

# NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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Maren Egedorf



# Agenda

- What is a needs assessment
- Why needs assessments are important (CHS, particularly commitment 1)
- How needs assessments are used
- How needs assessment relate to sustainability and relevance
- Different types of assessments (for emergency and development projects (short and long term interventions), time and thematic differences)
- How to plan and conduct an assessment (secondary and primary data collection, desk and field work; analysis, use, reporting and dissemination)
- Existing guidelines and tools incl. how to use them?

# What is a needs assessment?

Set of activities necessary to understand a given situation to assess needs

Including the collection, up-dating and analysis of data pertaining to the population of concern (livelihoods, risks, vulnerabilities, needs, capacities, resources, etc.)

As well as the state of infrastructure and general socioeconomic conditions in the location/area of concern (Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises)

# What does the Core Humanitarian Standard say

## Commitment 1



Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate to their needs.

**Quality criterion:**  
Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant.

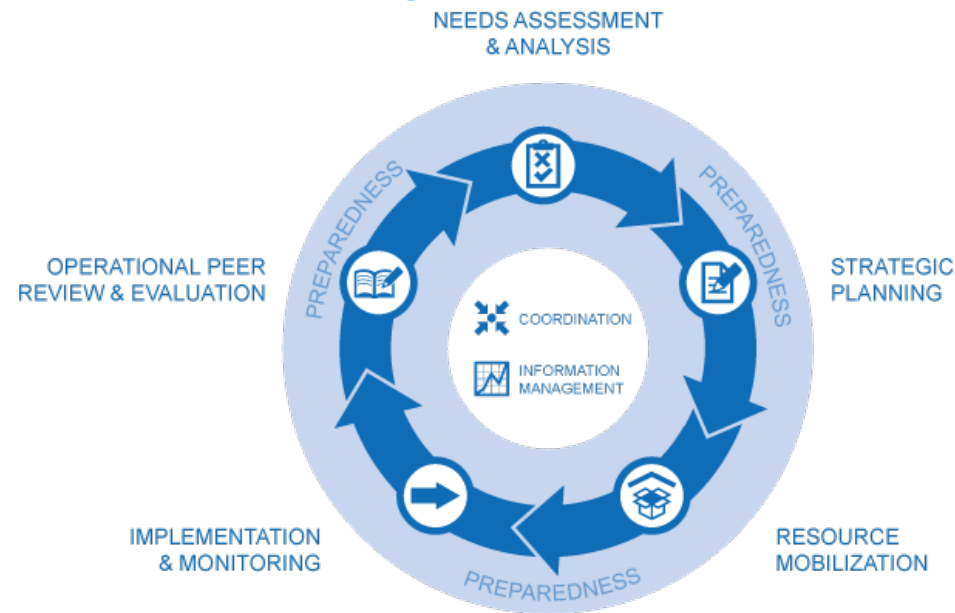
### **Why is this Commitment important?**

Commitment 1 captures the primary purpose of responding to humanitarian crises, which is to alleviate distress and suffering, uphold people's rights to assistance and ensure their dignity as human beings. A response that automatically treats everybody and every situation in the same way may fail to meet its objectives and is unlikely to maximise its potential benefit to those in need.

Commitment 1 stresses the importance of understanding the context and the needs of the different people affected and how these needs might change over time as well as the necessity to recognise the capacity of different groups of people. It also highlights the role of policies and processes to drive the *ongoing assessment* of needs, impartial assistance, and acknowledging gender and diversity in the response.

