Targeting in Complex Emergencies
Program Guidance Notes

Final deliverable to the World Food Programme
from the research project on
Targeting in Complex Emergencies

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October 2009

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Targeting in Complex Emergencies: Program Guidance Notes

Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanatory Note and Organization</th>
<th>iv</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acronyms</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Introduction to Targeting in Complex Emergencies ......................................................... 1

1. Every Day Dilemmas in Targeting Food Aid................................................................. 1

   Targeting in complex emergencies: Overview of issues ............................................... 2
   What is a complex emergency? ...................................................................................... 2
   What is targeting? What is participatory or community-based targeting? .................. 3
   Why target? ................................................................................................................... 4
   Why promote a participatory approach? ....................................................................... 5
   Six questions of targeting ............................................................................................ 7
   Revisiting “Everyday dilemmas in targeting food aid” ............................................... 8
   A simple exercise ......................................................................................................... 9

2. Overview of Tools and Methods ..................................................................................... 12

   General participatory methods of information collection and analysis ....................... 12
   Interview methods ......................................................................................................... 12
   Participatory information and analysis tools .............................................................. 13
   Tools developed for this research ............................................................................... 13
   Stakeholder analysis ..................................................................................................... 13
   Other useful tools for targeting in complex emergencies ........................................... 18
   Assessing local governance and leadership ................................................................. 18
   Benefits/harms analysis and “do no harm” approaches ............................................... 18
   Participatory Assessments ............................................................................................ 18
   Participatory distribution and implementation ............................................................ 20
   Participatory monitoring and impact evaluation ......................................................... 20
   Conflict analysis .......................................................................................................... 20

Program Guidance Notes .................................................................................................... 22

3. Early Warning and Preparedness (Where? When? What?) ........................................... 22

   Approaches .................................................................................................................... 22
   Concerns with community-based EW in complex emergencies .................................... 23
   Practical guidance for participation in complex emergencies ....................................... 23
   Other practical guidance notes ..................................................................................... 25
   Summary ........................................................................................................................ 25


   Introduction .................................................................................................................... 26
   Key questions .................................................................................................................. 27
   Conflict affected groups ............................................................................................... 28
   Methods for assessing different groups and how conflict has affected them ............. 29
   Community self-organization ....................................................................................... 32
   Understanding community self-organization and the impact of conflict ..................... 33
Explanatory Note and Organization

These Program Guidance Notes are the final output from a research project on targeting in complex emergencies that investigated the role of the recipient community in managing and targeting humanitarian assistance in conflict or complex emergencies. Field case studies were conducted in four locations in three countries (Colombia, Somalia and Sudan) and further key informant interviews were conducted with staff of WFP and partner organizations from Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and other locations.

These Notes represent the synthesized learning from all the research, reviews of documentation, and the experience of the authors with food assistance programs in complex emergencies more broadly. It is presented here as one document with a number of different sections, but is written in such a way that the sections in the Main Guidance Notes can be incorporated into other existing program guidance or used as stand alones. Annexes provide more in-depth information related to Part A, and can be referenced separately, or as part of the same document.

The annexes provide more in-depth information for many of the ideas that appear in the main Notes. The annexes include tools that may be helpful to field practitioners, and go into greater depth and more detail than the Notes themselves. This was done deliberately to keep the main Notes short and easily accessible. For program staff wanting to delve into greater depth, the annexes provide more detailed information, and a number of case studies illustrating real examples from the research.

These Program Guidance Notes are organized around the themes identified in the “process” or first chart column of Figure 1. Each is a critical step in a normal program cycle. Since Figure 1 highlights targeting, the actual selection of recipients is identified as a separate step—in practice this step is usually incorporated into parts of assessment, parts of program design, and parts of actual implementation. But all of the steps are important to the overall process of targeting as defined here. The Notes are organized as follows:

The first part of the Notes is the overview, covering a general introduction and an overview of the tools developed or identified to be useful to making field level decisions related to targeting in complex emergencies.

The second part of the Notes follows the program cycle outlined in Figure 1, and covers each element in separate sections. Section 3 is about early warning (EW) and preparedness. Section 4 is about assessment and information collection and analysis processes. Section 5 addresses the issue of determining and designing the appropriate response. Section 6 is about implementing that response. Section 7 is about monitoring and evaluation. Each section identifies the role of the recipient community and steps to make targeting more participatory.

The last part contains annexes to the main Notes. These include an extensive literature review, definitions, deeper discussions on sections in the main Notes, case studies from the field research, a glossary of terms, and the references cited throughout the Notes.
Acronyms

ALNAP Action Learning Network for Accountability and Performance
CBO Community-Based Organization
CBT Community-Based Targeting
CBTD Community-Based Targeting and Distribution
CEWARN Conflict Early Warning and Response Network
CFW Cash for Work
CP Cooperating Partner
CRS Catholic Relief Service
DFID Department for International Development (UK)
DRC Democratic Republic of the Congo
EMOP Emergency Operation
EW Early Warning
FEWER Forum for Early Warning and Early Response
FFW Food for Work
FFT Food for Training
GFD General Food Distribution
FRC Food Relief Committee
HAP-I Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International
HIV/AIDS Human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome
ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP Internally Displaced Person
IFRC International Federation of the Red Cross
IOM International Organization on Migration
INGO International Non-Governmental Organization
LRA Lord’s Resistance Army
MCH Maternal Child Health
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
PRA Participatory Rural Appraisal or Participatory Rapid Appraisal
PDM Post-Distribution Monitoring
PIPs Processes, Institutions and Policies
PRRO Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation
RC Relief Committee
SISDES Information System on Forced Displacement and Human Rights
USAID US Agency for International Development
WFP World Food Programme

4 Spanish Acronym
Introduction to Targeting in Complex Emergencies

1. Every Day Dilemmas in Targeting Food Aid

Questions about targeting in complex emergencies arise in a number of different guises:

1. A member of staff of a WFP partner agency is the liaison with a group of displaced people, who are being sheltered by a local church. She knows the IDPs are in need, and could provide some food assistance to help. But she also knows that in order to provide assistance, she would have to pay a visit to the church to assess their situation and register them—and she knows that simply the act of being identified as a displaced person could put them at risk of retaliation against them or their families. Thus the IDPs would rather maintain their secret status than receive assistance in a way that might in any way endanger that status. What should she do?

2. In another case, a rapid assessment has shown that people who have had to flee from violence are urgently in need of assistance—people are hungry and some children are malnourished. It is clearly a case for prioritizing the humanitarian imperative and getting food assistance out quickly—except that aid workers on the ground have no good way of knowing who is displaced, since those fleeing the violence have come to stay with friends, relatives or anyone they could find on the outskirts of a town. Thus a displaced population is intermingled with a host community, and is not identified in any way as displaced. Trying to identify only the displaced would take time (and thus undermine the humanitarian imperative); targeting everyone would clearly include people who the assessment indicated are not food insecure (and thus undermine impartiality). What should they do?

3. A team of nutritionists is worried about the prevalence of acute malnutrition. There has been no major shock in the area to trigger a nutritional crisis for two years, yet the prevalence of wasting is nearly 25%. They intervene with their usual program of therapeutic feeding, but call for a general food distribution as well. The problem is that they want the general distribution targeted very specifically at households with mildly or moderately malnourished children—to help reduce the caseload of severely malnourished children that they are dealing with. Yet they learn to their dismay that the recipients of the general distribution are openly sharing their food with other households that do not contain any malnourished children. How are do they make sense of that? Should they try to prevent it?

These and other practical problems of targeting arise frequently in complex emergency settings, requiring aid workers to deal with them, often in the absence of any program guidance or accumulated knowledge from previous experience. These Program Guidance Notes are intended to address this gap by showing how participatory approaches can help in dealing with some of these difficult contexts. It will also provide guidance on determining when targeting individual households within communities is possible and when it is not.
However, given the often chaotic circumstances of complex emergencies, these Notes are not intended as strict guidelines to be followed or a recipe for targeting. They are intended to be a representation of accumulated knowledge from previous experience.

**Box 1. Challenges of Targeting in Complex Emergencies**

There are many challenges to successful targeting in complex emergencies. These are briefly noted here—and are discussed in greater detail in the rest of these Program Guidance Notes.

