CERTIFICATE IN ESSENTIALS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

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Assignment 3

1. **In details explain why Humanitarian Organizations carry needs assessments.**

Needs assessment provides the evidence base for strategic planning, as well as the baseline information upon which situation and response monitoring systems will rely. It should therefor form a continuous process throughout the humanitarian programme cycle.

Coordinated assessments are carried out in partnership with all humanitarian actors in order to assess the humanitarian situation and to identify the needs of the affected population. Local and national authorities, civil society and affected communities are encouraged to participate in this process, the output of which is a humanitarian needs overview (HNO).

Key output: Humanitarian needs overview

Humanitarian needs overviews should be produced twice a year to support the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in developing a shared understanding of the impact and evolution of a crisis and to inform response planning. This document presents a comprehensive analysis of the overall situation and associated needs.

Coordinated assessments form the basis for context specific and needs-based strategic planning and system-wide monitoring, and constitute the first phase of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle.

A series of tools and guidance to support and strengthen coordinated assessments in humanitarian contexts are available, such as:

•IASC Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments: The guidance explains the agreed methodologies, approaches and roles and responsibilities identified as best practice for coordinating assessments and analysis.

•IASC Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) guidance:

The guidance explains how to jointly design and execute a joint, multi-sectoral needs assessment in the initial weeks of an emergency, including IASC system-wide level 3 emergency responses (L3). It is a precursor to subsequent cluster/sectoral needs assessments.

•Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) template: The HNO document compiles results from various sectoral and multi-sectoral assessments to identify priority humanitarian needs to be addressed. It feeds into the next stage of the programme cycle, strategic planning. It also highlights information gaps and country plans to address these gaps.

•Humanitarian Indicator Registry: The registry lists the principal needs and response monitoring indicators for each sector/cluster and provides a unique identifier, similar to a p-code, for every indicator.

•The Humanitarian Dashboard: It is one of the four priority OCHA information products and is an IASC agreed tool that presents a succinct and primarily visual overview of progress towards meeting needs in a humanitarian response. It allows stakeholders to quickly understand the strategic priorities of a response, the key figures characterizing the crisis, and the most important humanitarian needs and related response per sector.

•Kobo Toolbox: Kobo Toolbox is a suite of open source software for field mobile data collection and analysis, which can be used in needs assessments to promote a standardised, reliable, simple and efficient approach.

•Data Entry and Exploratory Platform (DEEP): DEEP is a collaborative online platform that supports the coordinated collection, sharing and analysis of crisis data to improve monitoring, context, situation and risk analysis. It allows various actors to jointly define scope, methods, processes and tools to make sense of structured and unstructured data from a variety of sources.

The Needs Assessment and Analysis Section (NAAS) within the Assessment Planning and Monitoring Branch (APMB) in Geneva provides guidance and coordinative support to assist humanitarian actors in a reaching common understanding of the humanitarian situation and needs, and to guide the next steps of strategic planning, monitoring and resource-mobilization.

NAAS also leads internal efforts to build OCHA and partners’ capacity to coordinate multi-sectoral assessments and analysis. This includes clarifying the OCHA policy on coordinated assessments, enhancing staff capacity at global, regional and country levels to coordinate assessment and analysis, and providing technical advice to OCHA field offices on assessments and joint analysis across sectors.

• Coordinated Assessment and Information Management (CAIM) training: CAIM is a basic level training course, designed for an audience who already have some conceptual knowledge and skills in needs assessment and analysis with at least some practical experience. This training aims to upgrade the existing knowledge and skills of participants in needs assessment and analysis in a humanitarian crisis ( Global Humanitarian Overview 2019)

What are the Basic principles of needs assessment make the scope of the assessment?

Step 1: Define the need or problem.

The problem statement is used to help plan the needs assessment and motivate other agencies to join the assessment team.

The problem statement should indicate:

* Who is affected by the problem.
* How many people experience the problem.
* The impact of the problem on general health or nutritional status.
* Areas where there are gaps in the community’s knowledge of a nutritional problem.

