying the process of analysis to other stages of the MIRA approach**

The process of analysis described above is also applicable to earlier stages of analysis of the MIRA approach, including sectoral and inter-sectoral secondary data analysis and second level analysis of primary data. Only the contributors and facilitators may change from one stage to another. More information can be found in Figure 3 on the on the Proposed roles and responsibilities of the various participants in the MIRA process.

## **Preparing and disseminating the MIRA outputs**

### *Preliminary Scenario Definition (Phase 1)*

Approximately 72 hours after the onset of a sudden emergency, a reasonable picture of the situation should have emerged from the secondary and initial primary data analysis. By then, assessors should have translated their conclusions into clear and easily accessible results so that a Preliminary Scenario Definition can be circulated. Its added value is to provide a summary of:

- Drivers of the crisis and underlying factors
- Scope of the crisis and humanitarian profile
- Status of populations living in affected areas
- National capacities and response
- International capacities and response

28. In addition, they can guide the design of further assessments, including the coordination structure, sampling methodology, unit of measurement, etc.

- Humanitarian access
- Coverage and gaps
- Strategic humanitarian priorities

As the Preliminary Scenario Definition must be produced very quickly, most of it may be based on the secondary data analysis. In some instances, it may even be the sole source of information. If it is possible to investigate sites during this period, the approach proposed in the community level assessment should be used to ensure consistency and continuity over time. The adaptability of the Investigation Form will facilitate this process (see Annex 2).

The Preliminary Scenario Definition reflects a shared understanding of the situation across the humanitarian community and is intricately linked to the development of a joint strategic plan and of resources mobilization tools (Flash Appeals, etc.).

As secondary data analysis continues at sectoral level throughout Phases 1 and 2, the Preliminary Scenario Definition may be updated periodically until the final MIRA Report is written. Each new update will be the result of a revised inter-sectoral analysis. Updates may be prepared upon request or after any significant changes in the situation (e.g. an increase in the number of affected populations, a report of new affected areas or vulnerable groups, an increase in population movement, etc.).

A template derived from the MIRA Framework is provided in Annex 5.

### *MIRA Report (Phase 2)*

Two weeks after the disaster, a MIRA Report is produced to inform the revision of the Flash Appeal. The Report consolidates the conclusions of the final inter-sectoral analysis. It responds to the same key questions as the Preliminary Scenario Definition and uses a similar structure, also based on the MIRA Framework.

The purpose of the MIRA Report is to help decision-makers – including the humanitarian country team, sector/cluster leads and members, the government and donors – collectively appreciate and communicate on the nature and dynamics of the crisis and to further define strategic humanitarian priorities.

The key findings of the final inter-sectoral analysis should also be captured in the Humanitarian Dashboard and included in the revised Flash Appeal, where relevant. This will help succinctly present the evidence on which the appeal is based.

A template derived from the MIRA Framework is provided in Annex 6.

## Conclusion

The MIRA is the first part of the assessment framework developed by the IASC to improve the coordination of assessments in humanitarian crises and to provide a concise picture and robust understanding of a crisis as it unfolds.

The MIRA was developed within the larger framework of coordinated assessments. As recommended by the NATF *Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises*, coordinated assessments should be part of preparedness and contingency planning work and should continue throughout the duration of a crisis.

The MIRA takes place during Phases 1 and 2 and has two distinct outputs. As of Phases 3 and 4, the need for detailed sectoral data becomes more urgent, calling for single-cluster/sector in-depth assessments. Coordination of assessments at both the intra and inter-cluster levels – in accordance with the IASC principles on coordinated assessments – remain essential to inform the ongoing response and early recovery planning as well as the revision of emergency response proposals and interventions.

The structured and evidence-based approach of the MIRA increases both the quality and the transparency of humanitarian assessments, supports a better humanitarian response and lays down the foundations for a stronger and better-coordinated assessment culture during crises.



# Principles on secondary data analysis

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## General principles

Secondary data analysis demands sectoral skills, general emergency programming skills, and good local knowledge of the geographic areas under discussion. It is a resource and time-consuming process, so enough dedicated resources should be available to capture and analyse the large volume of collected data.

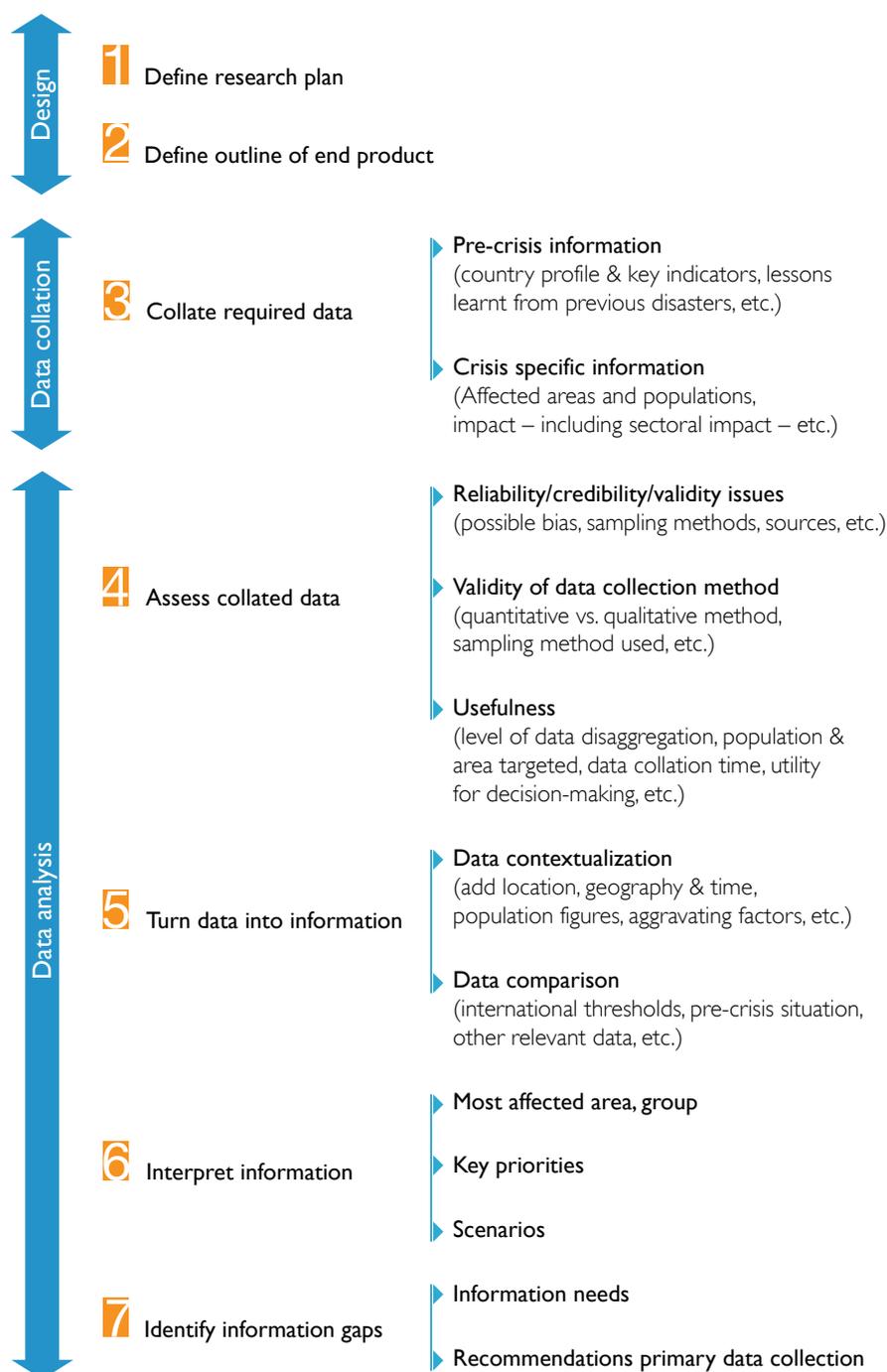
If dedicated resources are not available at the field level, clusters and agencies should request additional support from their headquarters. OCHA will compile secondary data to support the MIRA assessments it coordinates.

