

PROGRAMME CYCLE MANAGEMENT TECHNICAL BRIEF

Assessment

Assessment involves gathering and analyzing information to ascertain the needs of persons of concern. This includes identifying gaps between the current situation and agreed standards. It also entails understanding the underlying causes of the challenges facing the population and analyzing the capacities to assist in addressing these problems. Assessment takes place with the active involvement of persons of concern.

UNHCR

As the lead coordinator in refugee emergencies, UNHCR is responsible for assembling a multi-sectoral needs-based response to sudden, large forced displacements across borders, including an initial multi-sectoral needs assessment using the Needs Assessment in Refugee Emergencies (NARE) methodology. In IDP situations, the Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA), managed by OCHA, fulfils this function.

- **Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA):** UNHCR's internal planning is based on a CNA conducted annually in each of its operations around the world. The CNA contains in consolidated form, information on the risks, protection gaps and capacities of persons of concern (PoC) gained from assessments carried out throughout the year, as well as from regular monitoring and reporting exercises. The CNA allows UNHCR to design and implement more appropriate responses to needs, to prioritize available funding within and between operations, and to highlight what will not be done if funds for all these requirements are not available (unmet needs). CNA should also provide initial information on which services and assistance could be delivered through cash-based interventions. The determination of CNAs also considers what is realistic in terms of the capacity to meet the identified needs as well as an enabling operational context.
- **Participatory Assessment** is mandatory in advance of the preparation of the annual planning exercise and one phase of a comprehensive situation analysis, which also includes a review of existing information on PoCs and is followed by a participatory planning phase. The participatory assessment is a structured dialogue with refugee/internally displaced/returnee women and men, girls and boys of different backgrounds to identify protection risks and assistance needs; identify root causes of protection risks; identify community capacities and resources; discuss solutions and priorities. The participatory assessment allows PoCs to participate as partners in the design of programmatic responses to issues affecting their lives.
- The **Global Needs Assessment (GNA)** aggregates CNAs. The GNA feeds into the determination of UNHCR's global budget needs. These are then submitted for approval to UNHCR's Executive Committee (ExCom) and subsequently presented in the organization's Global Appeal.

WFP

WFP's assessments,¹ which are also made available to partners and other external actors, aim to identify vulnerable communities and assess their levels of food insecurity; review climate-related data to determine how seasonality can affect people's access to and availability of food; understand the role of climate change as a driver of food crises; study markets; and weigh the strengths and weaknesses of local supply chains and retail sectors.

WFP also conducts food security assessments jointly with partners, such as governments, UN agencies, and INGOs/NGOs. One important platform where WFP food security data is used is the **Integrated Phase Classification (IPC)**, a global multi-agency and multi-sectoral initiative that builds on technical consensus among partners.

- **Food security analysis:** face-to-face assessments, including baseline assessments (also known as Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analyses, or CFSVA) and emergency food security assessments (EFSA) in rapid and slow-onset emergencies such as hurricanes, floods, droughts and conflict situations. EFSA reports provide a snapshot of the food security situation and are updated on a regular basis. To collect food security data from places that are too remote or dangerous for face-to-face assessments, or when high-frequency data is needed to monitor an evolving situation, WFP uses mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping, or mVAM. This approach uses mobile technology such as SMS, Interactive Voice Response (IVR) or live calls to reach vulnerable populations and track food security trends in real-time.
- **Essential Needs Analysis (ENA):** Essential Needs Analysis (ENA) is a holistic analysis of people's essential needs, starting from the recognition that needs are interlinked and meeting food and nutrition needs often depend on fulfilling other essential needs too. Essential needs are defined as the essential goods and services required by households to ensure long-term survival and minimum living standards, without resorting to negative coping. The aim of ENA is to understand which needs are essential to households, how they meet and prioritize them, if they are supplied through the market or services, and where they may face gaps, in order to inform food security and essential needs programming for WFP and partners.
- **Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB):** MEBs were originally constructed primarily to identify the percentage of households in a target population who are poor, i.e., cannot meet their essential needs. For WFP, a MEB is useful in a variety of operations but particularly where the organization responds with cash-based transfers (CBT) to meet food needs or a broader set of essential needs through a multisector cash or a multipurpose cash intervention. The MEB can help to achieve support decisions on transfer value amounts for food and non-food needs, including supporting multi-sector coordination (government, partners and donors). It can further support population profiling, and in some cases targeting, for multi-sector/multipurpose cash interventions by identifying the characteristics of those who cannot meet their essential needs. The MEB is also used to inform decisions on which goods and services to assess in a supply assessment and monitor immediate and longer-term food security and resilience outcomes by analyzing expenditure trends relative to the MEB. Finally, the MEB is used to establish a relevant basket against which to monitor market prices and the cost of living.