Step 2: Set the Parameters of the Assessment

Certain parameters or elements must be determined before the needs assessment is undertaken.

The parameters set the direction for the assessment.

* Define “Community.” The “community” might include the people who represent the target population and live within a certain geographical region.
* Determine the Purpose of the Needs Assessment
* Identify groups who are at risk nutritionally.
* Identify the most critical needs and set priorities among them.
* Identify the factors that contribute to a problem.
* Determine whether existing resources and programs meet the needs of the population.
* Provide baseline information for developing action plans to address needs.
* Plan actions to improve nutritional status.
* Tailor a program to a specific population.
* Define the Target Population who is affected by the emergency or problem.
* Set Goals and Objectives for the Needs Assessment
* Goals and objectives determine the types of data collected and how they will be used.
* Goals are broad statements that indicate what the needs assessment is expected to accomplish.
* Objectives are statements of outcomes and activities needed to reach a goal.
* Specify the Types of Data Needed, which depends on the purpose, goals, and objectives of the assessment.

Step 3: Collect Data

Begin by first collecting data about the community or environment in which the target population lives and works.

Collect both qualitative and quantitative data about the Community because this will help describe the community and its values, health problems, and needs.

Qualitative data include opinions and insights derived from interviews with those people who are knowledgeable about the community, called key informants, and with stakeholders who have a vested interest in identifying and addressing the needs.

Quantitative data can be derived from a variety of databases, including registries of vital statistics, published research studies, hospital records, and local health surveys.

Step: 4 Analyse the Factors Contributing to the Problem

What you now have to do is sort these factors into a logical order that will help tease out the causal pathways leading to the problem, that is, the series of factors and events that seem to contribute to the problem.

The task is to sort these contributing risk factors into the following three areas:

• Pre-disposing factors—knowledge, attitudes and beliefs.

• Enabling factors—enable a behaviour or situation to occur.

• Reinforcing factors—reward or punish the carrying out of a behaviour, or maintenance of a situation.

It is important to sort these contributing factors into above areas as later on in your program planning you will see that unless your intervention or program is focusing on factors in all three categories it is very unlikely that you will bring about and maintain any change in the identified problem or issue. By the end of this step, you should have a clear idea of the sorts of factors you are going to attempt to target in your program.

Step: 5 Reassess and Strengthen Community Resources

Many communities have resources and infrastructure already available which can support the implementation of a program. When you are planning a new intervention, or duplicating an existing program, you should first be aware of existing resources and programs available in the local community. Many new health interventions should be planned in partnership with the community and associated resources that are already available.

Keep in mind that too often the focus of needs assessments is on community deficits rather than community strengths. Instead of focusing simply on needs, you should also make a careful assessment of community strengths and capacities. You may also take this opportunity to enlist the support and

involvement of different organisations and members of your target group for the planning of your intervention or program, if they are not already part of the process.

Step:6 Outcomes of the Needs Assessment

By the end of the needs assessment you should have:

• An agreement on a high priority health problem.

• An indication of the magnitude of the health problem.

• A target group with a set of clearly identified characteristics.

• A set of contributing factors for the health problem, sorted into pre-disposers, enablers and reinforces.

• An indication of community resources to be involved in the health planning process.

• Commitment from a range of stakeholders to bring about change.

1. Explain the steps in Needs assessments

A “need” is a discrepancy or gap between “what is” and “what should be.”

A “needs assessment” is a systematic set of procedures that are used to determine needs, examine their nature and causes, and set priorities for future action.

Needs assessments are conducted to help program planners identify and select the right job before doing the job right.

Ideally, needs assessments are initially conducted to determine the needs of the people (i.e., service receivers) for whom the organization or system exists (e.g., IDPs).

A “Needs Assessment” is a systematic approach that progresses through a defined series of phases.

Needs Assessment focuses on the ends (i.e., outcomes) to be attained, rather than the means (i.e., process). For example, reading achievement is an outcome whereas reading instruction is a means toward that end.