- Insecurity and access
- Impartiality
- Risk of violence or aggravating tensions
- Increasing protection risks
- Elite capture of the process—making marginalized people more vulnerable and feeding into underlying causes of crisis
- Fueling conflict if resources are diverted
- Manipulation of assistance by belligerent parties
- Inadvertently influencing patterns of migration or displacement (aid magnetism)

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**Targeting in complex emergencies: Overview of issues**

**What is a complex emergency?**

The Inter Agency Standing Committee defines complex emergencies as “a humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency and/ or the ongoing United Nations country program” (OCHA 1999). Several characteristics often define such conflicts:

- They are not between states but are internal to states, with non-state actors increasingly involved.
- They are increasingly “asymmetric” in nature—with one side much more powerful, and other side(s) less militarily powerful but more nimble.
- Complex emergencies are often not financed by state taxation but by illicit activities, aid and the plunder of civilians and natural resources—with obvious consequences for delivery of aid in such circumstances.
- Contemporary conflicts tend to deliberately target civilians, institutions and livelihoods. Up to 95% of casualties in contemporary conflict are civilian.
- Livelihoods may be disrupted in many ways, from looting, stripping livelihood assets, and poisoning water resources, to undermining customary rules of access and tenure of natural resources and access routes and, of course, the displacement of civilian populations.
- Contemporary conflict often instrumentally manipulates people’s identity, causing groups to turn on each other, even when they may have lived together peacefully in the past. This often takes the form of “ethnic cleansing.”

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5 For a discussion of the characteristics of complex emergencies, see Annex 5a.
Gender violence in wars and the use of rape as a weapon of war has become a rampant problem, with mass rape documented as a weapon in many conflicts.

These factors frequently result in a severe assault on the food security and livelihoods of civilians under complex emergency conditions, making the provision of food one of several possible humanitarian responses. These same factors also make it very difficult to effectively target and distribute food aid.

**What is targeting? What is participatory or community-based targeting?**

Targeting of humanitarian assistance is the act of ensuring that aid reaches people who need it at the right time and place, in the right form and quantity—and at the same time does not go to people who don’t need it.6

There are various levels of targeting. Geographic targeting is often the first step—determining the general areas affected. Targeting of individuals or households can be done in many different ways. With regard to humanitarian assistance, these are generally classified as:

- **Administrative targeting**: A humanitarian agency identifies recipients, according to a previously agreed indicator—usually from an assessment. These indicators may be physiological status (for example, presence of a malnourished child or disabled person), social status (for example, internally displaced), or economic status (wealth or assets).
- **Self-targeting**: The individual concerned identifies him/herself, sometimes according to some kind of externally imposed criteria and sometimes purely through his/her own self-identification
- **Community-based targeting**: The community identifies its most vulnerable members through a participatory process (at least in theory). In practice, this may be done through local leaders or institutions that are not necessarily participatory in the sense generally thought of by aid workers.

Targeting households or individuals is not always possible. In complex emergencies, all the above approaches have been attempted. But in many cases the only feasible approach is to provide assistance for everyone in an affected community. These Program Guidance Notes are intended to help field workers decide when targeting is possible and which methods are most applicable. They also help field workers improve the participation of the recipient community in targeting and managing food assistance.

The question of community-based targeting, which these Notes address, asks what a community is, and how communities are affected by complex emergencies. Communities are groups of people that often share the same geographic location, often share the same culture and similar livelihoods. Outsiders tend to think of communities in idealized terms of face-to-face relationships and a harmonious sense of belonging. However, all communities have power structures and hierarchies, and in complex emergencies different groups within communities may be in open conflict with each other, or the institutions that underpin local and community governance may have either contributed to the conflict, been significantly changed by the

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6 For a more in depth definition of targeting, see Annex 1b.
conflict, or both. As a result, relying on “community processes” for making decisions about humanitarian assistance in a complex emergency is a significant challenge. Understanding governance and power relations is critical before presuming that community participation can address an issue of targeting or managing humanitarian assistance. It is critical to understand who the stakeholders are, and how their interests relate to the question of targeting and food assistance. These challenges are addressed throughout these Notes. Section 3 in particular goes into these questions much more deeply.

**Why target?**

Targeting is necessary in humanitarian emergencies for a number of fundamental reasons. In most emergencies (not all), resources are scarce, and both the humanitarian imperative and the principle of impartiality require that those most urgently in need should be prioritized for assistance. In other cases, poor targeting that allows free humanitarian resources to flow to people who do not really need the assistance may harm trade, undermine producer incentives and labor markets, as well as lead to the diversion of aid to feed combatants and thus fuel conflict. Thus ensuring that food goes to people who need it and only those who need it is critical to minimizing the potential harm of food aid. But the task of targeting is complicated and, in many cases in complex emergencies, it can seem impossible—as highlighted by the brief accounts above.

Targeting is a sequential process that develops as agencies and communities interact, as the case load grows/diminishes in relation to access, population movement, pipelines, and resources, and as EMOPs develop into PRROs. In other words, targeting is not static.

Box 2 lays out some of the normative guidelines on targeting.

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**Box 2. WFP Policies and Sphere Standards on Targeting**

**WFP definition of targeting.** Targeting is “the process by which areas and populations are selected for a resource transfer in a timely manner...[including] (i) identifying and selecting communities and people in need of food assistance, and (ii) selecting delivery and distribution mechanisms” (WFP/EB.1/2006/5-A).

**WFP policy on targeting.** “WFP should target those at risk of losing their livelihoods, in addition to those whose lives are at risk.” Targeting policy is informed by humanitarian principles, particularly the principle of impartiality. Targeting should be informed by needs assessments and pre-crisis information. Targeting should improve over the course of an emergency and transition. It is important to involve all recipients, particularly women, in decisions regarding targeting (WFP/EB.1/2006/5-A).

**Sphere standard on targeting.** “Humanitarian assistance or services are provided equitably and impartially, based on vulnerability and needs of the individuals and groups affected by disaster.” (Sphere 2004, p. 35).

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Why promote a participatory approach?

Participatory approaches to targeting—often called community-based targeting (CBT) or community-based targeting and distribution (CBTD)—have long been part of standard operating procedures mainly in drought response over the past two decades. Most programming guidelines suggest that participatory approaches work best in slow-onset emergencies with no conflict or displacement, no marginalized minorities, in locations with a history of participatory local self-governance, and in locations where agency staff have adequate time and access to work with local community leaders on technical details. Little of this guidance is directly applicable to complex emergencies, which by definition include conflict, often include displaced people and discriminated minority groups, and often include security risks that minimize contact time between agencies and affected population. Yet the policies of many agencies, and compliance with Sphere minimum standards, require that the recipient community participate in decisions about the assistance they receive including targeting, without respect to the causes of the emergency. WFP policy promotes participation in all elements of programming in emergencies, including targeting. Promoting participation is thus a difficult task in complex emergencies. For all these reasons, participatory approaches to targeting have not been promoted in complex emergencies.

WFP definition of community-based targeting is, “Households or beneficiaries are selected with the participation of community members such as traditional or religious leaders, specially constituted food committees equally composed of women and men, or local authorities, on the basis of criteria developed with the participation of the communities.”

Participation is both an end in itself and a means to an end in humanitarian assistance. Participation in decisions that affect people’s lives is considered a right by most humanitarian agencies, including WFP. “Participation” varies from co-option by a stronger power at one end of the spectrum to decision-making and empowerment at the other.

Targeting and participation are two of the common standards in the Sphere Minimum Standards for Disaster Response. See Box 3.

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7 World Food Programme (2006) Targeting in emergencies WFP/EB.1/2006/5-A. World Food Programme, Rome
8 For a more in depth discussion of normative standards regarding participation and targeting, see Annex 4.
9 See Annex 3.
10 See Annex 3, especially 3b and 3g.
Box 3. Normative Guidance on Participation

**WFP policy on participation**

“Assistance programs are designed and implemented on the basis of broad-based participation in order to ensure that program participants (including recipients, national and local governments, civil-society organizations and other partners) contribute their knowledge, skills and resources to processes that influence their lives” (WFP/EB.3/2003/10-B).

