

Emergency preparedness and response handbook

Saving lives and protecting rights

Annex 8 : detailed needs assessment checklist

The below is a set of key areas of enquiry to be used in carrying out a detailed needs assessment and should guide your information collection. This checklist should be used in conjunction with the Detailed needs assessment report template, which will guide you in writing up the information into a report.

The responses will then be used to draw conclusions on the needs of disaster-affected communities and will inform ActionAid's emergency response programming as well as the co-ordination mechanisms we use and the policy work we undertake.

These questions are meant to act as a guide and should not restrict the flow of information you can gather. The actual questions you should use must be reformulated depending on the country and disaster context.

An appropriate methodology that is context specific must be used to facilitate this needs assessment exercise. However, it is recommended that a 'conversation' approach is used in any interaction with the community, to help increase engagement from communities and facilitate open dialogue.

Overview

a) Background information to the emergency (context)

Please detail what has happened: what was the disaster (e.g. earthquake, floods, conflict etc.); when did it happen; what is the past experience of this type of disaster in the country and for other disasters; what is the history of the country.

Please include any maps or diagrams to help with this.

b) What is the total number of people affected/extent of damage?

It is important that the scale of the disaster is captured. This means that you need to collect data of those affected but disaggregate the numbers to give a clearer impact of those affected. This should be split by LRP and then totalled to give the whole picture of those affected.

c) Women's rights information

- What was the impact of the disaster/ conflict on women?
- Where are women currently located, and what are their living conditions (e.g. do they have sufficient access to toilets; safe spaces; private spaces, etc.)?
- Are women's (basic and specific to women) needs currently addressed, and are there obstacles to them accessing their needs? Please focus specifically on lactating and pregnant mothers.
- How have women's lives changed since the disaster (e.g. is there an increased burden of care; have the men had to migrate, etc.)?
- Do women feel safe? Are there any reports of physical violence against women? Interrogate the types of violence and whether there is an increase because of the disaster, and are there trends in terms of age, location or association? Interrogate further about perpetrators of the violence – is there a pattern (e.g. are they a specific ethnic group; fathers; humanitarian workers etc.)?
- If there is an increase in violence, how are women coping, are they lodging complaints, and if so, where?
- Have women been consulted in needs assessments and in designing and implementing programmes (by any agencies that are active in their areas)?
- Are the priorities of women included in national needs assessments? Are specific resources allocated for women in the national response? Are there elements in national response strategy that may negatively affect women?
- Do women have access to key information regarding how to access and claim assistance, compensation? Are they involved in decision-making processes at different levels (local, regional, national) regarding response to the disaster?
- Do women's groups exist at the local level? What is their capacity?
- Are there new opportunities to bring women together, build leadership capacity, increase participation in needs assessments; designing relief and rehabilitation programmes, monitoring implementation, participating in reviews and reflections and representing the community within the community and outside of the community to influence power centres?
- Are women and their institutions aware of their right to protection, right to assistance, right to information, right to shelter etc.?
- Are women leading response/relief/rehabilitation activities?
- What is the existence and function of the justice system—what are the barriers for women to access them?

d) Psychosocial

- Are people displaying symptoms of psychosocial distress, e.g. sleeplessness; self-imposed isolation; dispassionate demeanour; unusual anger, etc. (refer to psychosocial manual)?
- Can you please provide this information disaggregated by men, women, children, youth, elderly, disabled?
- Is there any previous experience with psychosocial distress in the community?

e) Food security

- How do women and men access food locally normally (i.e. prior to the disaster)? Do they normally have equal access to the local market?
- What community and household power structures affect the use of food and other productive resources? Who (in the community and the household) controls these resources?