# When to use needs assessment?

- Needs assessment is the starting point for successful programme implementation through the whole project cycle
- But it is not a one-off activity: keep checking



# What to use it for?

- improve the understanding of the needs of people (at risk of natural and man-made disasters), and thus prepare more appropriate actions to assist them cope with and recover from these hazards IFRC VCA guidelines, p.7.
- are a diagnostic tool to provide analytical data to support better informed decisions on preparedness, mitigation, relief and development activities VCA guidelines, p 21
- Assessments can be used as diagnostic or planning tool across different sectors, or in one particular sector such as water and sanitation, health or food

# What to use it for?

- Make actions relevant
- We have to understand and realise, *we do not know better*

# The needs assessment process

1. Management of the assessment
2. Check with other stakeholders what they are doing
3. Desk study: literature review and secondary data
4. Design (sampling, method (s) (qualitative and/or quantitative), data entry)
5. Trainings
6. Community-level data collection
7. Analysis
8. Conclusions and recommendations
9. Share
10. Inform actions
11. Targeting
12. Check with the Core Humanitarian Standard: Did we include it all?



# 1. Management of the assessment

- Resources
- Time
- Stakeholders
- Participants
- Manager/team
- Same people involved in design, collection, and analysis? If not, how to manage?

## 2. Check with relevant stakeholders what they are doing

- Is somebody else planning to conduct an assessment?
- Or interested in participating (manpower, funds, vehicles, technology...)
- See p. 17 in TNA for tips on how to engage with stakeholders

## 2. Check with other stakeholders., cont.

Coordination of assessments is strongly recommended

- Pooling of resources
- Larger/better coverage
- Better coordinated actions in communities across stakeholders
- Less 'assessment fatigue' in communities
- ...
- See p. 10 in TNA for tips to

### United Nations' inter-agency assessments

| Assessment   | Main partners   | Context  |
|--|---|--|
| Joint assessment mission  (JAM)                                  | WFP – UNHCR   | Refugee and IDP situations                     |
| Crop and food security assessment mission (CFSAM)                | WFP – FAO   | Agricultural areas affected by crisis          |
| United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team (UNDAC) | WFP – governments – other United Nations agencies – NGOs                      | Large-scale natural disasters                  |
| Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP)                                | WFP – OCHA – governments – other United Nations agencies – governments – NGOs | Large-scale natural or human-induced disasters |
| Post-conflict needs assessment (PCNA)                            | WFP – World Bank – UNDP – other United Nations agencies – governments         | Post-conflict recovery and reconstruction      |

There are detailed guidelines for some of these partnership assessments, such as JAMs, CFSAMs and CAPs.

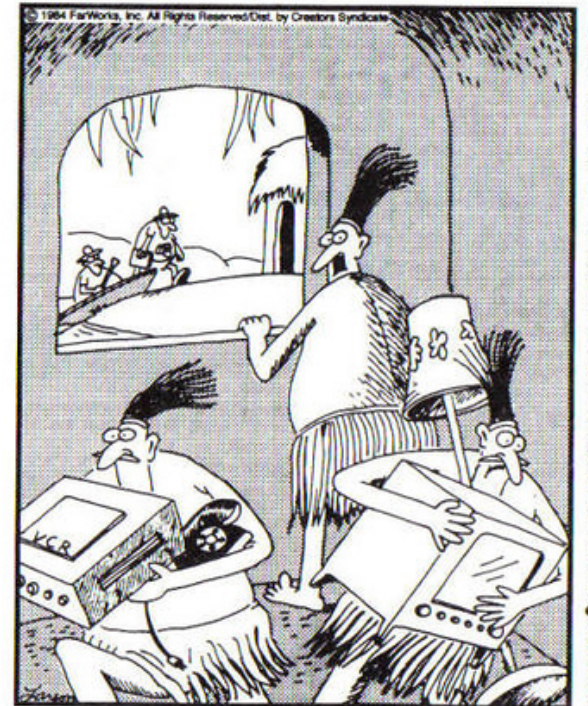
# 3. Desk study: literature review and secondary data

- What is already available to inform your assessment of needs in the area of concern (geographical, population group, thematic)
- Reports, statistics, evaluations, baselines, assessments, articles
- Systematise the information
- Map it if possible/relevant

# 3. Desk study: literature review and secondary data

- Provides cultural and historical context
- Physical characteristics
- History of development actions and their sustainability

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"Anthropologists! Anthropologists!"