**Sphere standards on participation**

**Sphere Common Standard 1** on participation notes, “The disaster-affected population actively participates in the assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the assistance programme” (Sphere 2004, p.28). Common Standard 4 on targeting makes much the same point.

**Food Aid Management Standard 3** on distribution notes, “The method of food distribution is responsive, transparent, equitable and appropriate to local conditions. Recipients of food aid are identified and targeted on the basis of need, by means of an assessment carried out through consultation with stakeholders, including community groups” (Sphere 2004, p. 168).

While WFP policy promotes participation as a goal in itself in targeting practices, it is also linked to the objective of improved targeting and reduced error. In many complex emergencies, the dominant targeting objective is to minimize exclusion—that is, prioritize the humanitarian imperative. Yet the research also showed that presuming a short, acute emergency can lead to problems later on. Section 5 on response analysis discusses targeting objectives in greater detail, and highlights the role of the community, and the constraints that communities face, in helping to minimize both exclusion and inclusion error in complex emergencies.

The way in which humanitarian assistance is targeted also has significant implications for protection. Exclusion of certain groups can worsen protection risks for those included, and if groups who need assistance are left out, they can be extremely vulnerable in a complex emergency. On the other hand, inclusion of groups that don’t need assistance undermines impartiality and causes other harms. So it is important to consider protection risk to populations when planning or implementing targeting approaches—participatory or otherwise. These **Program Guidance Notes** are intended to help field workers think through the importance of all these linkages and determine the best course of action under chaotic and adverse programming conditions in complex emergencies.

The provision and targeting of assistance in complex emergencies is fundamentally rooted in humanitarian principles, particularly the principles of humanity and impartiality. The principle of humanity, or the humanitarian imperative, states that civilians affected by conflict and disasters have a right to protection and assistance. The principle of impartiality states that assistance is to be provided solely according to need, not on any other basis—social, economic, gender, racial or sectarian. These notes will provide guidance on how participatory approaches can in some circumstances help to apply humanitarian principles, for example by working with representative and accountable institutions.
Six questions of targeting

To assist program staff in making better targeting decisions and strategies, these Program Guidance Notes are built around one generic version of a program cycle. The program cycle addresses six key questions that grow out of the definition of targeting. The question of targeting is often limited to the question of “who?”—or sometimes “who?” and “where?” Research has demonstrated that there are at least six such questions to ask about targeting: who, what, where, when, how, and why. These questions are discussed in greater detail in Annex 2.

• **WHO** in particular (within these areas) requires assistance (and an important subsidiary question is how many people require assistance). Targeting is often (mistakenly) interpreted as relating only to this question.
• **WHAT** refers to the kind of assistance that is being targeted. This can include the modality of food assistance and the ration itself, but increasingly it refers to more fundamental decisions about what kind of assistance should be provided in the first place—food, cash, or other forms of livelihood support.
• **WHERE** are the people who require assistance located (geographic targeting).
• **WHEN** concerns the timing of assistance. It is quite possible to target the right group with the right assistance, but still have large targeting errors through the late arrival of assistance.
• **HOW** refers to the manner in which assistance actually gets to the intended recipients. This can be through the various forms of targeting listed above (administrative targeting, self-targeting, participatory targeting, etc.) and it also related to the modality of the assistance (GFD implies certain kinds of targeting options).
• **WHY** food assistance is needed is the most fundamental question. What are the causes and consequences of the emergency? Note that this question underpins all the others, but isn’t as directly related to the question of targeting.

Much of the effort of targeting (particularly the targeting of food aid) is focused narrowly on the questions of who should be recipients. But the issue is much broader than this. It is equally important for accurate targeting to know when and where assistance is needed—only then can actual individuals or households be selected. But it is also critical to know what is needed, and why? Causal factors may differ, and may necessitate different interventions or different targeting strategies. Lastly, of course, the question of how people are going to be selected, and how those selected will actually be identified, is often the thorniest of all.11

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11 See Annex 2 for a more in depth explanation.
Revisiting “Everyday dilemmas in targeting food aid”

So how were the three situations described at the beginning of this section addressed? In each case, field workers required information that would inform a decision. Sometimes community participatory processes provided the information and helped in decision making. In all cases, specific tools or methods were required. These are briefly described below.

1. In this case, direct participatory methods involving members of the community would have compromised the identity of the IDPs, which was obviously against their best interests. Yet they still needed food assistance. Agency field workers had to work anonymously through the staff of the church, enabling them to assess food needs and identify those who required the assistance. This required a very careful stakeholder analysis and some training provided at another location on assessment methodologies for staff of the church, since they were identified as the one stakeholder who had the trust of the IDPs, but who were relatively safer from the security threats that the IDPs themselves faced. A careful adherence to “do no harm” principals and approaches was important. Many of the other tools described in these Guidance Notes had to be used indirectly, through the stakeholder that had the trust of the recipient community—the staff of the church.

2. In the second case, field workers had been informed that there were some 450 people displaced people, but found nearly 2,500 lined up when they arrived to distribute food aid. A near riot broke out when they called off the distribution. They could not figure out any way to separate real IDPs from others of a similar identity who simply wanted to get some food assistance. After field workers withdrew, a local leader emerged who managed to convince the IDPs to gather in small groups according to village of origin, and to self-identify those who came from that village. This broke a large, unruly crowd down into small groups of fifty to one hundred people, all of whom had the ability of identify others in the group who came from their place of origin, and who therefore were able to separate genuine IDPs from others (or at least, in this case, people who had recently left the villages that had been attacked—and could therefore be presumed to be IDPs). This leader (a local pastor, in this case, not a chief or elder) informed the agencies involved, who returned to the scene to find a much smaller number of proposed recipients, each organized by village and with an elected representative (see case study one in Annex 6 for more details). In this case, the field workers required a good assessment of stakeholders, but in particular, a means of assessing local leadership. Once they had ascertained the credibility of the leader, assessing food aid needs was a straightforward matter.

3. The solution to this problem required much more in-depth knowledge of the communities affected and their views about food and external assistance. It turned out that there was a strongly held belief that external assistance was for everyone in the community, and that trying to select some at the expense of others would lead to disputes—perhaps even violence. The general perception in the community was that even better off people should receive some of the external assistance, because in times when there was no external assistance, more vulnerable people would be dependent on better off people for employment or assistance. Thus the perception of vulnerability within the community was of a much longer time frame than the perception of vulnerability on the part of the outside agency. Nevertheless there was
a clear recognition that malnourished children required extra assistance, and there was no community resistance to these children and their households being targeted for extra assistance, but the General Food Distribution was perceived to be for everyone. If the external agency insisted on targeting only a few people, then the community would redistribute food after the agency left. The best way to get food to the families of malnourished children was therefore to allow the GFD resources to be divided among the whole community (which meant that no one received very much) and target additional resources to malnourished children (including a family ration). To get to this understanding, field workers needed to use many participatory approaches, including stakeholder analysis, participatory rural appraisal methods, an assessment of local governance and leadership, and benefits/harms analysis.

**A simple exercise**

A simple participatory exercise can allow WFP or agency staff to review community participation in their programs. As a planning exercise staff could:

1. Identify the targeting issue at each stage of the program cycle in a complex emergency
2. Consider the possibility for community involvement
3. Review risks involved
4. Think about the benefits, and
5. Map out risks and benefits across the program cycle.

Figure 1 is an example of such an exercise.

