

# NRC Solutions from the Start toolkit

## Tool 3 – Assessment and Information Collection Tips by Core Competency



Photo: Gloire Munesha/NRC

More than 2,600 families in Central and West Africa were not able to return to their villages after the order issued in February to evacuate the sites. NRC raised funds to support their voluntary return.

## Assessment and Information Collection Tips by Core Competency<sup>1</sup>

This document gives tips for including information relevant to ‘Solutions from the Start’ approaches in NRC’s emergency information collection and assessments – i.e. information beyond basic needs.

The information should then be analysed (i.e. considered and discussed) to help design NRC response strategy. ‘Solutions from the Start’ approaches should be integrated between NRC sectors and designed according to the context.

### Methodologies

In line with NRC’s usual practice, teams should first look at what secondary data sources are already available – only conducting an assessment if the information needed doesn’t already exist.

Sources might include:

- **Secondary data**, e.g. from other humanitarian actors’ assessments, local Red Cross or Red Crescent society, government and local authorities’ assessments.
- **Local context knowledge** from NRC staff.
- **Information from key informants**, e.g. community leaders (inclusive of women’s, youth, older persons’ perspectives) or local actors (civil society, local authorities, private sector).

If primary data collection is needed, the below could be included as questions in:

- An NRC **Rapid Needs Assessment**.
- Later **emergency assessments** by NRC (e.g. sector) or inter-agency efforts.
- For these, data might be collected through Key Informant Interviews or Focus Group Discussions, or potentially Household Interviews.

### Conflict, context, & protection analyses

The below tips assume that NRC is already conducting these analyses to inform all response design.

These should also be used to inform a Solutions from the Start approach. (*E.g. to understand displacement dynamics, or the extent to which NRC can work with local authorities, etc.*)

---

<sup>1</sup> For external audiences: In NRC, the sectors are called ‘Core Competencies’. NRC specialises in Education, Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA), Shelter and Settlements, Protection from Violence and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH).

## Core information

Analysis questions on the following are in the *Situational Analysis MiniTool* in the Solutions from the Start Toolkit, and in the *Situational Analysis* tool in the ‘One Response Design for Emergencies’ package. **They must be considered in response planning, to take a Solutions from the Start approach.**

- **Displacement status and intentions:** *How can NRC’s response be informed by, and support, communities’ preferences and intentions?*
- **Community capacities:** *How can NRC support existing community capacities, to be more sustainable?*
- **Market systems:** *Is a market-based modality possible? Can NRC support markets to provide the needed goods and services? Can NRC ensure individuals can access these markets? Is a cash-based modality possible? If in-kind response is planned, why will this deliver better results?*
- **Local systems and services:** *Can NRC support local systems to provide necessary services and goods, or overcome barriers for displaced people to accessing these, instead of direct delivery?*
- **Local actor capacities (civil society, private sector, local authority service providers):** *Can NRC complement or support existing local actor capacities, to be more sustainable?<sup>2</sup>*
- **Environment and climate:** *Are there any environment and climatic considerations to ensure longer-term intervention sustainability?*
- **Community engagement preferences**

**If additional information is needed** to support planning of specific interventions, see:

Community Coordination Toolbox

- [Stakeholder mapping and analysis tools](#)
- [Social and cultural influence analysis tool](#)

Cash and Market Systems tools <https://norwegianrefugeecouncil.sharepoint.com/sites/Markets>

- Type 1 Market Analysis
- Modality Choice Tool
- Market Systems response tools (*Problem Tree, Market Systems mapping, Root Cause Analysis ‘Five Whys’, Partner Identification: Will/Skill Analysis*)

---

<sup>2</sup> It may be necessary to consider **humanitarian principles** when deciding if or how to engage with local (political) authorities, or specific civil society actors. This will influence the types of activity NRC can undertake but does not mean that a ‘Solutions from the Start’ approach cannot be taken.

<p><b>Finding the root cause of a problem</b></p> <p>Often, emergency responses treat ‘symptoms’ rather than the root cause of a problem. E.g., trucking water rather than fixing a water supply system.</p> <p>The <a href="#">‘Five Whys’ exercise</a> – used by NRC’s Market Systems to identify systems failures – can be used to help analyse the <i>reason</i> for needs. And then, to see if NRC can address this in an emergency response.</p>		What is the issue? (observed need)
	Why did this occur?	
	Why did this occur? (...etc.)	
	Why did this occur? (the root cause!)	
	Possible solutions:	

## Sectoral tips for assessments and information collection by Core Competency (CC)

If conducting sectoral assessments, consider how to include:

- An **integrated approach lens** – i.e. not only looking at one CC alone.
- Questions that aim **to understand the root causes of an issue or with a longer-term perspective** beyond basic needs.