## How to proceed?

In addition to the main points listed in Section 3 on the *MIRA approach*, when analysing secondary information, it is necessary to:

- Tag the data according to the area of interest (pre- or in-crisis data; group, area and sector concerned; information on capacity, risk, need or response, etc.) or the related heading within the final report to facilitate information flow throughout the process.
- Review data regularly and identify information gaps and “known unknowns” that may guide further data collation. Crisis-related situation updates may also reveal new groups or geographical areas of concern.
- Look for important and relevant quantitative information such as censuses, humanitarian profiles, pre-crisis data sets, health statistics, demographic data, etc. Statistics may provide useful indications on the patterns and evolution of the crisis underlying factors.
- Use a gender and generational perspective to find out the differences between sexes and among age groups. Quantitative and qualitative information disaggregated by sex and age on mortality, morbidity, malnutrition, gender-based violence, etc. is needed to get an overall understanding of the situation of the female and male populations of different ages before the crisis so it can be compared to in-crisis available information.
- Use proxy information when data is not available or too old to be relevant (e.g. coping mechanisms as a proxy for the severity of the crisis).
- Refer to the impact of similar recent crises to guide data collation.
- Use the references generally placed at the end of collected reports and documents to guide to further sources.
- Identify key resources (at local, national, regional and headquarters level) that can support and contribute to data collation. If sources are not sensitive, they can be quoted in the report. When searching for secondary data or questioning the quality of a source already collected, advice should be sought from sector specialists and other experts with local knowledge. For local level information and data, local NGOs or contacts can help.
- Customize archiving procedures using a standardized architecture to easily retrieve documentation or incorporate new data. For in-crisis information, data should be stored in a way that simplifies daily updates and allows the visualization of trends. Each document’s name should reflect the date, source and place of the information it contains.

Figure 5. Step-by-step secondary data analysis

**Box 4. Key principles for secondary data collation**

- The more disaggregated the data, the more useful it is for identifying the most vulnerable people.
- Importance of the data vs. the time needed to find it. Some of the required data will not exist or will be difficult to find. Decide whether the importance of the data justifies the time required to find the data.
- Collect only what can be used. Know the question that needs to be answered and the data being sought.
- Provide clear timeframe for data collection and identify priorities. Ensure all stakeholders are aware of, and regularly updated on groups and geographical areas of concerns.
- Let the data speak for itself and be prepared to redirect data collation efforts accordingly.

**Box 5. Key principles for secondary data analysis**

- Scrutinize information and identify the underlying details of important facts, patterns, trends, significant differences or anomalies that are not always readily visible. Consider the details.
- Separate the matter into key parts and/or essential elements; break things down; identify causes/key factors or features/possible results.
- Ensure there is enough time to turn data into information. Often a great deal of time is spent collecting information, but too little time given to preparing for data collection, or analysing it.
- Challenge pre-conceived assumptions and conclusions. Discuss findings with colleagues and reach consensus on conclusions.
- Consider bias and reliability/credibility. Don't rely on one source only.
- Be sceptical when dealing with comparisons. Researchers like to do something called a "regression", a process that compares one thing to another to see if they are statistically related. This relationship is called "correlation". Always remember that a correlation does not mean causation.
- Be careful of the actual meaning of terms used. Terms such as "affected", "household" or "community" can mean different things in different areas. Definitions may change over time and where this is not recognized, erroneous conclusions may be drawn. Provide a definition for potentially confusing or sensitive terms.
- Ensure the secondary data analysis is properly referenced. A well-documented secondary data analysis allows for easier use of the material by other interested parties and allows for greater credibility of the product.
- Clearly define when information is based on assumptions instead of on facts or sufficiently verified information.
- Think about whether or not the findings make sense.



# Customizing the Investigation Form

## A modular structure

The CLA Investigation Form used for primary data collection is composed of five modules, presented in full below. By combining the various modules and/or their components, the Investigation Form can be easily adapted to fit the objectives of the assessment and the specificity of the crisis under scrutiny. This adaptability ensures consistency and continuity over time.

- 1** The **Description Module** is used to describe the assessment (date and team) and the community assessed (location; type of settlement, setting and population).

**Table 4. Description Module**

| Component                             | Proposed   | Comments  |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Description of the assessment         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date of the assessment</li> <li>• Field team</li> </ul>   | Supports data management and verification with the field team (or team leader). |
| Description of the community assessed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geo-location (Admin 1, 2, 3 – Place name / Code – GPS coordinates)</li> <li>• Settlement type</li> <li>• Setting type</li> <li>• Population type</li> </ul> | Supports data management and the stratification of the analysis. <sup>29</sup>  |

- 2** The **Generalist Key Informant Module** comprises three elements:

- opening questions to investigate problem areas,
- area-specific questions to assess each problem area in further details, and
- ranking of problem areas and identification of most affected sub groups.

**Table 5. Generalist Key Informant Module: opening and area-specific questions, ranking of problem areas and identification of most affected sub groups**

| Components              | Description   | Comments / Recommendations  |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Opening questions       | Opening questions constitute the “backbone” of this Module. They aim at identifying which problem areas (e.g. food, drinking water or protection) are perceived as a “serious problem” by the assessed communities. | The opening questions are derived from the HESPER Scale <sup>30</sup> and should therefore, when used, remain unchanged. According to the context, some opening questions may be removed or new ones designed and introduced. |
| Area-specific questions | Area-specific questions further investigate each problem area. They allow for a more in-depth understanding of underlying causes and provide insight on the way communities are affected.                           | Area-specific questions should allow for the identification of the cluster/sector response domains most adapted for addressing the issue (e.g. cash and voucher transfers vs food transfers, etc.). <sup>31</sup>             |

29. The variables used to describe the assessment need to refer to larger standards such as the CODs and the humanitarian profile, when available.

30. The Humanitarian Emergency Settings Perceived Needs Scale (HESPER, WHO & KCL, 2011) aims to provide a quick, scientifically robust way of assessing the perceived serious needs of people affected by large-scale humanitarian emergencies. For a copy of the HESPER manual and its 27-item scale, see [http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2011/9789241548236\\_eng.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2011/9789241548236_eng.pdf).

31. See note 26 for more details.

| Components   | Description  | Comments / Recommendations   |
|--|--|--|
| Ranking of problem areas and identification of most affected sub groups within the community | This component allows key informants to identify priority problem areas and list most affected sub groups for each area. | Key informants should rank the top 3 problem areas among those they have identified as being a "serious problem". For each, they should identify which sub-groups are most affected.<br>The breakdown in specific sub-groups should be standardized. <sup>32</sup> |

- 3** The **Specialized Key Informant Module** is used with health staff, teachers, sanitation engineers and staff from local specialized NGOs. It supports the identification and, when appropriate, the ranking of sector-specific problems. It focuses on questions that can be better answered by experts. There is no module per se in the Manual but lists of questions can be found in the toolbox of the IASC NATF website.<sup>33</sup>
- 4** The **Direct Observation Module** brings together structured observations recorded by team members at the end of each visit. A checklist is proposed as an example in the Investigation Form template below.<sup>34</sup>
- 5** The **First Level Analysis Module** supports the systematic debriefing of field teams after each visit. Like generalist key informants, team members identify the three top priority problem areas, list most affected sub groups for each area, and suggest which cluster/sector response domains could be the most adapted for addressing the problem. Their conclusions should be supported by structured observations and interviews held during the assessment. The team should also include all informal (or unstructured) elements that support its conclusions (see *Conduct first and second level analysis of community level assessment information* in Section 3).