The research on which these *Notes* are based was organized around the program cycle depicted in the form of a flow chart in Figure 1. It highlights the possibilities, the risks and the potential benefits of community participation in each the processes implied in a program cycle (the elements of a program cycle are depicted in flow chart form in the left hand column of the chart).
### Figure 1. A Generic Program Cycle Flow Chart for Project in a Complex Emergency (CE): The Role of the Recipient Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Targeting Issue (&quot;Six Targeting Questions&quot;)</th>
<th>Possibility for Community Involvement</th>
<th>Risks of Community Participation in CE</th>
<th>Benefits of Community Participation in CE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Warning/preparedness</td>
<td>Warning of crisis/preparing to mitigate or respond</td>
<td>Provides information for geographic area targeting (Where, when what questions)</td>
<td>Community based EW can accurately predict localized crisis, link to broader system</td>
<td>Limited comparability, limited experience with community EW in complex emergencies</td>
<td>Good location-specific information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Establishing need and targeting criteria</td>
<td>Provides information about food insecurity/vulnerability (Who what, where, when?)</td>
<td>Community understanding of food insecurity, who is affected and how badly; criteria setting</td>
<td>Some risk of elite capture of process, groups identified for political reasons, etc.</td>
<td>Potential of participatory processes to offset errors in assessment; improve access to vulnerable groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Analysis and Program Design</td>
<td>Selecting response, raising resources, designing the intervention</td>
<td>Determines nature of intervention; Allocates resources and designs strategy to meet needs (What, why, how much)</td>
<td>Communities sometimes involved in design, rarely involved in raising resources.</td>
<td>Some groups may control process to exclusion of others; RC members may be at risk</td>
<td>Greater ownership of community in the project, improved design of the intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipient selection</td>
<td>Determining who actually gets resources</td>
<td>This is the core of targeting issue, but not the entirety of it (Who, how much)</td>
<td>Role of Relief Committee (RC) or similar institution. The major question is about who sets selection criteria</td>
<td>Some groups may control process to exclusion of others; RC members may be at risk</td>
<td>CB process may counter balance power of elites or leaders to ensure inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation (Distribution)</td>
<td>Providing resources to intended people</td>
<td>Ensures those intended to receive assistance actually do (Who)</td>
<td>Role of Relief Committee, often its only real role</td>
<td>RC may be seen as just performing duty for outside agency</td>
<td>Empowered RCs might be able to prevent abuses in distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End Use/ Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
<td>Benefiting from resources; ensuring process is on track</td>
<td>Do intended recipients actually consume/ benefit from food distribution? (Who, how much?) Also, provides information about design, selection and distribution; should provide information on EW and assessment</td>
<td>Community-based M&amp;E or participatory impact assessment is common is some programs, but rarely in food assistance programs</td>
<td>Some groups may control process to exclusion of others</td>
<td>If community involved, the redistribution according to alternative criteria should decline; empowered RCs might be able to prevent abuses in distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Targeting Issue (“Six Targeting Questions”)</td>
<td>Tools and Methods</td>
<td>Relevant section</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Warning/</td>
<td>Warning of crisis/ preparing to mitigate or respond</td>
<td>Provides information for geographic area targeting (Where, when what questions)</td>
<td>Key informant interview&lt;br&gt; PRA methods&lt;br&gt; Conflict analysis</td>
<td>Section 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Establishing need and targeting criteria</td>
<td>Provides information about food insecurity/vulnerability (Who what, where, when?)</td>
<td>Key informant interview&lt;br&gt; Focus group interviews&lt;br&gt; Stakeholder analysis&lt;br&gt; Governance and leadership analysis tools&lt;br&gt; Do no harm/Benefits-Harms analysis&lt;br&gt; Conflict analysis</td>
<td>Section 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Analysis and</td>
<td>Selecting response, raising resources, designing the intervention</td>
<td>Determines nature of intervention; allocates resources and designs strategy to meet needs (What, why, how much)</td>
<td>Stakeholder analysis&lt;br&gt; Response analysis&lt;br&gt; Normative guidelines</td>
<td>Section 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Design</td>
<td>Recipient selection</td>
<td>The core of targeting issue, but not the entirety of it (Who, how much)</td>
<td>PRA methods&lt;br&gt; Stakeholder analysis&lt;br&gt; Participatory targeting/distribution tools</td>
<td>Annex 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Providing resources to intended people</td>
<td>Ensure those intended to receive assistance actually to (Who)</td>
<td>Participatory targeting/distribution tools</td>
<td>Section 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Distribution)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Do intended recipients actually consume/benefit from food distribution? (Who, How much)</td>
<td>Participatory monitoring/evaluation tools&lt;br&gt; Stakeholder analysis&lt;br&gt; Normative guidelines</td>
<td>Annex 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 3

Section 4

Section 5

Annex 4

Section 6

Section 7

Annex 4
2. Overview of Tools and Methods

A number of tools have been developed that assist in improving participation in program planning and decision making. Some were developed specifically for the purposes of targeting. This section outlines those tools and approaches, roughly following the outline in Figure 2.

*General participatory methods of information collection and analysis*

There are many good “how-to” manuals on participatory approaches already in existence. This section briefly reviews the main tools. Some (key informant interviews and group interviews) come from the tradition of qualitative research; others (focus groups and participatory approaches) come from the general tradition of participatory rural appraisal or PRA (although there are many different names for this general set of tools and approaches). In addition, there are approaches such as appreciative inquiry, which is not a method per se, but a perspective on understanding communities—one which begins not with problems and identifying “gaps” but with capacities and identifying strengths.

*Interview methods*

Interview methods include key informant interviews, focus group discussions and large group discussions. Each is briefly described below.

**Key informant interviews.** Key informant interview are used when one individual has the knowledge of a topic to be explored. The focus is on that individual’s knowledge and experience. For targeting purposes, key informant interviews might be held with local leaders or elders to get a good background of local practices or community characteristics, or with the leader of a women’s group to understand women’s issues or gender issues from the women’s perspective.

**Focus group discussions.** Focus groups are used to understand different perspectives around a single question or set of questions. Focus groups are thus usually selected to reflect the most diversity possible around that single issue. Thus if the issue to understand is food consumption patterns, five to six different household decision-makers about food consumption (usually women) would be selected to join the focus group, but reflecting the diversity of the community on this issue (so women from different socio-economic strata, different ethnic groups, etc). To achieve the focus needed, however, the group must be kept to a limited number, and the participants must be thoughtfully selected.

**Large group interviews.** Sometimes it isn’t possible to limit the size of the group, or to select participants as carefully as one might wish. Large group interviews can be used to get background information on the community, general trends, or other information where specific focus is not required. But note that minority perspectives or other viewpoints that are not dominant do not come out very well in this kind of interview.

For all these interview approaches, a set of questions or an interview guide is necessary, so the interviewer keeps to the focus of finding the information needed.
**Participatory information and analysis tools**

Focus groups in particular can be used in conjunction with a number of other tools that add to the information, enhancing discussion or debate and broadening questions from an interviewer. Many of these are summarized very well in a recent guide on participatory impact assessment, *Participatory Impact Assessment: A Guide for Practitioners*, by Andrew Catley, et al. (Medford MA: Feinstein International Center, 2008). These methods include the following:

**Participatory mapping.** This can be used to show spatial relationships in the community. For targeting, it might be used to determine the project area, but also whether certain satellite villages or neighboring villages were excluded from distribution.

**Timelines.** Timelines are devices to show changes over time. In the case of targeting, they can be used to determine key events before, during and after the period for which food aid was distributed. This can help determine the appropriateness of the timing of food distribution.

**Proportional piling.** Proportional piling methods foster a discussion of relative quantities—such as the proportion of income or food from different sources. For targeting, they can be used to depict proportions of food uses, others with whom food was shared, or changes in food and income sources before and after receiving food aid.

**Ranking.** Ranking shows the relative importance of different factors to describing a problem, or of the solutions to a problem. For example, ranking can depict the positive and negative effects of targeting, or of the different impacts determined in a participatory impact assessment.

**Participation radar diagrams.** These show the relative importance of different factors in the overall explanation of a phenomenon. For targeting, they could be used to measure participation in different aspects of distribution.

For an in-depth explanation of all these tools and more examples of how they are used, see Catley et al (2008).

**Tools developed for this research**

**Stakeholder analysis**

Stakeholder analysis is key to understanding who is involved with or exerts influence over (and who is influenced by) any particular action—the act of targeting food assistance in this case. It involves identifying participants, and then mapping their relations with each other and to the phenomenon under consideration.

Because this particular kind of analysis was so central to the research, specific tools were developed by the research team which are described below with examples of the kinds of analyses produced.

**Stakeholder analysis in a food aid program.** Stakeholders to be interviewed in a typical food aid program include the following:
1. **Key informants from programs.** Senior managers, program officers, needs assessment/VAM officers, technical officers (e.g. nutrition, gender, protection), heads of sub-offices, and field officers, security officers, logisticians.

2. **Community members.** Food aid recipients and non-recipients, men and women, youth and adults/elders, community leaders.