If detailed assessment on solutions is planned, see (for reference):

*Sector wide IDMC/IMPACT Area-Based Assessment Solutions Toolkit*

### Education

#### Impact on services/systems and local actors

- Has formal schooling (primary, secondary, tertiary) been disrupted? Why? For how long?
- Can displaced children and youth fully access the formal education system?
  - If not, what barriers are there to their ability to access, integrate, and learn in the available formal education system?
  - Are there gender-specific barriers for boys/young men or girls/young women?
- What are the existing legal and policy requirements for students to access the formal education system (*E.g. Birth registration, ID card, proof of former learning, exam papers, placement test*)
- Have public schools and vocational centres’ infrastructure been damaged? To what extent?
- Are key education personnel (*teachers, school counsellors, ministry staff*) still in place?
- Is there an increased strain on education systems that may have already been weak? (*e.g. insufficient teaching workforce, unpaid teachers, physical capacity/ school infrastructure to absorb influx of additional learners*)

- Are education authorities willing to provide flexible learning opportunities? (*E.g. adjusted timetable, non-formal education opportunities such as basic literacy and numeracy, bridging and catch-up, psychosocial support*) If not, why?
- Which actors provide non-formal education opportunities (currently or pre-crisis) and what types (*e.g. bridging, catch-up, accelerated*)? Have their capacities been impacted by the crisis?

### **Impact on people**

- Are there specific profiles of displacement affected children and youth whose access to education is more impacted (limited) than others? (*e.g. girls vs boys, children and youth with disabilities, specific ethnic or language*)
- What is the psychosocial impact of the crisis on children and youth, their caregivers, and their teachers? Do they have access to psychosocial support services?
- Are there any relevant community-based structures already in place and can they be built on, either at community or school level (*e.g. Parents Teacher Associations, student clubs/parliaments, youth networks, (refugee) youth led organisations, religious groups*)?

## **Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA)**

### **Impact on services/systems and local actors**

Key information on the functionality, accessibility, and legitimacy of relevant systems:

- Are government services relevant to ICLA functioning and accessible for displaced people?
- What is the status of justice systems (*capacity, backlogs, geographic coverage, enforceability, public trust*)?
- Are civil/identity registries and land administration systems functioning? (*Including damage or loss of records.*)
- Are there legal, political, or discriminatory barriers for displacement affected communities to access documentation, justice, or HLP?
- Are there risks of existing land or property disputes intensifying due to the crisis?

### **Impact on people**

Key information on how the crisis affects people's rights, protection, and living conditions:

- Has there been loss of civil/identity documentation and legal stay? Has this resulted in barriers to assistance, services, and livelihoods?
- Are there changes in legal status, freedom of movement, exposure to protection risks (*e.g. eviction, violence*)?
- To what extent is there loss, damage, or occupation of homes, land, or property, and availability of HLP documentation?
- Are people aware of rights and procedures related to LID, HLP, legal stay, essential services?

- What are any differential impacts on women, men, children, older persons, and other vulnerable or newly vulnerable groups?
- What are the main coping strategies adopted (*positive/negative, sustainable/unsustainable*)?

## Shelter and Settlements

### Impact on services/systems and local actors

- To what extent have physical, infrastructural, and tenure systems (*energy, schools, markets, healthcare, access to land, etc.*) been impacted or disrupted due to the shock? Are they under increased pressure due to population increase? What can be done to support this?
- Has infrastructure of spatial access (*such as roads, or bridges*) been damaged? If yes, to what extent? And how has it impacted the displaced population?
- Are there specific barriers for displaced people (and for different groups, e.g., children, women, persons with disabilities) to access local settlement infrastructure/systems and services?
- Energy: Who are the main local actors involved in regular service delivery of energy (local authorities or private sector). Are their capacities compromised or can their capacity meet the increased demand for services?
- Have key transport routes or pedestrian routes to access services been affected?
- How are host community services and infrastructure affected and what tensions or opportunities does this create?
- Who is responsible for managing or maintaining settlement services (formal or informal) and are these arrangements functioning?

### Impact on market systems (please do a Type 1 Market Assessment)

- Are markets functioning, and can provide enough affordable shelter-related commodities?
  - Can displacement affected people access the markets?
  - If not fully functioning, why (e.g. problems for traders, issues with supply routes)
  - If functioning, is there price inflation?
- Has the labour market been affected? Can displacement affected people access repair and reconstruction services?

### Impact on people

- Where have displaced people chosen to shelter?
  - Is the location at risk of immediate hazard, protection risk (including related to age and gender), or risk of eviction?