## Adapting the Investigation Form

The Investigation Form will always require context specific adaptation depending on the:

- Scale of the emergency
- Stability of the situation
- Physical and humanitarian access issues
- Logistic, financial and human resources
- Time constraints
- Other ongoing or planned field assessments
- Availability of secondary data
- Skills of assessors
- Representativeness of key informants
- Local perception regarding humanitarian actors and activities
- Information sensibility
- Data collection tools (personal data assistant, tablets, etc.)

Taking into consideration those different elements, there are essentially two ways of adapting the form.

- 1** **Selecting the most appropriate Modules.** In a situation where access and time are very limited, it is possible to use only the First Level Analysis Module to capture the observations of field team members and thus rely on their expert judgement to appraise the situation. The Generalist and Specialized Key Informants Modules can be added later on as access to resources and affected areas increases, and the need for detailed sectoral data becomes more urgent. Other combinations are possible, depending on the context.
- 2** **Adapting the Modules.** There are several ways of adapting the modules themselves. The first and most obvious is to carefully select the questions needed on the basis of the

32. The suggested standard breakdown is: men / women / boys / girls / older persons / persons with disabilities / particular ethnic or religious group (specify) / other, (explain) / all sub groups are affected in a similar way / do not know.

33. [Link to the website when it is live.](#)

34. There many observation checklists available for reference such as the EU ECHO's Initial Needs Assessment Checklist (INAC) or the WFP's Initial investigation.

findings of both sectoral and inter-sectoral secondary data analysis, and on their potential for meaningful analysis. More systematic variations are also possible if the Investigation Form uses the opening questions as a frame for the Generalist Key Informants and First Level Analysis Modules. Figure 6 on *Suggestions of modular approach between Phases 1 and 2* proposes a list of variations with their potential benefits, drawbacks and mitigation measures.

Whatever combination of modules is chosen, the Identification Module – including both components – is mandatory.

**Table 6a. Suggestion of modular approach between Phases 1 and 2**

| Constraints in terms of resources, time & access |                   |                |                |
|--|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Module   | High              | Moderate       | Low            |
| 1. Identification                                | Mandatory         |                |                |
| 2. Generalist Key Informant                      | Can be left aside | Should be used |                |
| 3. Specialized Key Informant                     | Can be left aside |                | Should be used |
| 4. Direct Observation                            | Should be used    |                | Mandatory      |
| 5. First Level Analysis                          | Mandatory         |                |                |

■ Mandatory  
■ Should be used  
■ Can be left aside

The Generalist Key Informant Module is not mandatory when the constraints are high, however, when used, it may also be scaled up or down based on the objectives of the assessment. Options for adapting those modules are provided in Table 6b below. The same breakdown is applicable for the First Level Analysis where the area-specific questions can be left aside or prioritized according to the level of constraint.

**Table 6b. Suggestion of modular approach for the Generalist Key Informant and First Level Analysis Modules**

| Constraints in terms of resources, time & access                      |                   |                                |  |
|---|-------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Generalist Key Informant Module                                       | High              | Moderate                       | Low                                    |
| Opening questions   | Mandatory         |                                |  |
| Area-specific questions   | Can be left aside | For problem areas = priorities | For problem areas = "serious problems" |
| Ranking of problem areas & identification of most affected sub-groups | Mandatory         |                                |  |

Finally, it must be remembered that as fewer modules are included in the Investigation Form:

- the speed of data collection, management and analysis will improve, but
- the potential to detect all issues of importance will diminish, therefore
- the reliance on the assessors' judgement (and therefore skills and experience) and on a strong (and exhaustive) observation checklist will increase.

## Investigation Form template

### Description Module

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Date            | Name and sex of assessor /assessment team |
| Province        | District                                  |
| Sub-District    | Place name                                |
| Settlement type | Setting type                              |
| Population type | GPS coordinates<br>X. _____<br>Y. _____   |

### Generalist Key Informant Module<sup>35</sup>

#### Opening and area-specific questions

**1** Is there a serious problem in your community<sup>36</sup> because people do not have enough water that is safe for drinking or cooking?

Yes  No  DKN

| What are the main sources of water in your community (tick all that apply)? |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| Borehole or well with functioning motor pump                                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Borehole or well with functioning hand pump                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Protected spring  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Protected open well   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Piped water   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Unprotected spring  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Unprotected open well   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Surface water   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Traditional water sellers   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Humanitarian assistance   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| None  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**2** Is there a serious problem in your community with food; for example because there is no food or not good enough food or because it is not possible to cook food?

Yes  No  DKN

| 2a. What are the main concerns related to food in your community (rank up to 3 concerns)?                            |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| No food, no market   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not enough food  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not good enough food   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No cooking facilities  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No utensils  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No cooking fuels   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Loss of agricultural land  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Loss of agricultural assets (tools, storage capacity, seeds, etc.)   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No physical access to markets  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No income, money, resources to purchase food   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2b. Are there significant changes in the total amount of food that people are eating since the disaster, on average? |                          |
| Amount consumed has increased  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Amount consumed has decreased  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Amount consumed is the same  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do not know  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not applicable   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

35. It is important to include the function and sex of the respondent.

36. The word "community" should be replaced with the term most suitable to the local geographical context (e.g. village, town, neighbourhood, camp, etc.) throughout the Investigation Form.

|  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2c. What are the main sources of food in your community (tick all that apply)?                   |                          |                          |
| Subsistence production   |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Local market   |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Humanitarian assistance  |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____  |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____  |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2d. Do people in your community have access <sup>37</sup> to the following nutrition programmes? |                          |                          |
|  | Yes                      | DKN                      |
| Management of severe acute malnutrition (facility-based)   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Management of severe acute malnutrition (community-based)  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Management of moderate acute malnutrition  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not applicable   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**3** Is there a serious problem in your community because people do not have an adequate place to live in?

Yes  No  DKN

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| 3a. What are the main types of shelter people from your community live in (tick all that apply)? |                          |
| House or apartment   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Improvised shelter (e.g. made from salvaged construction materials, etc.)                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tents  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Planned temporary or transitional shelter other than tents (e.g., made from distributed items)   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Repaired partially damaged homes   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Buildings used as collective accommodation   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other buildings (e.g. host family homes, rented accommodation etc.)                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No shelter   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3b. What are the main situations people from your community live in (tick all that apply)?       |                          |
| Not displaced  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Host families  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Collective centres   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Planned camps  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Spontaneous camps  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dispersed settlement   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3c. What are the main concerns with meeting shelter needs (Rank up to 4 concerns)?               |                          |
| There is no shelter  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Shelters are over-crowded  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Homes are so damaged that they are inhabitable   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Building materials to repair/build shelter are unavailable                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Skills to repair/build shelter are unavailable   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Potential grievances on land issues  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| People are lacking basic household items   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**4** Is there a serious problem in your community because people do not have easy and safe access to clean toilets?

Yes  No  DKN

**5** Is there a serious problem in your community because it is difficult for people to keep clean; for example because there is not enough soap, water or suitable place to wash?

Yes  No  DKN

**6** Is there a serious problem in your community because people do not have enough, or good enough, clothing, shoes, bedding or blankets?

Yes  No  DKN

37. Access includes physical, financial and cultural considerations.

**7** Is there a serious problem in your community because people do not have enough income, money or resources to live?

Yes  No  DKN

| 7a. What are traditionally the main sources of income of people in your community (Rank up to 4)?     |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| Agriculture   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agro-pastoralism  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pastoralism   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Small businesses/trading  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Skills to repair/build shelter are unavailable  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Daily work  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do not know   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7b. Were the following sources of income affected by the disaster (highly, moderately, not affected)? |                          |
| Agriculture   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Agro-pastoralism  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pastoralism   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Small businesses/trading  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Skills to repair/build shelter are unavailable  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Daily work  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do not know   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**8** Are there serious problems within your community regarding physical health; for example because people have physical illnesses, injuries or disabilities?