The objective of stakeholder analysis is to identify the different organizations, structures and individuals involved in, influencing, or influenced by targeting decisions. One suggested method follows, but flexibility in approach is important.

Depending on the number of people present, put them into small working groups.

**Step 1. Identifying stakeholders.** On a flip chart, create three columns titled “involved in,” “influencing,” and “influenced by.” Under each list all the relevant formal and informal groups, organizations and institutions.

**Step 2. Mapping relationships.** Using circles to represent particular groups, organizations or institutions, and arrows to represent relationships between them, draw a diagram to show relationships and functions. Use colors to denote whether the organization is either involved in, influencing or influenced by—for example blue for those involved in actual implementation; red for those influencing CBTD; and green for those influenced by CBTD.

**Step 3. Understanding context.** Important contextual factors such as culture, customary forms of leadership and participation, and particularly the impact of the conflict, are all important to understand to put the stakeholder map in perspective.

NOTE: This exercise should be done once in relation to targeting stakeholders and repeated for participation stakeholders. The latter group will probably be much larger and pull in some of those local governance groups. The exercise may have to be done several times to capture all the stakeholders. The key is flexibility and allowing individual researchers to do this as they feel appropriate in the context. The overriding objective is to identify all stakeholders, and map their relationship to each other.

Several examples of stakeholder analyses are diagrammed on following pages in Figures 3, 4, and 5.
Figure 3. Stakeholder Map of Targeting Practice in Southern Sudan (post-CPA era)
Figure 4. Operational Stakeholder Map—Food Aid Targeting and Distribution in Darfur
Figure 5. Local and Humanitarian Governance in Darfur

[Diagram showing the relationships between tribal leadership, local government/civic administration, humanitarian governance, and food aid recipients.]
Other useful tools for targeting in complex emergencies

Assessing local governance and leadership
The single most critical factor to understand in assessing the potential for participatory approaches is local governance and leadership. Where leadership is accountable to the community (even if not democratically elected), the potential for participatory approaches is higher, and working through local leaders is more likely to be representative of the community’s wishes and interests. Where leadership is predatory or unaccountable, not only are participatory approaches more difficult, holding elections or other devices for participation may be manipulate or corrupted. Introducing other methods of improving accountability may be more important than introducing the rudimentary forms of participation such as relief committees. Specific manuals or approaches for assessing governance include:

Local Governance Barometer: [http://www.pact.mg/lgb/](http://www.pact.mg/lgb/)


Benefits/harms analysis and “do no harm” approaches
The idea behind “do no harm” approaches or benefits/harms analysis is that humanitarian operations need to be accountable for both their positive, intended impacts, and their unintended (often negative) impacts. Outside interveners have the obligation to analyze, monitor and mitigate the negative or unintended impacts of their assistance. The most widely know tool is Anderson (1999). Specific manuals or approaches include:

Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—Or War by Mary Anderson. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999)


Participatory Assessments
These are similar to the tools outlined above, abut their specific application is in assessing food security. Several of the main approaches include:
General PRA tools. These are generally outlined in the first sub-section above, but are most often applied in the assessment step of the program cycle. They include proportional piling, pairwise ranking, wealth ranking, seasonal/daily calendars, Venn diagramming, guided transect walks, mapping, participatory SWOT analysis, and appreciative inquiry. These are explained in much greater details in manuals such as the FIC Participatory Assessment Guidelines (Catley et al. 2008) and summarized in ACF Community Participation Manual, Chapter 5.

Household Economy Approach. The Practitioners’ Guide to the Household Economy Approach (HEA) is a framework for analyzing how people obtain food, non-food goods and services, and how they might respond to changes in their external environment, like a drought or a rise in food prices. [http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_6781.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_6781.htm)

General Food Security Assessment. WFP has two excellent and detailed tools for general food security assessment. These include the Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) guidelines, for use in acute emergencies; and the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability (CFSVA) guidelines, for broader use—most often for comprehensive baseline (pre-emergency) assessment. Both are available on the WFP intra-net.

Other specific manuals include:


UNHCR Participatory Assessment Tool, available at [http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/450e963f2.html](http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/450e963f2.html)

Participatory distribution and implementation

Several tools have been developed that relate specifically to the issue of selecting the recipients of food assistance. These include general methods (administrative targeting, community-based targeting or self-targeting), but some are specific to community-based targeting. Two recommended specific manuals or approaches include:


*Community Based Targeting & Distribution Systems (CBTD).* Oxfam GB [www.alnap.org/meetings/jun06/.../jun06_oxfam_workshop_10.ppt](http://www.alnap.org/meetings/jun06/.../jun06_oxfam_workshop_10.ppt)

Participatory monitoring and impact evaluation

Just as participation in assessment and recipient selection is important, so too is participation in monitoring and evaluating the impact of food aid interventions. Several specific manuals or tools include:


*WFP Beneficiary contact monitoring questionnaire* could be adapted for community use


Conflict analysis

Understanding the context is critical to the use of any of these tools, and in complex emergencies, understanding conflict dynamics is the single most important factor to understanding the context. Many tools are out there for this. Several specific tools or approaches include:

*African Union Daily News Highlights Email:* [oau-ews@ethionet.et](mailto:oau-ews@ethionet.et) or [situationroom@africa-union.org](mailto:situationroom@africa-union.org)

*Conflict Analysis And Response Definition, Abridged Methodology,* April 2001, West Africa Network For Peacebuilding, Centre for conflict research, Forum on early warning and early response (FEWER)

*Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment and Conflict Sensitivity.* Center for Peace-building (KOFF), May 2004,

Program Guidance Notes

3. Early Warning and Preparedness (Where? When? What?)

Early warning (EW) provides information to both agencies and communities about impending shocks or crises. Early warning in complex emergencies is about identifying and mapping populations and areas at risk of conflict and displacement. Good early warning helps to address targeting questions about when and where a crisis is likely to occur and, to some extent, what populations or livelihood groups are the most vulnerable. Classic food security early warning systems were based on remote sensing and climatic information, as well as production and market information. Recent innovations include an increased emphasis on community-based early warning systems. Early warning systems can be costly, and are thus most often found in places where recurrent disasters justify their expense. While traditionally EW systems tracked risk factors for natural disasters, they are increasingly found in complex emergency situations, but are subject to numerous constraints. Preparedness is the process of ensuring that risk-prone communities are aware of the hazards they face, and are prepared to prevent or mitigate the impact of those hazards, and to respond to the crisis that these hazards might cause. Until comparatively recently, few such examples of either early warning or preparedness incorporated community participation, and few ever have in complex emergency conditions.

Approaches

EW systems function at different levels—most commonly at the national level. More localized systems are likely to incorporate some amount of community-based information gathering and analysis. Where good EW systems exist, the geographic targeting question (where?) is usually answered with much greater accuracy, at least to a certain degree. In Somalia, for example, where the Food Security Analysis Unit has a team of field monitors regularly updating both current status indicators and indicators of early warning, the targeting of food aid resources down to the level of districts and livelihood zones is quite good (at a more localized level, however, the number of staff is insufficient to cover the area, so the level of accuracy in targeting declines). In Colombia there is a national early warning system in place related to the movement of IDPs as a result of violence. It captures geographical areas from which IDPs flee, as well as those to which they flee. This serves as a trigger for geographic areas that may require more in depth assessment because there are possible new case loads. Good early warning systems are also critical to answer the question of when a crisis is beginning to take shape. Late information is almost as useless as no information at all for the purposes of programmatic intervention.

Despite its absence in many systems, the role of the community can be critical in early warning and preparedness. Local knowledge is extremely valuable in interpreting local phenomena, which is critical for early warning. Likewise, if early warning information is not available to the affected community (i.e. only to external agencies) the effectiveness of early warning is significantly diminished. So there is an implied two-way role for local communities in early warning, both as generators and consumers of information and analysis. While the role of the community in both these functions receives lip-service, there is still relatively little actual involvement on the ground, particularly in complex emergencies.
Good preparedness systems also address the question of what? This includes not only what kind of hazards or risk factors, but also the kinds of mitigation and response interventions that would be appropriate. Here also, the role of the community should be paramount, but in practice—at least until recently—this has often not been the case.