- [Particularly for slow onset crises such as droughts], what percentage of households are food insecure, or under threat from being food insecure over the next few months? Note – important to establish robust criteria for showing how we have calculated ‘insecurity’.
- [Particularly for slow onset crises such as droughts], what percentage reduction in crop production has been suffered by communities?
- What difference has the disaster made in terms of people’s food consumption? Do men and women have different access to food than prior to the disaster? Have people’s eating patterns changed? If so, how (e.g. now only eating one meal a day compared to three, women going without food, people eating unusual food because their usual food is not available)?
- Are local markets still functioning? Has the disaster-affected food supply to the markets and/or prices? Are people physically able to access food markets (i.e. is there any damage to infrastructure/security issues etc. that are preventing them reaching markets)?
- What is the nutritional status of different groups (men, women, children, elderly people, etc)? Are any groups (particularly women and children) showing symptoms of malnutrition and/or anemia? How are gender and social position connected to malnutrition? Note – consult health professionals to assess malnutrition rates as per agreed international criteria (e.g. global acute malnutrition (GAM), severe acute malnutrition (SAM), etc.
- What are the special nutritional needs of pregnant and breastfeeding women, people with HIV/AIDS and other vulnerable groups?
- Are women encountering problems breastfeeding? Are girl and boy babies breastfed differently?
- Are both women and men aware of and able to participate in cash- and food-for-work opportunities? Can both men and women access credit, agricultural materials and services?

f) Livelihoods

Under this section you will need to collection information on livelihoods and it will useful if you are able to cross reference this information to any livelihoods analysis you have, either produced by ActionAid or produced externally.

- Are you able to provide a wellbeing (wealth) ranking? You should categorise households and social groups into wellbeing categories. This will help you to understand the socioeconomic differences as well as understand local perceptions of and criteria for wealth, wellbeing and inequality in a community.
- What types of agriculture, farming, fishing, trade and food supply existed in the community before the disaster? What role did women and men play in these sectors? What were the pre-disaster discrimination and vulnerabilities regarding livelihood activities?
- What livelihood assets do women and men own and control? Has the emergency affected who controls what?
- Can people continue their pre-disaster livelihood? What factors such as mental distress/physical injury, capital, production input, change in bio-physical environment (salinity, sand-casting, contamination, dryness), physical infrastructure and supply chain, are limiting people's ability to res-start livelihoods? How can synergy among various support mechanisms be created by coordination? What are the cash needs of households?
- What is the impact of the disaster on local trade and markets?
- What polices and power structures affect ownership and distribution of natural resources such as land, water bodies, forest, pasture and grazing land? What are women's property and inheritance rights? How has emergency affected men and women's access to and control over resources? Are new polices emerging that restrict women's access to and control over resources?
- What skills and capacities did women and men have before disaster? Do people need additional skills to continue their pre-disaster livelihoods and/or pursue new livelihoods options?
- How much time do women, men, girls and boys spend on unpaid work (fetching water, cooking, collecting firewood, caring for children, washing clothes etc.)? Has this changed as a result of the emergency? What can ActionAid do to support women and girls to increase their participation in decision-making by releasing the pressure of unpaid work?

g) Education

Note: Please also refer to the INEE Minimum standards handbook for further questions.

- Was there any difference in access of girls and boys to education prior to the emergency? How has the emergency affected girls' and boys' access to schooling?
- [Particularly in slow-onset disasters such as droughts], are children being pulled out of school to support their families with work/fetching water/ finding pasture for animals, etc? What percentage of children have been pulled out of school over the last few months? Are more children likely to drop out? Is there any difference between boys and girls in terms of children dropping out of school?
- What is the extent of damage to the physical infrastructure of schools and approach roads/bridges? How has this affected children's access to school and what impact has this had on their attendance? What is the learning environment at home and temporary locations
- What percentage of schools in the community are functioning? Are there alternative schooling facilities for displaced children in temporary camps and host communities?
- Are there any other factors hindering school attendance (fear, threats, violence, mines, natural risks, socio-cultural factors)?
- Are schools being used as temporary shelters, meaning they cannot be used to provide education? What percentage of schools in the disaster-affected communities are being used as temporary shelters?
- Are children showing signs of emotional distress such as interrupted sleep, irritability, anger, experiencing nightmares/flashbacks?
- Are there skills/experience/interest among teachers to run psychosocial programmes for children?

h) Housing/shelter

- What was the condition, culture, material used and ownership of houses before disaster?
- What was the status of land ownership before the disaster? What percentage of people owned the land they lived on? Following the disaster, do people still have documents that prove their ownership of land?
- How many people/households have been displaced by the disaster? Where are they now staying? If people have set up camps on private land, are they likely to be evicted in the near future?
- Is there a need for temporary shelter? How long people may need to stay in temporary shelter?
- How many houses were destroyed by the disaster? How many were damaged? Did particular areas of the community suffer greater damage to houses than others? What are the likely reasons for this?
- What was the average number of people per household prior to the disaster? What is the average number of people per household following the disaster? How is the household made up?