- How can we best support them in their shelter choice/location or support them to go somewhere safer?
- Is the current location likely to evolve into a longer-term settlement?
- What are their intentions? Do they want to return if it is safe to do so?
- Are displaced people settled somewhere specific so they can still access livelihoods? How can we support that?
- Have people grouped in social networks, or families, retaining original community ties? How can we support this?
- What are the HLP rights, or barriers to rights, for displaced people? Has the crisis impacted these?

### **Environment and climate**

- What environmental factors might affect shelter and settlement interventions, e.g. seasonal variation, vulnerability to natural hazards, or availability of key construction materials?
- Projecting a potential population growth in the settlement, what future environmental risk needs to be flagged (e.g., deforestation, erosion of agricultural land, water pollution)
- Could shelter interventions contribute to environmental degradation or create tensions over natural resources?

## **Shelter and Settlements (Site Management)**

*In addition to the relevant settlement questions from the Shelter and Settlement section:*

### **Impact on services/systems and local actors**

- What structures do the local authorities have for coordination at local area and site level?
- Do the local authorities have staff or allocated individuals to monitor displacement sites?
- Are there local community or faith groups that are supporting with services or working with specific groups (women, elderly, children, youth)?

### **Impact on people (*community capacities*)**

- Are communities displaced together or have they been separated?
- Are there community leaders in the displaced group?

## **Protection from Violence**

### **Protection Analysis**

- *Is any information being received that could later support evidence-based advocacy?*

### **Impact on people (*understanding the context*)**

- What are the different groups in the affected communities, in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, language, or other? Are any groups excluded from access to information or services?
- Are there tensions within the affected communities, or between displaced and host communities? Why?
- Are there any existing community groups that can be reactivated?
- Are there any individuals taking leadership in organising services or information-sharing?

### **Impact on services/systems and local actors**

- What is the response from first responders (community groups, national and local NGOs, local authorities, civil society organisations)? What are the limitations of these? Are there any barriers for displacement affected people to access this response?
- Is there a functioning social system?
  - If so, is it able to absorb the demand for specialised protection support?
  - Have services been impacted by the crisis? If so, what is needed to restore capacity?
  - Are there specific barriers for displaced people to access or be referred to these?
- What other protection services are available from local civil society actors?
  - Have services been impacted by the crisis? If so, what is needed to restore capacity?
  - Are civil society actors willing and able to provide or extend services?
  - Are there specific barriers for displaced people to access or be referred to these?
- Are services available in relevant languages? Are there any issues of discrimination?
- Are all community groups represented among service providers?

## **WASH**

### **Impact on services/systems and local actors**

- Is the public WASH infrastructure/system/service compromised or under increased pressure due to the crisis? Why, and what is needed to restore services or increase capacity?
- Are there specific barriers for displaced people (including children, women, persons with disabilities) to access local WASH infrastructure/systems and services?
- Who are the main local actors involved in regular service delivery (local authorities or private sector)? Are their capacities compromised or can they meet increased demand for services?
- What capacities do local civil society actors have, relevant to WASH? (*E.g. local organizations, community groups, and other humanitarian actors*). What potential is there for NRC to strengthen these partnerships, leverage their resources and networks, or act as an Enabler?

- Do institutions, including health centres and schools have functional and appropriate WASH services in place, *including safe water supply, sanitation facilities, hygiene facilities and hygiene behaviour change activities, as well as waste management?*

### **Impact on services/systems and local actors (*operation and maintenance*)**

- What O&M arrangements exist for WASH infrastructure (*who does maintenance, what skills are available locally, where do spare parts come from*)?
- What local bodies could potentially manage WASH services? (*Local government, community-based organisations, private operators, utilities*) What are their capacities and limitations?
- What are the existing or potential sources of funding for WASH O&M? (*user fees, taxation, subsidies*)? Is there willingness and ability to pay?
- What is the likely timeline for NRC to hand over WASH services? Who are realistic recipients?

### **Impact on market systems (please do a Type 1 Market Assessment)**

- Are local markets functioning, to provide enough affordable WASH-related commodities?
  - If not fully functioning, why? (*E.g. problems for traders, issues with supply routes*)
  - If functioning, is there price inflation?
  - Can displacement affected people access the markets?

*How can we best support markets to function, and displaced affected people to access the markets?*

### **Impact on people (*capacities*)**

- What positive coping strategies are adopted? (*E.g. sharing WASH facilities with relatives*)
- What is the capacity of communities, households, and/or authorities in maintaining WASH services during the conflict/shock?

### **Environment and climate**

- What environmental and climatic factors might affect WASH interventions? *E.g. seasonal variation, vulnerability to natural hazards, bacteriological and chemical (i.e. arsenic, salinity or fluoride), contamination in groundwater.*
- Could WASH interventions contribute to environmental degradation or create tensions over natural resources?