**Concerns with community-based EW in complex emergencies**

EW systems generally often do not deal effectively with warning about the causes of conflict. Most EW systems observed either measure current status (food security status, nutritional status) or else process indicators oriented towards climatic or environmental hazards. Some food security information systems such as the Somalia Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit are beginning to incorporate the latest information on displacement into their food security analysis. In the Somalia case, this significantly changed the nature of the analysis, and also changed the way in which information was depicted. However, at-risk communities were not significantly involved in collecting or analyzing information on conflict.

Community involvement in conflict early warning is highly variable. Where communities are involved in their own localized early warning, there is often a difficulty in relating local data to regional or national data and systems. While local communities have mechanisms for making imminent danger of conflict known—i.e. an imminent attack—this information often does not go beyond the local community. However, where conflict is concerned, local communities are likely to be caught up in it, making conflict a qualitatively different kind of causal factor for local analysis than drought, flooding, pests or diseases, and other hazards.

Even if there is a degree of community involvement, obtaining good, up-to-date information requires access (which in turn implies some degree of security). In many cases, good early warning information on conflict is constrained by poor access due to poor security.

**Practical guidance for participation in complex emergencies**

Several important points emerge from the research that should be taken into consideration when planning a community participation element to early warning in a complex emergency context. For community participation in preparedness, the most important points to consider include:

- The history of social, economic, political and ethnic marginalization
- Local perceptions of vulnerability - both causal factors (conflict, etc.) and outcomes (such as food insecurity)
- Internal divisions within communities
- Divisions across communities
- Patterns of conflict and location-specific indicators of conflict
- The role of leadership and local governance (see Section 3)
- Displacement—people being displaced out of the community, and into the community from elsewhere
- The existence of mechanisms to deal with consequences of conflict or displacement (traditional or externally introduced)

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12 See Case Study Number 4 (Um Labanaya) in Annex 6.
Examples of conflict analysis and conflict-sensitive programming guidelines include practical information on how to approach raising these issues, which are highly sensitive in complex emergencies. The examples from the research are summarized in Box 4.

Box 4. Conflict Early Warning Systems and Participation

CEWARN. One of the few functioning conflict early warning systems that incorporates community involvement is CEWARN, the Conflict Early Warning and Response Network, which operates in the Greater Horn of Africa. Formally sanctioned by IGAD, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development based in Djibouti, CEWARN operates in three areas—along the Kenya/Somalia/Ethiopia border (the “Somali cluster”), along the Kenya/Uganda/Sudan border (the “Karamoja cluster”), and along the Ethiopia/Djibouti/Somalia border (the “Afar-Issa cluster”). While there are governmental institutions involved, CEWARN’s protocol includes inputs from local communities. Hence, community participation is part of CEWARN, although CEWARN is not a community-driven system.

At the community level, indicators of conflict-reducing trends that are tracked include the formation of inter-ethnic group alliances, peaceful celebrations, inter-group sharing and marriage, cross-border trade and gift-offering. Indicators of mitigating behavior include small arms disclosure, arms reduction programs, access to education, relief distributions, market activities, weapons reduction programs, NGO and local peace initiatives, positive media coverage, elements of law enforcement, and even the stability of bride prices.

Indicators of conflict include, internal and external armed support, development aid problems, media controls, unusual pastoral migration, harmful livestock policy, interruption of self help activities, negative media coverage, influx of IDPs, increase in security escorts, increase in small arms availability, ammunition as commodities, school attendance interrupted, natural disasters, resource competition and many more.

Sistema de Alerta Temprana. In Colombia the national EWS (Sistema de Alerta Temprana) is part of the SISDES (Sistema de Información sobre Desplazamiento y Derechos Humanos, or, Information System on Forced Displacement and Human Rights) run by Codhes (a human rights institutions whose remit includes documenting conflict related violence and identifying risk factors associated with displacement). Codhes keeps a register of estimated numbers of displaced in Colombia through bulletins by cross checking numerous sources of information including the press, registers held by civil rights organizations, NGOs, government institutions, local authorities, academic institutions, and those run by the Catholic church, as well as field visits by Codhes staff members. As such, the data collection cannot be said to be participatory. Although there is constant consultation with affected civil society about their displacement, it is more to extract and record information than to be a participatory methodology, it is not intended to be so.

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13 See “Conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peace building: Tools for peace and conflict impact assessment: Resource Pack.” The link can be found in Annex 6 c.
Other practical guidance notes

Several other practical suggestions for EW in complex emergencies that help to facilitate participatory approaches (even if not directly participatory themselves) include:

- **Make use of WFP security monitoring.** WFP has significant investment in staff safety and security in complex emergencies. Often this is an excellent source of conflict early warning information, even if not directly labeled as such. For example, the incidents of attack by the LRA in Southern Sudan were being tracked by WFP so that necessary precautions related to staff security could be taken. This information could be fed back to communities at risk from these attacks, and can be used to anticipate population movements.

- **Monitor displacement.** Displacement information is increasingly being provided by other agencies (IOM, OCHA) often with field monitors on the ground. While in many cases, this information is not formally incorporated into food security analysis, it is available on the internet and other places. In Colombia regular bulletins on the numbers of displaced by conflict and identification of geographical areas that people flee from and flee to, provide a basis for decision making for government and humanitarian institutions alike that influence targeting.

- **Exercise appropriate cautions.** Care must be exercised with this information, however, as it also informs the warring parties! Most IDPs in Colombia chose to move anonymously, relying on social networks for fear of reprisals, developing a strategy of becoming invisible.

**Summary**

- Early warning and preparedness address the questions of what, where, and when? EW systems can include conflict indicators such as history of marginalization of certain groups, relationship between ethnic and social groups, cross border and arms trade, attacks and displacements. However, in complex emergencies, few examples of EW systems include community participation.

- Having community dialogue about the range of issues is critical background information, and can set the tone for interventions.

- WFP’s security monitoring and OCHA’s displacement monitoring can be also good sources of information.

Introduction

Assessment is about gathering information and analysis: asking the right questions and making sense of multiple sources of information, in order to inform program decisions that influence targeting. This section is concerned with what you need to know to inform and improve targeting practice under complex emergency situations—particularly in terms of promoting participation while upholding humanitarian principles.

The starting point for assessments in relation to targeting are the six broad targeting questions (who, what, where, when, how and why?), which require reliable information and good understanding, shared by all key decision-makers. Assessment is an ongoing process, with program decision-makers constantly re-assessing the situation and their program strategy based on the most recent information and analysis.

There are multiple types and purposes of assessment from rapid initial assessment, to more in-depth food security assessments, nutrition surveys, or annual food needs assessment. All assessments should have clear objectives which often address specific targeting questions. In food assistance programs, the most common kinds of assessments include:

- **Initial rapid assessments** provide preliminary answers to all six questions sufficient to plan an emergency response. Findings will be verified and expanded upon later.
- **Nutrition surveys** show the severity of the nutritional crisis in terms of prevalence estimates of malnutrition and mortality rates; ideally they identify the underlying causes of malnutrition related to food, health and care for programming purposes.
- **Food security assessments** quantify (or qualify) the magnitude (scale—who is affected and where), duration (how long for and future scenarios) and severity of food insecurity (why and what type of intervention is needed to supplement local resources).
- **Annual food needs assessments** estimate the food assistance needs of a chronically affected sub-group (e.g. refugees or IDPs) for a given period (who, how much, where, when).

Assessments may be quantitative (estimating numbers affected, food deficits, GAM prevalence, etc.) or qualitative (identifying livelihood or food security groups, food insecurity/famine timelines, wealth ranking, proportional piling of food sources, case-histories of displacement). Many of these qualitative techniques are designed to be participatory, in that they encourage members of the community to be active in explaining their situation rather than passively answering questions. Examples of participatory assessment methods and approaches were provided in Section 2. Not all of these tools are designed to include conflict as part of the analysis. Specific conflict analysis tools have also been included in Section 2.

In designing participatory assessments it is important to be clear about the objectives of using participatory techniques or methods, and the balance between different, possibly competing, objectives. Objectives might include:
• Using participatory methods to gather better, more accurate information about “who needs food aid.”
• Using participatory methods to build relationships and trust.
• Using participatory methods to hand over an element of decision-making power about food aid needs to local communities. While local communities might be consulted on this issue, no examples were found in the case studies in which community leaders had this type of decision-making power.