Yes  No  DKN

**9** Is there a serious problem in your community because people are not able to get adequate health care for themselves; for example treatment or medicines or health care during pregnancy or childbirth?

Yes  No  DKN

| 9a. Do people in your community have access to the following health services? <sup>38</sup> | Yes                      | No                       | DKN                      |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Free condoms  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Clean home delivery   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hygiene promotion   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Outpatient consultations  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Routine vaccination   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Basic essential obstetric care  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Post-exposure prophylaxis for STI & HIV infections  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Inpatient   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Surgery   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Comprehensive essential obstetric care  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**10** Is there a serious problem in your community because people feel distressed; for example very upset, sad, worried, scared or angry?

Yes  No  DKN

**11** Is there a serious problem in your community because people are not safe or protected where they live now; for example because of conflict, violence or crime in your community, village or city?

Yes  No  DKN

| 11 a. What are the main concerns related to security (tick all that apply)? |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| There are no problems   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There is not enough security provided                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |

38. Services (or packages) to be selected from the HeRAMS Standard Checklist of Services – it is recommended to choose services that give a broader understanding of the situation in terms of access to health services (e.g. BEOC).

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| Security actors are abusing people from the community  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do not know  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>I 1 b. What are the main issues people in your community are facing in terms of safety (tick all that apply)?</b> |                          |
| Attacks or bombings  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Combats or clashes between armed groups  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Armed violence   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Presence of landmines or explosive remnants of war   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Continuation of threats from natural disasters (e.g. earthquake aftershocks, etc.)                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Deliberate killings of civilians by the military or armed groups   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Executions or other killings   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Enforced or involuntary disappearance  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Maltreatment of the population (e.g. extortion, forced labour, physical abuse, torture)                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Violence against girl and women  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Arrests and detention  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Abduction or taking of hostages  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Displacement   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Forced military recruitment  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do not know  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>I 1 c. What are the main security mechanisms in your community (Tick all that apply)?</b>                         |                          |
| Police – particular group  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| National armed forces  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Community security groups / neighbourhood watch  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| None   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do not know  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**12** Is there a serious problem in your community because children are not in school or are not getting a good enough education?

Yes  No  DKN

**I 2.a.** Does the majority of school-aged children (>75%) attend school?

Yes  No  DKN

**I 2.b.** Did the majority of school-aged children (>75%) attend school before the disaster? (Y/N/DNK)

Yes  No  DKN

**I 2.c.** What are the main groups of school aged children least likely to participate in school (rank up to 3)?

|                            |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Children with disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ethnic minorities          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Girls                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Boys                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____      | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**13** Is there a serious problem in your community because people have difficulties caring for family members who live with them; for example their children or family members who are elderly, disabled or ill?

Yes  No  DKN

**14** Is there a serious problem in your community because people are not getting enough support from other people in the community; for example emotional support or practical help?

Yes  No  DKN

**15** Is there a serious problem in your community because people have been separated from family members?

Yes  No  DKN

**16** Is there a serious problem in your community because people have been displaced from their home country, city or village?

Yes  No  DKN

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| 16a. What are the main reasons why people are unable to return home (tick all that apply)?                               |                          |
| Not applicable – return is impossible; too early in emergency  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disaster conditions need to subside (e.g. water recede)  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of basic services in place of origin  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Waiting for structural assessment  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The security situation does not allow it   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No transportation home   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16b. What are the main concerns regarding the cohabitation between people from your community and Hosts/IDP Communities? |                          |
| Insufficient sheltered space   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Insufficient fuel, resources   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Unequal access to basic services and goods (specify)   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Security threats   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**17** Is there a serious problem in your community because people do not have enough information; for example information about the situation in which they live now; or the situation in their home country, city or village?

Yes  No  DKN

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| 17a. What are the main sources of information in your community (tick all that apply)? |                          |
| Television (Specify) _____   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Radio (Specify) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Newspapers (Specify) _____   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Internet   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Friends, neighbourhood, family   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Community / religious leaders  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Aid workers  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17b. What is the most important information for your community (tick all that apply)?  |                          |
| Information on /communication with family members                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Information on relief operations (food, water provision, etc.)                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Health advice and treatment  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Market information   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Security information   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Information about the situation in my home community / country of origin               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Weather forecast   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**18** Is there a serious problem in your community because of inadequate aid; for example because people have no information about the aid that is available, because people do not have fair access to the aid that is available; or because aid agencies are working on their own without involving people in your community?

Yes  No  DKN

| 18a. Have there been problems in the delivery of humanitarian assistance? (tick all that apply) |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| There was fighting between recipients   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There was not enough for all entitled   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The distribution was interrupted by an attack   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The assistance was physically too heavy or bulky for the vulnerable in the community to take    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Some population groups are not receiving aid  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Non-affected groups are demanding humanitarian assistance                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Political interference in distribution of aid   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The assistance did not respond to the actual needs  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do not know   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**19** Is there a serious problem in your community because people do not feel respected or humiliated; for example because of the situation in which they live; or because of the way other people, including aid workers, treat them?

Yes  No  DKN

**20** Is there a serious problem in your community because people are not able to move between places; for example going to another village or town?

Yes  No  DKN

| 20a. Is movement restricted for any of the following reasons? (tick all that apply)             |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| Activities of armed groups  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Presence of landmines   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| General violence / serious crime / banditry   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of identity or travel documentation  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tribal conflict   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Natural obstacles to move out of the location   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Curfews or restricted travelling days / hours / distances or other such restrictions            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Restrictions on girls' and women mobility or other discriminations                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack / impracticability of the transportation network (bridges, roads, etc.)                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of transportation means  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20b. What are the main consequences resulting from the restriction of movement? (rank up to 4)  |                          |
| Reduced access to water   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reduced access to health services   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reduced access to humanitarian relief distributions   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Inability to access fuel sources (e.g. firewood)  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Limited/no access to socio-economic sources / activities (e.g. access to cattle, markets, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Risk of physical, sexual or domestic violence   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**21** Is there a serious problem in your community because people have too much free time in the day?

Yes  No  DKN

**22** Is there a serious problem in your community because of an inadequate system for law and justice; or because people do not know enough about their legal rights?

Yes  No  DKN

**23** Is there a serious problem for people in your community because of physical or sexual violence; either in the community or in their homes?

Yes  No  DKN

**24** Is there a serious problem in your community because people drink a lot of alcohol; or use harmful drugs?

Yes  No  DKN

**25** Is there a serious problem in your community because people have a mental illness?

Yes  No  DKN

**26** Is there a serious problem in your community because there is not enough care for people who are on their own; for example unaccompanied children, widows or elderly people; or unaccompanied people who have a physical or mental illness, or disability?

Yes  No  DKN

**27** Is there a serious problem in your community because people no longer have access to key community resources? (tick all that apply)

Yes  No  DKN

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| 27a. Which infrastructure is most critical to people in your community today? (rank up to 3) |                          |
| Religious centres / sites (Specify) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cultural centres (Specify) _____   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Youth centres  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (Specify) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Ranking and identification of most affected sub groups within the community**

Please identify priority problem areas within your community among all the items identified as being a “serious problem” (rank up to 6) and list sub groups within your community that may be most affected.