# 4. Design of primary data collection

Primary data collection: in the communities with the people

- Sampling: random, systematic
- How many communities, men, women, elderly, children, people with disabilities will you include in your study?
- Selection criteria
- Selection of method(s) and tools (qualitative and/or quantitative)
- Development of assessment guide
- Data registration form/template/table
- Data entry/analysis plan

# 4. Design of primary data collection, cont.

## Tools

- Community baseline data
- Semi-structured interview
- Focus group
- Direct observation
- Mapping (risk, community...)
- Transect walk
- Seasonal calendar
- Historical profile
- Household/neighbourhood vulnerability assessment
- Livelihoods analysis
- Coping strategies' analysis
- Network analysis
- Analysis of capacity of organisations
- Venn diagram
- Problem tree
- (VCA toolbox with reference sheets, IFRC)

# 4. Design of primary data collection, cont.

Selection of tools and methods:

- You do not just ask: What is your needs
- You use the tools to tell you the story



## 4. Design of primary data collection, cont.

Deciding which tool to use, depends on:

- What information you want to obtain
- The results of your secondary data review
- Cost of using the different tools
- Timeframe
- Your resources
- Your available capacities (to collect and analyse the data)
- Training needs – of you and of volunteers

# 4. Design of primary data collection, cont.

## Participatory methods

- Brainstorming
- Walking together
- Post-its on walls
- Community meeting
- 'Group' meetings
- Ranking



## 4. Design of primary data collection, cont.

- Sex- and age-disaggregated data (SADD) – data broken out by sex and age (or age group)
- Gender analysis – examines the distinct reality of being male compared to being a female and the relationship between males and females in a particular community
- Diversity analysis – examines the distinct reality of being a particular age/age group (generational analysis), disabled and other contextual factors (e.g. minority group, ethnicity, etc.)

*What are their distinct needs, protection concerns and priorities*

# 4. Design of primary data collection, cont.

Challenges in collecting and analysing SADD

- No harmonised way to collect SADD
- If collected, who does the analysis?
- How does it feed into design of actions?
- SADD and gender/generational analysis is often used to identify problems not solutions

## 4. Design of primary data collection, cont.

The risks of not including a gender and diversity analysis:

- We limit the effectiveness of actions
- Actions do not reach the most vulnerable
- Potential to deepen existing inequalities

## 4. Design of primary data collection, cont.

- Undertake a participatory needs assessment, consulting both women and men, to gather information on their respective needs capacities, risks, vulnerabilities and cultural identity, beliefs, and values
- Be conscious about whether to facilitate mixed-sex or same-sex, age etc. groups
- Ensure all opinions/ideas are captured

# 4. Design of primary data collection, cont.

Develop analysis plan/data entry plan prior to designing your data collection tools.

Three main reasons for this:

1. **Efficiency:** It ensures that only useful information is collected. Time is not wasted on collection of information that will not help achieve the assessment objectives and will not be used
2. **Thoroughness:** It ensures that all the necessary information is collected
3. **Feasibility:** When all the information needs and available resources have been considered, it is possible to decide whether or not the assessment can be undertaken as planned (EFSA guidelines)

## 4. Design of primary data collection, cont.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' [VCA toolbox with reference sheets](#) has detailed descriptions of the different tools and methods.