Often the focus is on the first objective—improving quality of data and analysis with less attention to building relationships and trust. In the context of complex emergencies getting to know local communities and their leaders is just as important as acquiring excellent data on food assistance needs.

Technical expertise is a necessity for some types of assessment. Of equal importance is the active engagement of decision-makers and other stakeholders at all stages of assessment to ensure their shared understanding, buy-in and commitment to the assessment findings, conclusions and recommendations. This is one form of participation and crucially sets the tone for subsequent programs.

Working with local communities, their leadership and their institutions is a necessity not a choice. The ultimate responsibility for urgent humanitarian action rests with national governments, who can request (or not) assistance from the international community. But working in complex emergencies however often puts a humanitarian agency in a different relationship with national governments. Information is often based on more regional or local sources of information: for example, in Colombia, needs are identified through secondary sources. At a local level in an emergency, the first line of support is usually those closest at hand—family, friends and wider social networks and contacts who are often linked with local civil society organizations, government and non-governmental organizations. Even in the most acute crises people’s social contacts, networks and relationships play a crucial role in their survival and ability to cope. Participation is also about relationships—working together on a more equal footing, with mutual understanding and the development of trust between partners.

The assessments mentioned above do not explicitly address questions of participation: for example, how do people organize themselves within their communities? Who’s who in local civil society and governance, how do they relate to the conflict affected population, and how best to work with them? Unless you know the answers to such questions it may be difficult to promote community participation that is fair and equitable to target and distribute food impartially, i.e. according to need. The remainder of this section is devoted to these issues.

**Key questions**

Assessments serve multiple purposes, ranging from determining food aid needs to enabling decision-makers to decide whether targeting is possible or necessary: i.e. can food aid be targeted within populations through community participation, or does it need blanket distribution? The issues of community organization and participation are often not addressed explicitly by assessments and it is the aim of this section to explain how these crucial elements might be incorporated as part of assessments, in order to help address the question:
How can a humanitarian agency promote participation and community-based ways of working, while at the same time upholding humanitarian principles in contexts of complex emergencies?

This can be broken down into three more specific questions, (with several sub-questions):
1. Who’s who, and how has conflict affected different groups in the area and their inter-relations?
2. How do people normally organize themselves within their communities? Who represents them and how? What forms of local governance exist and how have these been affected by conflict?
3. How representative and effective is local governance? (How does it relate to the conflict affected population, and how best to work with it?) What are the opportunities for AGENCIES and partners to work with local institutions and what opportunities exist for promoting participation?

These questions are dealt with one-by-one in the following sections.

**Conflict affected groups**

**Question 1. Who’s who, and how has conflict affected different groups?**

Conflict affects the lives and livelihoods of civilian groups directly and indirectly, and in different ways, depending on who they are and their relationship to the conflict. Unequal power relations, whether based on political or economic interests, lie at the heart of local conflict and underpin all forms of discrimination, persecution, intimidation and violence, including gender based violence. This can include relations between ethnic groups as in the case of ethnic cleansing, or resource conflicts between livelihood groups, as often occur between pastoralists and sedentary farmers, or between the newly displaced and unwelcoming local residents. Participatory processes are difficult to promote in contexts of grossly distorted power relations, without a clear understanding of how these relations play out and their implications for impartial and equitable programming.

Conflict affects trade and local economies, which generate economic interests with implications for livelihoods and humanitarian action. Local markets are connected to national and transnational market networks, which are often large-scale and sometimes illegal cross-border trading operations, for example, in weapons or natural resources. Assessing how conflict affects different groups requires first an understanding of how conflict plays out locally and how it is influenced by higher level political and economic interests. Second, it requires examining how conflict has affected different civilian groups and local power relations. The allocation of scarce economic resources, such as food aid, has implications for the local economy, including markets and livelihoods, and the political economy—meaning relations between groups, institutions and

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14 “War economies” usually refer to the illicit trade in (and often extraction of) resources ranging from coltan to diamonds to opium, usually by the military, militias or conflict “entrepreneurs” operating in organized networks. They in turn fund the war effort and livelihoods become increasingly dependent on perpetuation of the conflict. A shadow economy which is also sometimes called a parallel economy differs from the war economy in that it is not directly fuelling the conflict, but is operating within a conflict setting where there is little regulation. The coping economy is how the majority of the population is engaging in the market, even in a conflict situation, for example, trading food aid commodities, or seeking daily labor. The same actors may be engaged in all three types of economy, which are often inter-connected. For examples see Duffield (2000), Collinson (2003) and Lautze and Raven-Roberts (2006).
even, potentially, parties to the conflict, who in turn may seek to influence the targeting process to their own ends.

Conflict takes different forms, ranging from chronic low level insecurity (linked to small armed groups whose aim is to acquire wealth, assets, or control of natural, trade routes, etc.) to more politically driven conflict involving civil war or wider regional conflicts between neighboring states. The nature of conflict often changes over time, with shifts in allegiances, development of new alliances, or alternatively fragmentation of combatant groups and escalation of localized tribal conflicts. All these variations have been witnessed in the Darfur region of Sudan in the six years since the conflict first erupted.

It is helpful to distinguish at what level conflict is playing out and where the driving political and economic interests lie– locally, regionally, nationally or trans-nationally? Often a conflict is presented as a local conflict, but there are much wider political and economic interests. For example, in the Darfur region, following the partial signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement, there was an eruption of local tribal violence between different Arab groups. This was partly linked to issues of their exclusion from the wider international peace process, but was described by the government as purely local tribal conflict. Failure to distinguish different types of conflict can be both a cause and a consequence of poor targeting decisions.

All conflict has a long history, which might be seen differently depending who is narrating or describing it. An appreciation of the history behind particular grievances or other factors driving conflict and how these have evolved over time is important, but these must be considered from all perspectives. Probably all political groups use propaganda in one form or another to elicit support and sympathy. Conflict affected countries with a large diaspora often use publicity to fund-raise, or for political lobbying, and to keep combatants active in their home countries. In searching secondary sources of information it can be particularly difficult to distinguish between the propaganda that is out there, and more evidence-based information and analysis.

Re-cycling of information often gives it a false air of authority and importance, and the lesson from this is to always check the original sources of secondary information as rigorously as possible. It is vital that needs on all sides are assessed as objectively as possible, and that all potential interests and their influence on the conflict are taken into account. This may sound ambitious and unnecessary but these factors might be important in relation to undermining or upholding humanitarian principles.

**Methods for assessing different groups and how conflict has affected them**

Conflict sensitivity can contribute to improved analysis and impartial response to the wide-ranging needs of a conflict affected population. The World Bank, DFID, FEWER and USAID all see conflict analysis as a key element in their program development and have developed conflict analysis frameworks (their approaches are summarized in Section 2).

The term conflict sensitivity is preferred here to distinguish it from the conflict analysis that is undertaken for the purposes of humanitarian security. Conflict sensitivity is concerned with analysis of the peace and conflict context, in order to understand and anticipate the interaction between one’s own intervention and the context, and to avoid negative impacts and maximize
positive impacts in the actions taken (FEWER 2004). Conflict analysis, on the other hand, encompasses the analysis of actors, causes and dynamics of a conflict for a range of purposes, including securing humanitarian access, as well as identifying (possible) entry points for peaceful conflict resolution and transformation.

Various tools are available for conflict sensitivity/analysis. One recommended approach combines a simple conflict analysis as part of a livelihoods analysis, and in that way maintains the focus on the lives and livelihoods of the conflict affected population. A participatory approach that has been used successfully in Darfur, Sudan, is described in Box 5.

Useful resources for understanding local conflict include local and international media reports, human rights reporting, regular updates from international monitoring services, local situation updates, scholarly analysis and public information put out by the combatants. All sources are potentially biased politically, out-of-date, or limited in scope (geographically and in terms of groups affected). Recycling of information by multiple sources may appear to substantiate it, but unless it is backed up by new evidence it is no more reliable than the first time it was written.

National and local professionals within government, the media, universities, civil society and commerce, are among the most valuable resource people, as long as their particular bias or perspective is recognized. Often those based in the capital city are unjustifiably given more credibility than local key informants. Establishing a strong network of key informants is crucial to monitoring local political developments, but this must be based on their professional expertise and position, not on their political affiliation. The aim is understanding and analysis for the purposes of promoting community-based participation, nor for any political motive.