| Rank | Area-specific item       | Most affected sub groups   |
|------|--------------------------|--|
| 1    | Priority problem area #1 | Men <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|      |                          | Women <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|      |                          | Boys <input type="checkbox"/>  |
|      |                          | Girls <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|      |                          | Older persons <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|      |                          | Persons with disabilities <input type="checkbox"/>                             |
|      |                          | Particular ethnic or religious groups (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> |
|      |                          | Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |
|      |                          | All groups are affected in a similar way <input type="checkbox"/>              |
|      |                          | Do not know <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| 2    | Priority problem area #2 | Men <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|      |                          | Women <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|      |                          | Boys <input type="checkbox"/>  |
|      |                          | Girls <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|      |                          | Older persons <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|      |                          | Persons with disabilities <input type="checkbox"/>                             |
|      |                          | Particular ethnic or religious groups (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> |
|      |                          | Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/>                                 |
|      |                          | All groups are affected in a similar way <input type="checkbox"/>              |
|      |                          | Do not know <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| 3    | Priority problem area #3 | Men <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|      |                          | Women <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|      |                          | Boys <input type="checkbox"/>  |
|      |                          | Girls <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|      |                          | Older persons <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|      |                          | Persons with disabilities <input type="checkbox"/>                             |

|   |                          |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 3 | Priority problem area #3 | Particular ethnic or religious groups (Specify) _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   |                          | Other (Specify) _____                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   |                          | All groups are affected in a similar way              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|   |                          | Do not know   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### Specialized Key Informant Module

Examples of questions for specialized key informants are provided in the toolbox on the IASC NATF website.<sup>39</sup>

### Direct Observation Module

Example of a direct observation checklist.<sup>40</sup>

| Questions  | Yes                      | No                       | Comments/details/ observations |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>WASH</b>  |                          |                          |                                |
| Is there a problem with garbage/waste around where people are staying?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                |
| Are there latrines at the site?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                |
| Are the latrines functional? ( <i>Visit the latrines</i> )   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                |
| Do households have suitable clean covered water storage containers? ( <i>Ask to see HH water storage in several households</i> )                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                |
| Is there queue at the main water point?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                |
| Other (Specify) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                |
| <b>Education</b>   |                          |                          |                                |
| Were school aged children observed out of school during school hours on school days?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                |
| Is water available at the school?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                |
| Are teaching and learning materials damaged or missing?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                |
| Other (Specify) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                |
| <b>Infrastructure damages: A: Totally destroyed; B: Not usable; C: Damaged but can be repaired; D: Limited damage, can be easily repaired; E: No damages</b> |                          |                          |                                |
| What is the level of damages to school buildings?  |                          |                          |                                |
| What is the level of damages to health centres?  |                          |                          |                                |
| What is the level of damage of houses and buildings?   |                          |                          |                                |
| What is the level of damages of the main water points?   |                          |                          |                                |
| Other (Specify) _____  |                          |                          |                                |
| <b>Food security</b>   |                          |                          |                                |
| Is there food available in the market?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                |
| Other (Specify) _____  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                |
| <b>Shelter</b>   |                          |                          |                                |
| If it is a site with individual shelter, please give some details (provide best estimate)  | Size of rooms _____      |                          |                                |
|  | # of people/room _____   |                          |                                |
|  | # of families/room _____ |                          |                                |
|  | # of rooms _____         |                          |                                |
| Total number of people in the shelter _____  |                          |                          |                                |
| Other (Specify) _____  |                          |                          |                                |

39. [Link to the website when it is live.](#)

40. Draft direct observation checklist for assessment teams + summary form (ACAPS, 2012).

*Assessment Team Module*

**Ranking of priorities problem areas and identification of most affected sub groups**

| Rank | Area-specific item       | Most affected sub groups   | Comments/ justification |
|------|--------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| 1    | Priority problem area #1 | Men <input type="checkbox"/><br>Women <input type="checkbox"/><br>Boys <input type="checkbox"/><br>Girls <input type="checkbox"/><br>Older persons <input type="checkbox"/><br>Persons with disabilities <input type="checkbox"/><br>Particular ethnic or religious groups (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/><br>Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/><br>All groups are affected in a similar way <input type="checkbox"/><br>Do not know <input type="checkbox"/> |                         |
| 2    | Priority problem area #2 | Men <input type="checkbox"/><br>Women <input type="checkbox"/><br>Boys <input type="checkbox"/><br>Girls <input type="checkbox"/><br>Older persons <input type="checkbox"/><br>Persons with disabilities <input type="checkbox"/><br>Particular ethnic or religious groups (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/><br>Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/><br>All groups are affected in a similar way <input type="checkbox"/><br>Do not know <input type="checkbox"/> |                         |
| 3    | Priority problem area #3 | Men <input type="checkbox"/><br>Women <input type="checkbox"/><br>Boys <input type="checkbox"/><br>Girls <input type="checkbox"/><br>Older persons <input type="checkbox"/><br>Persons with disabilities <input type="checkbox"/><br>Particular ethnic or religious groups (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/><br>Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/><br>All groups are affected in a similar way <input type="checkbox"/><br>Do not know <input type="checkbox"/> |                         |

# Direct observation

Observation is often underrated as a data collection method. Everyone collects information<sup>41</sup> knowingly or unknowingly. However, employing direct observation as an effective assessment tool requires that assessors consciously use and record what they see, hear, and smell to help shape their understanding of a situation or a problem.

There are two approaches to direct observation:<sup>42</sup>

- 1 Structured observation**, also called “looking for”, where the observer is looking for a specific behaviour, object or event, or conversely for its non-existence. For example, the observer is looking to see if the population uses soap before and after meals. To guide a structured observation, a checklist is normally developed to function both as a reminder and a recording tool.
- 1 Unstructured observation**, or “looking at”, where the observer is looking to see how things are done and what issues exist. For instance, the observer is interested in knowing how women and men move in and out of a camp. To guide an unstructured observation, a short set of open-ended questions can be developed that will be answered based on observations.

Every data collection instrument (e.g. questionnaire, interview checklist) should make provision for direct observation comments and notes (see example below<sup>43</sup>) as they help add context and meaning to the data collected.

Suitable pre-field visit preparation helps assessors understand the value of their observations and the importance of systematically recording them. Observations must be separated from the respondents’ comments or responses.

**Table 8. Example of form for recording observations**

| Location  | Observation <sup>44</sup>  | Significance  | Follow-up   |
|-----------|--|---|---|
| Village X | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor drainage around well; spilled water flowing back into the well</li> <li>• Animals walking around the well</li> </ul> | Water contamination likely to lead to diarrhoeal disease, particularly among young children | Investigate household water usage: do people boil and/or treat water? |

## Strengths and limitations of direct observation

As it does not require costly resources or detailed training, direct, direct observation can be used to collect rapidly different types of information in an emergency situation.

Observation is also a good way to cross-check people’s answers. It may generate questions for further investigation and help frame future discussions or questions in case of inconsistency between what the assessor observes and what the key informants are saying.

However, as a data collection technique, direct observation only provides a snapshot of the situation, and has therefore limited use when the crisis evolves rapidly (such as when there are population movements) or when there is a conflict. Furthermore, it provides only partial information about a community’s capacities and priorities.<sup>45</sup> Finally, while it does not require specific training, some preparation is necessary to ensure that the observers are aware that their own perceptions and expectations are subjective and have an impact upon how they report

41. Adapted from *Technical brief: direct observation and key informant techniques for primary data collection during rapid assessments* (ACAPS, June 2011).

42. *Child Protection Rapid Assessment Toolkit* (UNICEF, January 2011).

43. Modified from the *Emergency Food Security Assessment Handbook* (WFP, 2009).

44. *Key sites for observation include water collection points, latrines, communal washing areas, schools, storage facilities, gravesites, markets, health facilities and religious centres.*

45. Adapted from the *Guidance on Profiling Internally Displaced Persons* (Edited by the Norwegian Refugee Council’s Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and OCHA, April 2008).

and interpret their observations. The observer's gender, age, ethnicity and previous disaster response experience can all have an effect on how collected data is interpreted. The particular sectoral specializations (e.g. protection, water and sanitation, shelter, etc.) of observers may also influence their observation findings, as they may either focus more on their own specialty or misinterpret something outside of their field. The technical expertise required to answer particular observation questions should match the level of technical expertise of the observers.