# 5. Trainings

Do you and/or your volunteers need training in:

- Some of the tools?
  - In qualitative data collection techniques?
  - In quantitative data collection techniques?
  - Data analysis?
  - In networking?
- 
- Train data collectors in the tool you use, data registration form/template/table and data analysis plan

# 6. Community-level data collection

- Before you go and collect data: Do a test of your tool if possible
- Adjust tool
- Organise your teams – consider composition
- Send them out
  - Check/monitor the weather, maybe the security situation
  - Do team members know what to do in an emergency situation?
- Have teams meet and discuss the tools, methods and results (after each day, if possible)
  - Adjust tool and method if necessary

# 7. Analysis

- Useful to have somebody with experience in analysing your data to help you
- You have to 'identify' needs and capacities
  - Difficult to get 'useful' (actionable?) information if you ask: what do you need?
  - Therefore – your assessment is broad
- Use your analysis plan to organise your data
- Respect the results that emerge

# 7. Analysis

## Quality of the analysis

- Reliability (same results would be obtained if use of tool repeated))
- Validity (does the tool measure what it is intended to)
- Bias (results are distorted)
- Triangulation (use different sources to triple-check)
  
- Present and discuss your results with the communities. *They are the experts*

# 8. Conclusions and recommendations

- After you have finished the analysis, you can write conclusions and recommendations
- Bring these to the discussion with the community too (with the results of your analysis)
- The communities are key in deciding which action to take and next steps
- Keep in mind you are there to connect the communities, not divide them
- Sustainability, sustainability, sustainability

# 9. Share

- With the communities
- Share your tools and methods
- Your sampling
- Your analysis
- Your results, incl. your data
- It is not *your* data

Also if it is not 'good' or does not show what you expected

# 10. Use the needs assessment to inform actions

- When you have the results of your needs assessment, use it to design your actions
- When actions mirror needs, identified with the people in the communities, sustainability increases
  - The action is relevant to the people in the community
  - Ownership

# 11. Targeting

- Due to the limitations of funding, it is not (always) possible to respond to all needs, or to reach all people/communities in need
- Therefore, it is necessary to target and prioritise the most vulnerable
- The beneficiary selection and prioritisation criteria should be developed in consultation with the community



# 11. Targeting

- Target women, girls, boys and men with specific actions when appropriate
- Consider workload for the different target groups
- Take specific actions to prevent the risk of gender based violence