¹ <https://www.wfp.org/analyses-and-assessments>

- **Market assessments:** market-related data on prices, food availability and supply chains with analysis of macroeconomic factors and government policies. Economic growth trends, exchange rate fluctuations, imports and exports, employment and inflation are key indicators. Additionally, geospatial information helps to analyze access to markets, including distances, and how insecurity or weather-related events, such as flooding, affect access. WFP publishes country-based monthly price and market bulletins, which feed the quarterly Market Monitor.
- **Seasonal and agricultural monitoring:** Assessing the development of agricultural growing seasons and its impact on the lives and livelihoods of local populations enables WFP to keep track of events and highlight situations of humanitarian concern. WFP processes large amounts of weather and Earth Observation data into key indicators that are combined with additional information – for example on environmental and socioeconomic factors – into narrative reports. These seasonal reports provide context and outline short- to medium-term perspectives for food security and livelihoods, helping WFP develop intervention strategies before a crisis occurs.
- **Climate analysis:** analysis that matches information on livelihood systems, nutrition dynamics and other environmental and socio-economic factors with data on climate risk. Climate analysis seeks to understand the links and potential impacts of climate change on food insecurity; identify the communities that are most vulnerable to current and future risks; and guide policies and actions to prepare for weather-related disasters, with the aim of reducing climate-related food insecurity.

Joint UNHCR-WFP Assessments

UNHCR and WFP have agreed to share the roles and responsibilities for joint food and nutrition assessments and to conduct all aspects of this process together. The purpose of a UNHCR/WFP joint assessment is to understand the situation, needs, risks, capacities and vulnerabilities of refugees, returnees or IDPs (and host populations) with regard to food security and nutrition.

Joint UNHCR-WFP Targeting Guidance

UNHCR and WFP have signed Joint Principles on Targeting Assistance to Meet Food and Other Basic Needs, which commit the two agencies to work collaboratively on targeting refugees and other Persons of Concern (PoC) based on needs.

Food assistance and assistance to meet other basic needs are complementary, and if one is provided but not the other a gap remains, and basic needs will not be met. UNHCR and WFP therefore consider assistance as a multi-sector package for which a joint targeting process should be established, and anchored in do no harm and humanitarian principles.

UNHCR and WFP should consider the possibility of targeting assistance in all contexts. Targeting should be integrated into Joint Assessment Missions (JAMs) and resulting Joint Plans of Action (JPAs). Where appropriate, targeting should be designed and implemented based on a careful and systematic assessment of its feasibility, including inputs from the population of concern and host community. Targeted assistance should consider not only basic needs but how it can contribute to supporting refugee self-reliance in line with the Joint UNHCR/WFP Strategy on Self-Reliance in Food Security and Nutrition. The two agencies recognize that resources are not always available to meet all needs and that prioritization of those most in need is often required. These guidelines therefore provide considerations for resource shortfalls.

Tools and Resources

- **UNHCR-WFP Joint Assessment Mission Guidelines:**
<https://www.wfp.org/publications/unhcrwfp-joint-assessment-missions-jam-guidelines>
- **UNHCR-WFP Joint Guidance: Targeting of Assistance to Meet Basic Needs:**
<https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000113729/download/>
- **UNHCR Needs Assessment Handbook:** <http://needsassessment.unhcr.org/>
- **UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations:**
<https://www.refworld.org/docid/462df4232.html>
- **UNHCR Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA):**
<https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/50179/multicluster-sector-initial-rapid-needs-assessment-mira>
- **UNHCR Needs Assessment in Refugee Emergencies (NARE):**
<https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/50208/needs-assessment-for-refugee-emergencies-nare>
- **UNHCR Guide to Starting a Socioeconomic Assessment:**
<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/5ea81a904.pdf>
- **WFP Emergency Food Security Assessment Technical Guidance:**
https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/manual_guide_proced/wfp197304.pdf
- **WFP Market Functionality Index Technical Guidance:** https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000114503/download/?_ga=2.84120409.1195310484.1587625477-2003950135.1580462388
- **WFP Essential Needs Guidelines:** <https://www.wfp.org/publications/essential-needs-guidelines-july-2018>
- **WFP Emergency Food Security Assessment Handbook:**
<https://www.wfp.org/publications/emergency-food-security-assessment-handbook>