### *Basic principles during the field assessment*

- Direct observation starts before an interview or discussion. Often, things seen on the drive to the disaster site or upon entering the affected area on foot provide valuable contextual data. After presenting themselves to the relevant authorities, assessors start the assessment with a walk around the area. They should observe the conditions and the area from various standpoints (including from a hill or a tall building if any). If possible, the assessors should walk with local people as it facilitates discussion and can be an excellent way to come across unexpected information (issues that were not predicted).
- Assessors should spend time in communal or public places such as cafés, tea shops, markets and religious buildings. The local market gives a useful picture of the foodstuff and goods that are available, as well as of the local production and prices.
- Observation provides assessors with immediate information on schools, water points, health posts and other infrastructure such as public services and sanitation systems. It also helps assess people's physical condition, activities and economic circumstances (housing, livestock, etc.),<sup>46</sup> power relationships within the community as well as coping mechanisms and access to aid. Assessors should record what should be there but is not observed. The absence of people in the market, of children in the schools, of men or women in displaced population groups is as important as their presence.
- Where appropriate, assessors should observe the daily lives of women to get a sense of what their economic activities are and how their domestic chores such as fetching water or collecting wood, might expose them to risks of violence (be aware that in some cultural settings, it is inappropriate and disrespectful for men to observe and/or interview women).
- Where culturally acceptable and the security situation permits, assessors should take pictures. Photos, video footage and even sketches can be extremely useful in communicating to others the reality of the situation.<sup>47</sup> Be sensitive to the fact that taking pictures of affected people can put them at risk (in conflict settings) or be highly inappropriate (such as men photographing women). Teams should not be endangered by attempting to take pictures where they are prohibited (e.g. military installations, etc.).
- Assessors should cross-check the information as they are on the spot and have immediate access to it. If discussing water, assessors should ask to see the water source. If people describe food or a building method that assessors do not know, they should ask to see it. Use direct observation to triangulate the responses, and explanations given by affected persons.
- At each visited site, the whole team should meet at least once to review progress and to decide which places still need attention before leaving the site. This way they will avoid gaps in essential data.
- At the end of the visit, assessors should hold a meeting with community representatives. They should explain what they have done and seen, share their conclusions, and tell the female and male members of the community how this information will be used. They should be sure not to make commitments or promises regarding assistance.
- Finally team members should organize a debriefing to tally up observations and pull together the final conclusions. Where necessary, observations must be transferred from individual checklists to a data summary sheet.
- Highlight areas where team observations and population responses do not match so that discrepancies can be analysed and triangulation needs identified.

46. Particularly but not exclusively that of children, older persons, chronically ill persons, people living with disabilities, and where appropriate, women.

47. Modified from the 2000 IFRC Disaster Assessment Guidelines (IFRC, 2000)

**Box 6. Dos and don'ts of direct observation<sup>48</sup>****Do**

- Avoid pre-conceived notions and fixed expectations.
- Note what is seen and what people say if the subject is not of immediate concern. Follow the advice of people met during the visits. Use the opportunity to observe things that were not planned.
- Walk around the community outside of predefined roads, paths or natural boundaries to have a balanced view of conditions.
- Record contradictory or unexpected information.
- Keep focused and active during observation.
- Be curious! Observation is not just about seeing, but also about hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling and touching.
- Be aware of what has not been seen. Record the lack of services and infrastructure.
- Respect local culture. Assessors are observed as much as they are observing. Follow local rules of behaviour, such as not smoking during interviews. Be aware of gender dynamics and make sure that the assessment team reflects the same dynamics.
- Be sensitive to local concerns. For example, assessor should not eat or drink in public if there is a shortage of food and water.

**Don't**

- Begin with expectations of what is going to be seen or record data chiefly to prove a pre-existing hypothesis.
- Rely on memory but write down observations on a checklist or record sheet. Record both what is seen and what was expected but not seen.
- Focus solely on misery and destitution. Be aware of capacities, opportunities and social capital within the affected community.
- Be intrusive. Take steps to be as sensitive and respectful as possible: observation should be as discreet as possible.
- Take a picture without asking permission first.

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48. Adapted from ACAPS, June 2011.



# Key informant interviews

In addition to direct observation, key informant interviews<sup>49</sup> are a common data collection technique in rapid assessments. During this type of interview, an individual with prior knowledge of the affected community is questioned to gather key information on the impact of the disaster and on priority community needs.

Key informants are well informed on their community and its inhabitants.<sup>50</sup> Because of their professional background, leadership responsibilities or personal experience, key informants have specific knowledge or expertise about some aspects of the emergency, the area, the community,<sup>51</sup> a specific sector (hospital chief of staff or school administrators) or a sensitive issue. Typically, a key informant is a local civil or religious leader. As the latter are usually men, it is important to ensure that a balanced number of women and men are interviewed so that the needs of both can be reflected, enhancing the accuracy and impartiality of the assessment. Women's particular contribution in humanitarian crisis in caring for young, elder and sick members of the community makes them particularly knowledgeable on who is at risk and on what the needs are. Females knowledgeable about the community can include midwives, nurses, community leaders, leading market women and teachers.

While not traditionally considered as key informants, regular people can also have valuable personal experience to share. For example, a female household head can be a key informant on the priority needs of mothers. Likewise a person who is unable to walk without assistance can give a unique insight into the challenge of accessing aid when living with a disability.

Key informant interviews may be used to:

- obtain technical information from people representing specific professions, such as health workers or school teachers;
- gain specific knowledge about a specific topic or sector (e.g. water and sanitation);
- delve into sensitive issues that are not appropriate for group discussion (e.g. protection concerns)

### *Strengths and limitations of key informant interviews*

Key informant interviews help collect basic information quickly and with few resources. They are also particularly valuable in accessing remote or hard-to-reach communities. Finally, they give a holistic and qualitative overview of the impact of a disaster on community members.

Their greatest limitation is that they provide a subjective perspective. The information is biased by the respondent's personal opinion and cultural background, both of which need to be taken into account when analysing the responses.

### *Choosing semi-structured or structured interviews*

A key informant interview can be semi-structured or structured. Here are a few issues that should be taken into account.

#### **Semi-structured interview (checklist)**

A semi-structured interview is a guided interview where a limited set of questions is decided ahead of time.<sup>52</sup> The questions are open-ended to stimulate discussion on a given topic. It is preferable to use a checklist or question outline instead of a questionnaire and try to build a relaxed and constructive relationship with the informant through a conversational approach. This

49. ACAPS, 2011.

50. Norwegian Refugee Council's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and OCHA, 2008.

51. WFP, 2009.

52. UNDAC Handbook (OCHA, 2006).

**Box 7. Open and closed-ended questions**

**Closed-ended questions** have specific answers, which are normally short (with yes or no answers) factual and easy to verify. They are generally easy to aggregate and analyse as they do not require complex recoding operations.

**Open-ended questions** have no fixed set of responses, allowing the respondents to answer as they see fit. Respondents can think, reflect and voice their answers in their own words. The ability to rank priorities and compare qualitative responses holistically is needed for the analysis.

means the assessors should be familiar with general cultural considerations and sensitive to the person, and not be judgmental or set in their pre-conceived ideas. While understanding the language can be an advantage,<sup>53</sup> it is not a necessity. However, if language is a barrier, the translation should be cross-checked to ensure that the concerns of the respondent are captured rather than those of the translator.

Analysing findings from semi-structured interviews is a labour-intensive process as there is often a greater range of answers than in other forms of information collection. Answers can be summarized according to the main points raised and then a limited number of sub categories can be created. This helps determine how respondents rank priorities and issues. The interview can also be condensed into a single summary sheet listing the sectors and sub sectors affected as well as the concerns and priorities expressed. When comparing different interviews across affected communities, the findings of the different summary sheets can be aggregated into one and information analysed to identify patterns and areas of concern.

**Structured interview (questionnaire)**

In its simplest form, a structured interview involves one person asking another a list of predetermined questions about selected topics using a questionnaire. The aim is to ensure that all interviews are rigorously uniform and presented in the same order. This ensures that answers can be accurately aggregated and that comparisons can be made with confidence between sample sub-groups or different assessment periods.