# 12. Check with the Core Humanitarian Standard

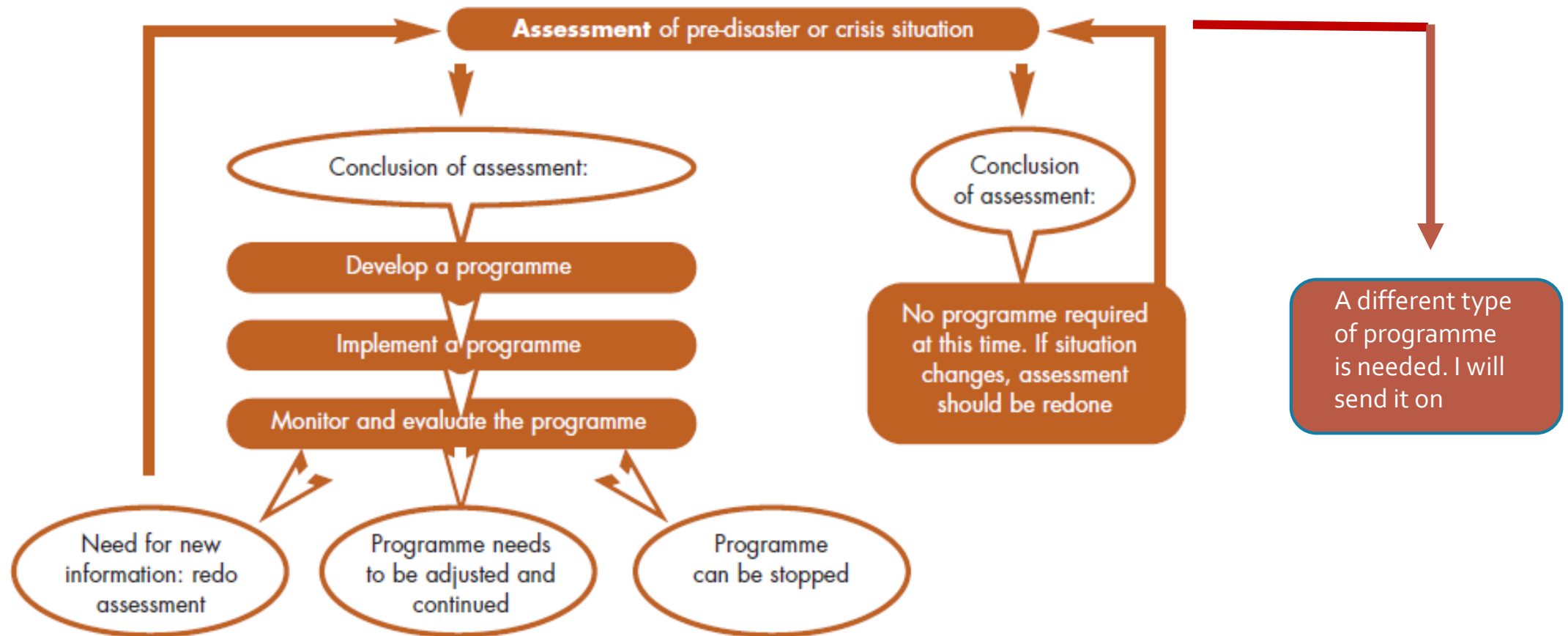
## Performance indicators

1. Communities and people affected by crisis consider that the response takes account of their specific needs and culture.
2. The assistance and protection provided correspond with assessed risks, vulnerabilities and needs.
3. The response takes account of the capacities (e.g. the skills and knowledge) of people requiring assistance and/or protection.

## Guiding questions for monitoring Key Actions

- Has a comprehensive needs assessment been conducted and used to inform response planning?
- Are multiple sources of information, including affected people and communities, local institutions and other stakeholders consulted when assessing needs, risks, capacities, vulnerabilities and context?
- Are assessment and monitoring data disaggregated by sex, age and ability?
- How have vulnerable groups been identified?
- Does the response include different types of assistance and/or protection for different demographic groups?
- What actions are taken to adapt the response strategy based on changing needs, capacities, risks and the context?