It gathers data by means of established procedures and methods designed for specific purposes. The kinds and scope of methods are selected to fit the purposes and context of the needs assessment.

Needs assessment sets priorities and determines criteria for solutions so that planners and managers can make sound decisions. Needs assessment sets criteria for determining how best to allocate available money, people, facilities, and other resources.

Needs assessment leads to action that will improve programs, services, organizational structure and operations, or a combination of these elements.

Now, let’s think about what grant reviewers want to see in our proposals:

• Evidence for both the need and the solution

• Capacity to implement the solution

• Credibility of leadership and organization

• Sustainability of the nonprofit and programs

Clearly, needs assessments can be instrumental in positioning nonprofit for grant seeking success. But to provide stakeholders with clear and compelling results, we must implement science-based, comprehensive needs assessments. This is critical. Simply sending out a 10-question survey to a pre-selected group is insufficient. Instead, find out what scholars are doing in your field. Gather local data using multiple methods. Use a random sample of participants from different groups. And make friends with statisticians and librarians at your local university or college — they can bring a wealth of experience and credibility to your work.

The following steps are based on best practice methods for needs assessment from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, as well as scholarly research on public health and survey development/analysis. By following these six steps, you can implement a timely and cost-effective needs assessment for your organization. (Office of Migrant Education: 2001 New Directors Orientation)

Step 1: Brainstorming and Planning

Gather your team of key stakeholders who will serve as a needs assessment task force. This group should include people in leadership, service delivery staff, volunteers, and consumers. Ask the following questions regarding the problem you would like them to address with the needs assessment.

•Frequency – How often does it happen?

•Duration – How long do the effects last?

•Scope – How many people does it affect?

•Severity – How seriously are people affected?

•Perceptions – How do people feel about the problem?

Step 2: Guiding Documents

Gather feedback from your task force. Analyze it. Write up the results as the guiding document for the rest of your needs assessment work. Publish the guiding document for your task force and key stakeholders.

Step 3: Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data collection is defined as the process of finding information relevant to your question from existing sources. You must collect secondary data to support the questions you ask in your surveys, focus groups, or interviews, and you must dig through the literature to understand the state of the research evidence in your subject area.

This is an essential resource for secondary data collection. Use a bibliography to keep track of the results of your secondary data collection. (This will be essential in Step 6.)

Step 4: Primary Data Collection

Primary data collection is the process of collecting qualitative (anecdotal) and quantitative (measurable) data directly from the people you serve. This can be accomplished using:

•Written or electronic surveys

•Key informant interviews

•Moderated focus groups

You can use electronic or written surveys—or both—as your main source of collecting quantitative data. It’s good practice to send these surveys to both current and potential consumers because they bring different perspectives to your work and your results. Also, consider three (or more) groups who may provide a different but important worldview that will lend additional validity to your results.

Once you have identified the groups you will survey, gather mailing lists. Unless the groups are very small, you should select only a random sample of these groups; you do not need to survey everyone to get the information you need.

In practical terms, your survey should conform to the following best practices:

•Should take ten minutes or less to complete

•Ask participants questions about knowledge, attitude, behavior, & satisfaction

•Include demographic questions (age, race, ethnicity)

•Use open-ended, multiple choice, and Likert scales

•Include a cover letter describing the survey’s purpose, signed by the person in charge (a credible source)

•Include four pages or fewer (including cover letter) with clear, brief instructions

•Use a green or blue colored paper, printed on both sides, stapled in one corner

•Include postage-paid return envelopes

•Use an incentive such as a gift certificate, a one-dollar bill with every survey, a link to a sweepstakes drawing, etc.

Once you have the results from your surveys, you will see common themes. You can use key informant interview and focus groups to dig deeper. For key informant interviews, select a sample of 7-11 community leaders or consumers (sometimes more, depending on the scope of your work). Get permission to record the interview, use a set of pre-defined questions, and let the interviewees do most of the talking. Keep written notes for all your interviews.