A list of predicted options for answers can be included so that assessors simply tick the boxes. This saves time and increases accuracy in the field, but care must be taken not to lead respondents by reading out the options. The questionnaire must also always have a space for assessors to include other options than those pre-defined.

Designing a good questionnaire demands technical expertise, experience and a good understanding of the context. Structured interviews are recommended for Phase 2 assessments, once the findings from Phase 1 have presented concrete evidence on information needs and areas requiring further investigation.<sup>54</sup>

Structured interviews can be time-consuming and should be kept focused. Experience from in-crisis responses shows that spending approximately an hour on each interview and selecting a cross-section of key informants maximise the range and quality of the information gathered.

*Selecting key informants*

Key informants should be selected on the basis of the information they can provide on the affected population's profile (number of people, distribution, vital statistics, etc.), movement trends (population displacements), security, context (socio-economic conditions, political/social/religious specificities, etc.) and sectoral issues (water, environment and sanitation, food security/nutrition, shelter, health, protection, environment, education, etc.).

While community leaders can provide useful information on the demographics of the area, the loss/disruption of public services, markets, etc., women are often the most knowledgeable about the health, nutritional, water and protection needs of different segments of the community, including vulnerable groups.

The number and type of key informants selected in each location depends on the availability of people, their range of expertise or perspective, the nature of the disaster and the time that can be spent on site.

53. WFP, 2009.

54. Phase 1 assessments support the design of the questionnaire and guide the site selection process.

The pool of key informants should include individuals of both gender and all age groups as well as representatives from religious and/or ethnic minorities when relevant to ensure a full picture of the affected community. Power dynamics within the community should be taken into account and all social groups consulted to ensure that opposing classes do not speak for each other. It is particularly important not to rely only on those in power to know about the situation of the poorest and most socially excluded people in the community.

Where there are different population groups, such as host and displaced populations, key informants from both groups must be selected.<sup>55</sup> In any setting, if one group is likely to experience the crisis in a significantly different way than another group, each should have its own key informant.<sup>56</sup> A key informant for a group of displaced population can be the camp representative or manager.

A key informant can also be a regular individual who embodies certain aspects of the community and can provide meaningful indications about access, risks, priorities, vulnerabilities and capacities at the community level.

### *Basic principles of key informant interviews<sup>57</sup>*

#### **Before the assessment**

Before the assessment begins, it is important to:

- Involve experts in the design and planning of the assessment, especially for the sampling, the site selection process and the design of the data collection instrument.
- Whether an open-ended checklist or a closed-ended questionnaire, the questionnaire must be field-tested and refined. Field-testing provides a good indication of the instrument's complexity and of the time required to complete it. Questions that are difficult to understand or which make key informants uncomfortable or prone to respond untruthfully should be re-worded, replaced or removed.
- Plan field data collection carefully to ensure there is enough time to carry out interviews. Authorities must be informed of the itinerary and credential letters explaining the objectives of the assessment provided.
- Choose experienced people for the assessment team(s), ensuring a gender balance of assessors and translators so as to enable access to female and male members of the community by conducting same sex interviews. When possible, national/local authorities should be involved in field teams. Tasks are divided according to the expertise of team members.
- Train interviewers properly to achieve accurate and precise assessments. Team members must be briefed on the objectives, methodology and principles of the assessment and on

55. *Initial rapid assessment guidance notes* (GHC, 2009).

56. *The division is based on the heterogeneity of experience.*

57. *GHC, 2009.*

#### **Box 8. Useful resource persons for rapid assessment in emergencies**

##### **At district/local level, representative(s) from:**

District/local authorities, local leaders/village elders, the police, the army, the fire and rescue services, NGOs, civil defence, IFRC/ICRC, international and national relief teams/organizations, religious leaders, United Nations Agencies, health facilities, evacuation centres, birth/death registration office, etc.

##### **At capital level, representative(s) from:**

National authorities, UNDAC & United Nations Agencies, geographical institutes, departments of meteorology/hydrology, NGOs, embassies, OCHA, etc.

#### **Box 9. Reducing bias while selecting respondents**

- **Communities are not homogeneous.** Information should be gathered from all interest groups, including marginalized persons. A balanced number of women and men should be represented among key informants.
- **The characteristics of the various groups the team will consult should be defined** (IDPs, minority ethnic/religious groups, etc.) and groups that are not represented in the interviews should be noted.
- **Wherever possible, it is important to talk face-to-face to affected people**, including children, older persons, persons with disabilities, and ethnic or religious minorities. The poorest people in the community must also be included as they are likely to be worst hit by the crisis.

the interventions that could be implemented on the basis of the results obtained. Each interviewer should be thoroughly familiar with the data collection process and the information being elicited by each question. Field notes to explain key terminology and outline site sampling should be provided.

### During the assessment

- Upon arrival in a new location, field teams should meet with community leaders to explain the visit and assessment methodology and request the leaders' support.<sup>58</sup>
- It is important to be aware of the respondents' situation when approaching them, including their surroundings and the activities they are engaged in (see Box 5).<sup>59</sup> Interviews should occur in a safe place that is convenient to the respondents.
- Good communication and informed consent are essential. Respondents should understand why they are interviewed and what will be done with the information they share. They must understand that they are not required to participate in the interview and that refusing will not have a negative impact on them. Assessors should be careful not to raise expectations.
- Assessors should be flexible and adapt to each respondent. The order of the questions may need to be changed or the full list may not be covered during an interview. However the more difference there is between the ways information is collected at different sites, the more challenging and time-consuming it will be to build an overall picture of the humanitarian impact in the affected area.
- The interviews should start with general questions about the situation and allow respondents to raise issues of concern to them before progressing to the subjects of interest to the assessor. The assessor should continue with questions that are factual and relatively straightforward, and move on to more sensitive issues only when the interviewees are more at ease.
- When the translator is present, the assessor must make sure that he or she understands the subject and wording of the interview and is able to forge a respectful relationship with interviewees.
- The assessor should take notes as the interview progresses, transcribing the information without distortion.
- Interviews should be combined with observation to verify information and correct inconsistencies.<sup>60</sup>
- When an interview is not yielding the kind of overview perspective needed, the assessor should politely bring the discussion to an end, thank the interviewees for their time, and seek other key informants.<sup>61</sup>

Each interview should be structured with care. People should know that their time and participation is valued. Trust should be built before asking sensitive questions and the interview should not end too abruptly.

Identification information (such as date and location of the interview, social role or position of the interviewee, group represented by the interviewee, sex of the interviewee, etc.) should be recorded for each key informant, as this information will be needed to interpret the data. This will enable the team to verify that both segments of the population have been reached and help identifying any important difference across gender in terms of prioritized needs.

Finally, it is important to remember that while the questions are based on a standardized approach, the way in which assessors ask these questions and interact with respondents can have a major impact on the quality of the data collected.

### After the assessment

As with direct observation, a debriefing should be organized to give team members the opportunity to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the interviews and the interview process and compare findings, views and impressions. The team leader should gather observational information, anecdotes or concerns not captured in the Investigation Form. It is important to consider the respondents' reliability as well as the assessment team's bias. All of this information should be considered and included in the final report.

58. *Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies: The Good Enough Guide. Emergency Capacity Building Project, 2007, p. 34.*

59. JENA (UNICEF, 2010).

60. GHC, 2009.

61. GHC, 2009.

Field team leaders should endeavour to maintain communication with the visited communities and to update key informants on how the information they provided is being used and what follow-up actions are being taken. If possible, they should share the final report with them.

