NEEDS, CAPACITIES, and RISKS ASSESSMENT

What It Is

The first step of an emergency response is the Needs, Capacities and Risks Assessment. Increasingly, Needs Assessments are providing the information necessary to inform a Response Analysis which includes the possibility of MPGs. Specifically, Needs Assessments are:

- To provide an understanding of the most pressing needs of affected populations, the most affected areas and most affected groups.9
- To understand the physical disruption (and capacity) of markets and infrastructure to supply essential goods and services.10

Essential Checklist

Review pre-crisis information on needs and capacities, if available. Specifically, consider prevalent risks and vulnerabilities, e.g. marginalised groups such as the Bantu in Somalia; access to and reliance on markets and services, e.g. source of shelter materials and malaria treatment; access to and utilisation of financial services, e.g. banks, hawalas, microfinance, mobile money services, etc; existing cash-based safety programmes, specifically those that are government-run.

Conduct Needs, Capacities and Risks Assessment. Consider the impact of the crisis on pre-existing and new needs and capacities. The results of both sector-specific and multi-sector Needs Assessment are relevant.

Ask crisis-affected people if they can buy what they need. What would they buy if they could, e.g. food, water, shelter materials, medicines? What would they prioritise?

Ask crisis-affected people about their access to markets and services. Can they get what they need locally? Are there some people/groups who will struggle to access markets? Ask for their ideas on solutions to access and supply-related problems.

Ask crisis-affected people their preferences for assistance. Would they prefer direct distribution/delivery of goods and services, or cash enabling them to purchase what they need? Why one and not another?

Combine sector-specific needs from the household or community perspective. Disaggregate by group, season, geography, livelihood, age group, etc. For example, drought-affected displaced persons in Mogadishu, Somalia will need food, shelter, drinking water, access to medical care. Somali pastoralists will need food, water, fodder and access to veterinary care. The agro-pastoral Bantu people will need this plus seed prior to the rainy season.

Distinguish between recurrent and one-off needs. For example, food will need to be provided weekly or monthly, whereas shelter materials can be provided through a one-off distribution.

Distinguish between goods and services that can be purchased locally or that require direct delivery and/or complementary support. For example, malaria nets can be purchased, but source control or water management will require education, community organisation, technical assistance and tools. Water for household consumption can be purchased, but companies will need support to repair trucks and boreholes. People can pay for transport, but roads will need to be repaired.

Group those needs that can potentially be met through a cash transfer at household level. Recurrent needs are included in the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB), all or a portion of which can be covered by the MPG. If other one-off, sector-specific needs can be met through cash, these can also be included in the MPG transfer value when appropriate, e.g. September grant for school supplies.

Clarify who will benefit most from an increase in purchasing power or MPG. Vulnerability (and Gap) Analysis will describe the depth and scope of socio-economic vulnerability and who is most likely to be affected.

9 MIRA, p.2
10 MIRA, p.4
Based on the initial findings of the Needs Assessment, define a broad strategic objective for humanitarian assistance that includes the potential for MPGs. Some recent examples include: Nigeria (2014) – Deliver coordinated and integrated life-saving assistance to people affected by emergencies; Iraq (2015) – Maintain targeted life-saving support and provide essential service packages to people dependent on humanitarian assistance because of the crisis; Haiti (2014) – Ensure basic services, protection and durable solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Do No Harm/Do More Good

- Talk to crisis-affected persons and protection colleagues about protection needs, self-protection or positive coping mechanisms that should be considered in the MEB or as a one-off need, e.g. paying for legal documents or birth certificates.

- Flag any root causes of protection issues that are socio-economic, which might be positively (or negatively) affected by an increase in purchasing power or a cash grant, e.g. a reduction in child labour.

RESOURCES

- **MIRA** Guidance: Crisis Impact: 1. Scope and scale of the crisis, 2. Conditions of affected population (IASC)
- **NARE** Checklist: Needs Assessment and Gaps Analysis (UNHCR)
- **Sector- or Cluster-specific** Needs Assessment guidance and tools (various)
- **48-hour assessment tool** for food security and livelihoods (CARE)
- **Humanitarian Perceived Needs Scale**: a manual with scale (WHO)
- **Guide for Protection in CBIs** (UNHCR), p.8
- **Community-based protection and participatory action research** as Needs Assessment (L2GP)