- What is the habitation pattern of families and what are the cultural norms regarding habitation?
- Is there a need for temporary shelter? How long may people need to stay in temporary shelter?
- If people have been displaced and are living in temporary shelter, are women's living conditions safe, private, and do they have access to facilities they need, e.g. private bathrooms, etc?
- What capacity exists in the community or displaced location to rebuild shelter? How can ActionAid support building additional capacity of people to engage in reconstruction? Are women involved in shelter design and rebuilding?
- What are the contextual, operational and policy challenges to re-building permanent homes? How long would it take to build permanent home? What ideas, opinions and preferences do communities (both men and women) have about the size, location, material and approach (owner driven or contractor driven) about rebuilding their homes?

What are the environmental implications of these preferences (e.g. type of material preferred for rebuilding) and what are government restrictions and advice in this regard? Are there viable alternatives that will be socially and culturally acceptable to communities as well as compatible with government policy?

- What is the number of people whose permanent shelter cannot be constructed due to land and or other issues? Can local and central government (including local municipalities) provide land for rebuilding? What are the existing policies and rules regarding land ownership? What can ActionAid do to address land issues?
- What are the emerging discourse, standards, policies and interest groups shaping housing policies? How do they affect women and other excluded/landless/homeless people?
- What is the research potential to develop resilient housing? What capacity can ActionAid build for local construction workers and communities?

i) Non-food items (NFIs)

You will need to ensure that clothing, bedding, personal hygiene, cooking and eating, fuel, tools and equipment are considered.

- What NFIs have been identified as required?
- What is the customary provision for women, men, children and infants, pregnant and lactating women and older people, and what are the particular social and cultural considerations?
- Are the identified NFIs appropriate for the needs of women, children and infants?
- What additional items are considered socially or culturally important to maintain the health and dignity of the affected people?
- Are you able to identify which non-food items can be sourced locally or obtained by the affected population themselves?

j) Water, sanitation and hygiene

- What water and sanitation practices were the population accustomed to before the disaster? How has this changed as a result of the disaster? Specifically how are women affected?
- What is the current source of water for drinking, bathing, washing clothes and other domestic use? How far is the water source from households? Is it safe for women to access?
- Do all groups in the affected population have equal access to the water?
- Will the water from the source be sufficient to meet the immediate and longer-term needs of all the affected population?
- If water treatment is necessary are there treatment options available? Do people know have access to water treatment options (e.g. chlorine tablets) and know how to use them safely?
- What sanitation facilities are people, especially women and children, using? Are there issues with poor sanitation, overcrowding, etc?
- Are there any cases of water-borne diseases in the community? How many, and which groups are affected?
- How can water and sanitation facilities be built to be more resilient to future disasters?



k) Information

- Do some households in the community (at least 1 in 4 households) have access to a functioning radio following the disaster? If yes, what are the 3 main radio stations people in the community listen to now and when do they listen? (specify the radio station name and time people listen using a 24-hour clock)
- Do some households in the community (at least 1 in 4 households) have access to a functioning television set now? If yes, what are the 3 main TV stations people in the community watch now?
- Do some households in the community (at least 1 in 4 households) have access to a functioning mobile phone now?
- Which language(s) do people in the community speak?
- What are the 3 most trusted sources of information in your community? (please only select 3)
 - Friends, neighbours and family
 - Community leader
 - Religious leader
 - Government official
 - Military official
 - Aid worker
 - Other (please specify)
- What are the 3 preferred channels used by the community now? (please only select 3)
 - Radio
 - TV
 - Newspaper/magazine
 - Telephone voice call
 - SMS message
 - Internet
 - Notice boards and posters
 - Community meetings
 - Loudspeakers
 - Other (please specify)
- What are the 5 most important information needs for your community now? (please only select 5)
Information about:
 - Missing family and friends
 - Food
 - Water
 - Shelter (or shelter materials)
 - Health advice and treatment
 - Market prices for commodities and livestock
 - Information on how to access personal documents such as ID cards
 - Security
 - Weather forecasts
 - The situation in your country of origin
 - How to contact aid providers
 - Other (please specify)