#### Box 10. Dos and don'ts of key informant interviews<sup>62</sup>

##### Do

- Ensure, as much as possible, that key informants are interviewed by persons of the same sex (assessor and translator).
- Make introductions and obtain permission to carry out the interview before asking more targeted questions. Build trust with the persons interviewed and give them time to talk about their priority issues or express grief.
- Ask if notes can be made or an electronic mobile device used to record the interview. If using a device, explain what it is and how it works.
- Be sensitive to time. Each interview should take no more than an hour to complete, but the time spent finding the data should be proportionate to its value. Be flexible and appreciate that the interviewee may have other pressing obligations or, on the contrary, may just need to talk.
- Make sure the data collection instrument has space for capturing direct observation comments and notes. Keep the instrument brief.
- Avoid or limit open-ended questions for Phase 2.
- Choose key informants well. Know the question that needs to be answered and the data being sought. Identify the key information source and focus on finding the critical information.
- Limit the number of critical topics to be discussed with each key informant. Don't try to run through the whole set of information needs with one informant only.
- Be alert to behaviours and non-verbal signs that indicate how comfortable the person is with the interview, whether questions are too sensitive or if the respondent is losing patience. When people are uncomfortable with the questions, do not insist.
- Use the same methods in each community visited and record data consistently to facilitate comparisons and highlight obvious differences.
- Record access routes, travel time and other logistical tips to help future plans.
- Ensure that a balanced number of women and men are interviewed. Give voice to all vulnerable groups, specifically children, older persons, persons with disabilities and religious and ethnic minorities.
- Give key informants the opportunity to ask questions or share their thoughts on issues that have not been discussed. However, be careful not to raise unrealistic expectations of aid if the conversation turns to topics outside the scope of the assessment or intervention plans.

##### Don't

- Waste time talking as a whole team to one respondent (apart from initial introduction to authorities or other gatekeepers).
- Substitute direct observation for the respondent's answer or explanation to a question. Note discrepancies and try to determine potential reasons for them.
- Put an informant in a compromising situation by conducting an individual interview. Where feasible, explain to the rest of the community why and what will be the topic of the conversation. If unsure if it is appropriate for women to be interviewed separately, explain that it is important for the assessment to capture both women's and men's perceptions on what the priority needs are. Seek their permission before beginning the interview.
- Interrogate respondents or run the interview as if extracting information was the only intent. Let people talk and guide the conversation.
- Monopolize interviewees' time. Especially during times of crisis, people have their own priorities.
- Restrict yourself to one respondent's information on any single topic. Triangulate by asking other persons about it until there is consensus on this point.
- Induce particular answers by helping an interviewee to respond.
- Ask questions that may stigmatize or endanger people.
- Use names when collecting information to preserve the anonymity of the data collected. When key protection risks are observed, discreetly inform colleagues from the Protection Cluster.
- Keep key informants from asking questions at the end of the interview.
- Create expectations about future humanitarian support.
- Let a translator answer a question for the interviewee or dominate the interview process.

62. GHC, 2009.



# Preliminary Scenario Definition

| PRELIMINARY SCENARIO DEFINITION ▶<br>NAME OF COUNTRY         | (as of Date)   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS AND UNDERLYING FACTORS</b></p>   | <p><b>SCOPE OF THE CRISIS AND HUMANITARIAN PROFILE</b></p> |
| <p><b>STATUS OF POPULATIONS LIVING IN AFFECTED AREAS</b></p> | <p><b>NATIONAL CAPACITIES AND RESPONSE</b></p>             |

**HUMANITARIAN ACCESS**

**STRATEGIC HUMANITARIAN PRIORITIES**

**INTERNATIONAL CAPACITIES AND RESPONSE**

**COVERAGE AND GAPS**

| SCENARIO ▶  | Probability level | Impact level |
|---|-------------------|--------------|
| NAME OF COUNTRY   |                   |              |
| <p><b>CORE ASSUMPTIONS AND IMPACT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>ASSUMPTIONS</b> (risks, opportunities and triggering factors)</li> <br/> <li>▶ <b>GENERAL IMPACT AND EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS</b> (affected population displacement patterns, increases in prices, market disruptions, crop destructions, etc.)</li> <br/> <li>▶ <b>AFFECTED AREAS</b></li> <br/> <li>▶ <b>RESPONSE CAPACITY AND GAP ANALYSIS</b></li> </ul>   |                   |              |
| <p><b>POPULATION AT RISK AND ANTICIPATED DURATION OF EMERGENCY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>AFFECTED GROUPS</b> (e.g. IDPs are a population at risk in the case of further flooding) <b>AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS</b> (numbers, demographics, specific vulnerable groups, coping mechanisms)</li> <br/> <li>▶ <b>HOW ARE THEY AFFECTED</b> (e.g. displaced in inadequate shelter, loss of access to basic services or of assets)?</li> <br/> <li>▶ <b>LOCATION</b> (e.g. in a public building, in urban areas, in camp settlements, etc.)</li> <br/> <li>▶ <b>DURATION OF THE EMERGENCY SITUATION</b> (period during assistance will be required)</li> </ul> |                   |              |

**OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINTS**

- ▶ SECURITY, ACCESS, COMMUNICATION

**PRIORITY NEEDS**

- ▶ MOST AFFECTED GROUPS
- ▶ MOST AFFECTED AREAS
- ▶ SECTORS REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE
- ▶ KEY INTERVENTIONS (including intervention/assessment preparedness measures)

**CLUSTER/SECTOR SPECIFIC SHEET**

- ▶ DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS AND UNDERLYING FACTORS
- ▶ SCOPE OF THE CRISIS
- ▶ STATUS OF POPULATIONS LIVING IN AFFECTED AREAS
- ▶ NATIONAL CAPACITIES AND RESPONSE
- ▶ INTERNATIONAL CAPACITIES AND RESPONSE
- ▶ HUMANITARIAN ACCESS
- ▶ COVERAGE AND GAPS
- ▶ STRATEGIC HUMANITARIAN PRIORITIES



# MIRA Report template

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## *How to use this template*

This template provides general guidance on the expected content of the MIRA Report. The template should be tightly linked to the MIRA Framework designed for each crisis.

Table 1 on the *MIRA Framework* presented in Section 3 provides guidance on the information required. It is based on eight themes, each further divided in three dimensions and providing a series of questions to guide the analysis. The Framework should be agreed upon at the start of the MIRA process. The main text of the Report should be concise and easily accessible.

The information in the MIRA Report should communicate the findings of the assessment, populate the initial Humanitarian Dashboard, and feed into other reporting mechanisms.

## *The MIRA Report template*

### **Drivers of the crisis and underlying factors**

1. What are the main drivers of the crisis and what are the underlying factors of increased vulnerability?

### **Scope of the crisis and humanitarian profile**

2. What is the geographical extent of the affected area?
3. How many people are affected?

### **Status of populations living in affected areas**

4. What are the main characteristics (mortality, morbidity and dignity/quality of life) of affected populations?
5. What is the condition of affected populations in terms of protection?
6. What is the condition of affected populations in terms of livelihoods?
7. What is the condition of affected populations in terms of access to and utilization of basic services and goods?

### **National capacities and response**

8. What are the local coping mechanisms of affected communities?
9. What are the national/sub-national, private sector, non-governmental and government capacities to respond?
10. What are their interventions to date in response to the crisis?

### **International capacities and response**

11. What is the international response capacity and how has it been affected?
12. Which agencies/ organizations are operating where and in what sectors of intervention?
13. What are their interventions to date in response to the crisis?

### **Humanitarian access**

14. What are the logistic considerations in terms of effects of the emergency and options for response?

15. What are the security considerations?
16. How do civil-military relations feature in the context?
17. What proportion of the affected population (disaggregated by sex and age and according to sector) reachable for humanitarian interventions?

**Coverage and gaps**

18. To what extent are the conditions of affected populations (disaggregated by sex and age and according to sector) being addressed?

**Strategic humanitarian priorities**

19. What are the key priorities for humanitarian interventions?
20. Are there other key issues to be considered (environment, HIV, disability, etc.)?





**Multi Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA)**  
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs  
Palais des Nations  
1211 Geneva, Switzerland

**IASC** Inter-Agency  
Standing Committee