Focus groups are similar but conducted with heterogeneous groups of seven to nine people (e.g. all mothers with small children vs. a second group with fathers of small children). These are moderated by an independent, trained facilitator and are focused on a specific topic. Use focus groups to probe deeper into survey findings or to ask questions that would be difficult to ask or answer in a survey. Focus group members should be encouraged to talk openly about their opinions and interact with other members. Incentives are essential and drive participation. Also, find a volunteer who will take written notes and run a digital recorder during the interaction; the facilitator’s job is to mediate and guide the conversation.

Step 5: Data Analysis

Now that you have collected all your data, it’s time to analyze the results. You will likely need to do both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Again, find a statistician to help you with this project. There are many public health programs across the country with epidemiology students who are required to complete practicums and internships. Find one!

For qualitative analysis:

•Secure a transcript of the interaction.

•Review the transcript for patterns/themes.

•Collect quotes to support each identified pattern or theme.

•Write a summary of your findings focused on the key themes.

For quantitative analysis:

•Tally responses for descriptive results (describing your participants).

•Analyze the mean/ median/mode (averages) and correlated data (when results from one question are directly linked to results from one or many other questions. These can be used to predict, in general, how others would respond).

•Define rankings and trends identified in the results.

Write up the results and put them into graphics. This will set the stage for the final step.

Step 6: Dissemination

Step 6 is essential: you must publish the results of your work. Why?

•To improve community understanding

•To increase support

•To advocate for new policies or initiatives

•To encourage community involvement and action

You can disseminate your results through multiple venues including formal written reports, cases for support, community meetings, media campaigns, and social media. The manner in which you publish the results will depend on costs, time, human resources, and the potential impact of your work. Of course, you should not only use needs assessment results in your grant proposals but also in program design, evaluation, and strategic planning.

While the process takes time, the results of a properly implemented needs assessment can pay enormous dividends for nonprofits. Consider what elements you can do, find external help, convene a motivated task force, and implement a needs assessment that yields credible results (Heather Stombaugh, September 26, 2012)

What are the main tasks at each step?

1. **What are the steps of handling sensitive information in your organization?**

In my organization we use a variety of means to handle sensitive information using user’s username and a password to unlock a computer and share drives accessible to only authorized users. In conduct of interviews, we use only Language Assistants (LA) assigned to work with the respective section or unit assigned to support.

Below are some of the policies my organization has in place for handling sensitive and confidential information.

1. Control access

For any information that’s stored digitally it’s incredibly important that you control access to it by using passwords, firewalls and encryption. This is especially important when the information is contained on smaller storage devices such as USB drives that are easily misplaced.

When using passwords to control access to confidential information, we ensure that they’re both secure and changed regularly. We are frequently reminded not to use easy-to-guess passwords. The best type of passwords used are a combination of upper and lower-case letters and as well as special characters.

2. Use confidential waste bins and shredders

When my organization needs to dispose of sensitive documents, the best way has been to shred them.

3. Lockable document storage cabinets

In this case the best option is to have lockable storage cabinets that only a few select people have the key for.

To provide an added level of protection, we use lockable storage cabinets in a locked room that cannot be accessed by everyone.

4. Secure delivery of confidential documents

If it’s physical documents that need to be delivered, we use a trusted courier service or delivered by someone you trust within the organization usually our flights are used for this purpose.

For digital documents that need to be sent to a third party, we use email or a file sharing program which is encrypted.

5. Employee training

When it comes to confidential data being leaked, often it’s a company’s own employees who are the biggest risk. This isn’t necessarily due to malicious reasons either; often it’s simply because the right training was not provided.

From year to year our organization sends broadcast to staff members to enroll in several mandatory trainings to do with Information Management (IM), Information Communication and Technology (ICT), how to avoid phishing among many more. All these trainings are done in-house.

Reference:

Global Humanitarian Overview 2019

Heather Stombaugh, September 26, 2012

Office of Migrant Education: 2001 New Directors Orientation

Materials adapted from “Planning and Conducting Needs Assessments: A Practical Guide” (1995)