What kind of information does the community want to share with government and/or aid organisations? (Please tick all that apply)

- Alert government and/or aid organisations of needs in the community
- Share your experience
- Provide feedback (positive or negative) about the quality of aid received
- Other (please specify)

I) Resilience building

- What risks did the community face before the disaster and what are the new and emerging risks?
- How do women see the gaps in resilience?
- How did power structures, access to resources and decision-making create vulnerabilities of women and other excluded groups? What new opportunities have been created for local governance for resilience building?
- What difficulties are women and other people experiencing in accessing, understanding and make use of EW. What can the strategy be to retain social evidence of disaster, in the case of low frequency hazard area?
- Explore capacity building in relation to: empowerment of women, agency building and leadership; and responsiveness in relation to operational, legal and policy capacity of local and national government? What capacity already exists among householders, community and organisational level to design resilience building programmes? How can regional and international risks be addressed?
- What investment can ActionAid make in children in relation to resilience?



m) Existing policies and schemes

- What are the existing constitutional obligations, legal responsibilities and political commitments of the government regarding protection and fulfilling the rights of those affected by the disaster (particularly women)?
- Has the government announced any new laws, provisions or compensation packages in response to the disaster? What are these and to what extent are women's issues included? Are any groups likely to have been excluded and discriminated against as a result of their status and vulnerability prior to the disaster?
- What is the role of various actors and interest groups in shaping recovery policy? To what extent are those affected by the disaster able to engage with and influence decisions around the recovery process?
- Is the aid provided by donors and government sufficient to meet the needs of all those affected by the disaster? Are there any discrepancies between the amount of funds pledged/committed by government and donors and money which can be accessed for response? How does the per-capita aid allocation compare to that allocated for previous disaster responses in the country, region and internationally?
- Do discourse and practices of standards consistent with internationally established practice?
- What factors affect the ability/capacity of those affected by the disaster to hold the government to account? What mechanisms (existing and new/emerging) are communities aware of and able to use to do this?
- What are the policy and governance opportunities created to secure resilience for women and other excluded people?
- Has the disaster created any new opportunities to shape governance and power structures in favour of people living in poverty and exclusion (particularly women)?
- Has a Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) been initiated by the World Bank Global Fund for Disaster Risk Reduction (GFDRR)? Which agencies are participating? Is there any involvement by communities or their representatives? If not, what action could ActionAid take to increase their engagement?



n) Capacity building

Partners

- What are the implications of multiple funding streams and a potentially significant increase in the amount of funding available on partners' capacity, systems and governance? Do partners have adequate and efficient control mechanisms in place to prevent mis-use and misappropriation of funds?
- Do partners have sufficient capacity (particularly in terms of human resources) to manage the ActionAid emergency response programme, taking into account their existing programme commitments?
- What should ActionAid include in the capacity building programme for partners in relation to systems efficiency, women's leadership, advocacy capacity and long-term programming on resilience building?

Community

- What community groups exist and what role did they play in responding to disaster? What challenges did they experience in responding to the disaster? What is their current role – are they engaged by humanitarian actors responding to the disaster?
- What is the potential of community groups to shift local power dynamics and structures in favour of women and other excluded groups? What is the potential to strengthen existing women's groups and/or create new ones?
- What can ActionAid do to revive dormant and inactive capacity of women and excluded groups in relation to disaster recovery, resilience building and advocacy/campaigning?



Please complete this table with as much information as possible on where ActionAid is responding to the emergency/planning to respond (include map if possible). Add rows as necessary.

| Area name (specify if LRP or not) | Type of activity (e.g., distribution of food, NFIs – give details of items, etc) | Proposed number of people to be reached disaggregated by gender and age and vulnerability | Proposed amount to be spent £ | Amount secured so far (if applicable) £ |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------------|--|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Total | | | | |