# Assessment informs decision making

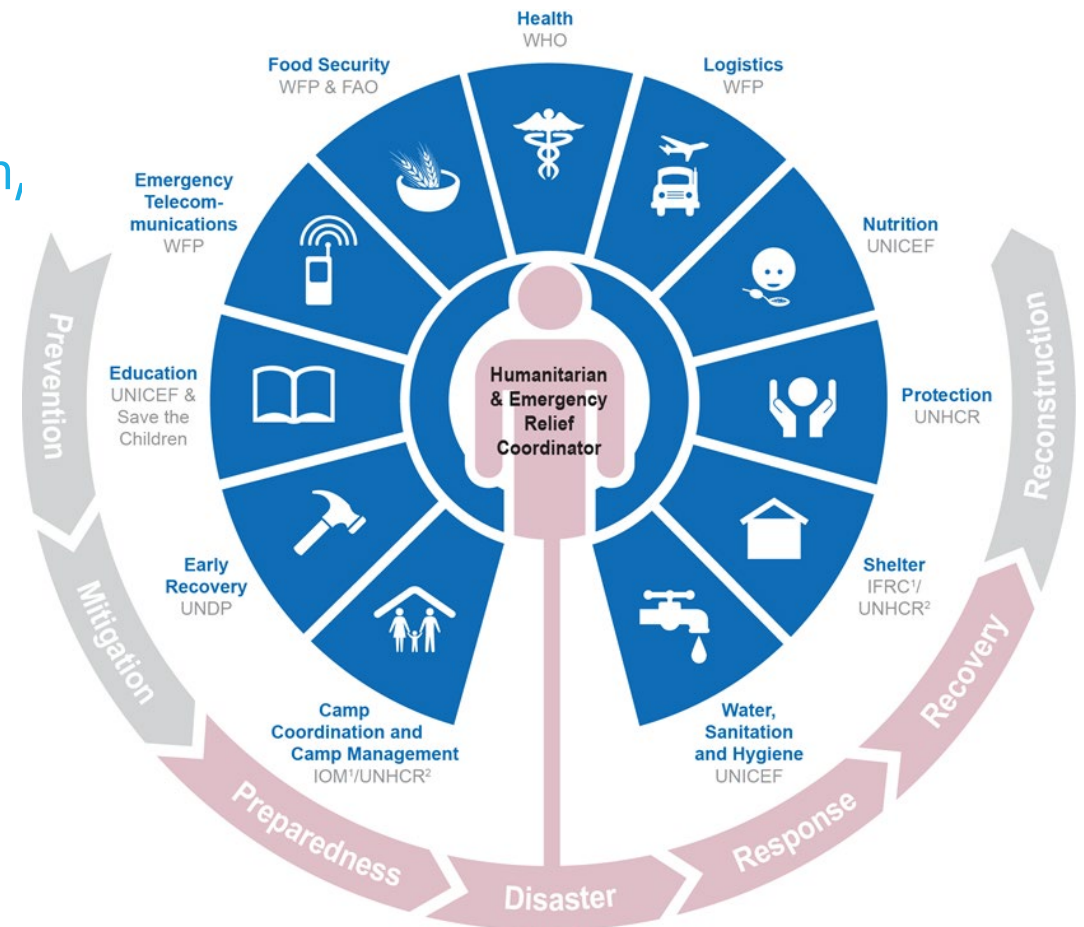


# Needs assessments

- For emergency actions
- For development actions

# Needs assessment in emergencies

- Needs assessments in emergencies organized by theme. For instance: Education, protection, food security
- They are carried out in a hurry



# Needs assessment in emergencies

In food security it could look like:

- Does the crisis have an impact on the population's food security and their livelihoods?
- How severe is the situation?
- Is there a need to intervene?
- Has the level of malnutrition been exacerbated by the crisis?
- How are people coping?
- How many people are food insecure, who are they, and where are they?
- Why?
- What is needed, when and for how long?

# Needs assessment in development

- More like baselines (Provides a breadth of information on the political, socio-economic, natural contexts, (markets, livelihoods, coping strategies, nutrition, health, education, etc.)
  - > What we have been talking about
- Carried out with – and in - good time

# Needs assessment in development

- The process is designed to obtain data that serves your purpose
- Identifies the causes of vulnerability, poverty, food and nutrition insecurity
- Provides an in-depth profile of the area, livelihoods, gender, culture, history
- Includes an analysis of risks (hazards, disaster history, economic shocks, etc.) and their potential impact on the most vulnerable



# Relation between the two assessments

- The baseline assessments should inform the emergency assessments
- And also disaster risk reduction plans
- They 'automatically' do, if it is the same people
  - Often the case in 'minor' emergencies
  - Main problem is in larger emergencies, where 'external' staff is used

# Sustainability

- One of the key reasons for conducting needs assessments
- You take it into account when assessing and proposing actions
- The community is more likely, in theory, to support actions they have themselves decided upon

# Reference sites

- [Technology Needs Assessment](#), UNEP DTU Partnership
- [Vulnerability Capacity Assessment series](#), IFRC
- [Social vulnerability assessment tools for climate change and DRR programming](#), UNDP
- [WFP site on Food security analysis](#). There are several links to documents and manuals
- WFPs food security analysis work, known as Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping, [VAM](#)
- [CFSVA](#) – has examples of formulations and questionnaire input
- [EFSA](#) - has examples of formulations and questionnaires
- Assessment Capacities Project ([ACAPS](#))
- [Needs assessment and analysis](#) (OCHA)
- [Livelihood analysis](#), FEWS NET

**COMMENTS AND  
QUESTIONS?**

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