Box 5. Understanding Livelihoods in Conflict Settings—A Participatory Approach

This livelihoods analysis integrates an analysis of livelihoods, conflict and protection, which is then used for reviewing humanitarian programming needs. It is based on a participatory approach that can be applied locally with focus groups of key informants or in workshop settings. It has been successfully applied in Darfur. It is also an opportunity to explain and explore the application of humanitarian principles, and ensure these are embedded within program strategy from the start.

In a workshop setting, e.g. assessment training, participants, including many local professionals and experts working with INGOs, the UN and civil society, are divided into working groups each of which focuses on one livelihood group for the duration of the workshop. Livelihood groups are identified by expert local resource persons who then act as resource persons within their working groups. Through a series of tasks, each group applies the livelihoods framework to the local context, guided by facilitators, and capturing their outputs carefully on flipcharts. The framework is not presented to participants initially. Through the tasks outlined below, participants are introduced to each of its components one by one, before exploring the inter-linkages between them and the impact of conflict on each one.

Livelihood strategies are the different ways a household pursues its prioritized short, medium and long term goals. These goals are in part determined by the assets available to the household. The assets or resources available to the household may be either directly owned or otherwise accessed by the household.
• Natural: land, water, forests, (there may be rights of access to grazing land, water points, etc.)
• Physical: livestock, stores and stocks, equipment
• Financial: money, debt, credit, claims and investments
• Human: health and nutritional status, adult labor and care-providers, skills and level of education
• Social: household social networks, social institutions, social exclusion, norms, trust, values and attitudes
• Political: networks and connections with local governance institutions, armed groups, etc.

While assets influence the strategies that households are able to pursue, they are also influenced by the prevailing policies, institutions and processes (PIPs). For example, the provision of livestock health services (an institution) influences the subsequent quality and number of livestock raised, while taxation (a policy) influences the financial revenues or capital flowing back to the household following livestock sales. Hence the feedback loop is useful for understanding how the PIPs influence access to assets, and also the final value or quality of assets.

Objectives
1. Familiarize participants with the livelihoods framework through its application in a local context.
2. Identify local livelihood groups and develop a shared understanding of livelihoods for specific livelihood groups using the livelihoods framework.
3. Explore the linkages between livelihood strategies, goals, assets and PIPs. Review how conflict affects the different parts of the framework.
4. Additional objectives could be added depending on the aim of the workshop, for example, to review the protection issues associated with livelihoods in the local conflict setting and implications for food distribution.

Tasks (steps in the participatory analysis)
Livelihood working groups take each of the following questions in turn. After discussion in individual groups, participants return to plenary to review the findings of all the group, and step by step build up the livelihoods analysis. This ensures a deep understanding of the livelihoods framework, “the feedback loop,” and the way in which conflict affects all aspects of people’s livelihoods.
1. What are people currently doing to earn a livelihood? Identifies the livelihood strategies.
2. Why are they doing this? Identifies livelihood goals.
3. What do they need in order to do this? Identifies livelihood assets that the household has access to, plus identifies important policies, institutions and policies of relevance to this group.
4. How has conflict affected or influenced livelihood strategies, goals, assets and PIPs?

Key points that emerge
• The integration of conflict sensitivity as part of a livelihoods analysis enables participants to engage in the analysis without the pressure of having to undertake a more explicit political analysis (i.e. it makes it possible to discuss sensitive political issues, as the primary aim is to understand livelihoods not political matters).
• This exercise often reveals new processes, institutions and policies that have emerged as a result of conflict, which strongly influence the vulnerability of different groups and the interrelationships between them. It also illustrates how different groups might be vulnerable for different reasons.
In a conflict setting livelihood assets may also represent liabilities, and therefore ownership or access to these assets can potentially be a protection threat or risk. For example, owning valuable livestock, or carrying cash, can mean that a household/community is particularly vulnerable to attack and looting. This process of “asset-stripping” of civilians during wartime and conflict has been widely documented.

Asset-stripping may be direct—systematic attacks which are intended to destroy the livelihoods of people. For example, the tactics of driving people off their land and stealing their assets. In the process of displacement, previous livelihood strategies become impossible and people lose access to other assets such as farmland.

Alternatively, asset-stripping may be indirect—the systemic destruction of livelihoods as a result of processes, institutions and policies, many of which develop as a result of conflict. For example, the restricted access to farmland as a result of insecurity, the collapse in livestock prices, and the increased taxation of local goods.

Community self-organization

Question 2. How do people normally organize themselves within their communities, who represents them and how, and how has this changed as a result of conflict and crisis?

Giving aid has implications for the local economy, including markets and livelihoods, and the political economy—meaning relations between groups, institutions and even, potentially, parties to the conflict. There is always the possibility that groups will seek to influence the aid process to their own ends: one mechanism through which this might be possible is community-based targeting. The local dynamics of conflict determines whether or not equal representation and participation of all groups is possible through existing local institutions. On the one hand, armed conflict contributes to increased vulnerability, risk and insecurity for some, but yields economic benefits and power for others. On the other hand, poor governance hinders the professional implementation of well-targeted programs. For this reason understanding the local political economy of community-based targeting in conflict settings is important.

Making decisions on participation for programming purposes should include an analysis of governance and civil society, including for example, their relationship to the conflict and the local perceptions of their role. This is necessary to determine sources and levels of risk and vulnerability, and also the operational capacities to target food according to need. The bottom line is, are the public institutions sufficiently impartial, professional and accountable to assist in the targeting and distribution of food assistance? To answer this question, you need to know how people normally organize themselves within their communities, who represents them and how, and how this has changed as a result of conflict and crisis. Guidance on how to answer these questions is given below.

Community based activities do not occur in a vacuum—even in the most seemingly chaotic situation such as a recent displacement leaders will quickly assert themselves. Either traditional leaders will take on new roles, as interlocutors or negotiators with humanitarian agencies, or new
leaders will be appointed or will appoint themselves. Assessing the legitimacy and authority of new leaders can be challenging. They often control information and resources and act as gatekeepers to the wider community. Determining who these leaders represent and how they were appointed is crucial. Consider local actors and their institutions within the wider regional context. This requires tracing leadership structures from the bottom upwards and considering how and at what point civil and political leaders coalesce.

**Understanding community self-organization and the impact of conflict**

Participatory processes help identify changes in local leadership and governance, and how these have been affected by conflict. Examples are given below of techniques that have been applied in conflict settings. But first, always be aware of the risks that respondents might be exposed to for talking about their leadership. Where there is a possibility that leadership is predatory, it is vital not to expose people to further risk by publically discussing sensitive topics. Always follow up discretely with trusted local resource people, before going further.

- With conflict affected communities, identify and map the role and function of local leaders now and before the conflict. These discussions might be sensitive so start by exploring what used to happen in the past, and perhaps first focus on governance issues related to civil duties or livelihoods, for example, management of natural resources and land tenure, livestock marketing, transnational trade, etc. Then move on to more sensitive topics, including for example judicial or policing functions, squatters’ rights and representation, gender equality and women’s representation. In different contexts the sensitivity and salience of different topics is likely to vary, so it is important to do your homework with local key informants or even colleagues from the office, beforehand.

- Use participatory tools, for example, “chapatti” or Venn diagrams to identify different institutions and their relationship to the affected population. Use flow charts to illustrate hierarchies in power relationships, showing who relates to whom, and by what authority a leader wields power. Timelines are useful to capture key institutional changes—new ministries, acts of parliament, new leadership, over time.

- Once a picture of local leadership in the past has been developed, find out what happened to those original leaders and ask who their leaders are now, and how they were elected. It is important to find out how roles and responsibilities have changed with the evolving conflict and how leadership has shifted, or how new leadership structures, roles and responsibilities have emerged. People may not want to divulge much information or give their personal views about their leaders. Be sensitive to this, not pushy, and seek out the views of a range of respondents, including women and men, older and younger groups, recent arrivals and longer-term residents.

**Representation and local governance**

**Question 3. How representative and effective is local governance? What are the opportunities for AGENCIES and partners to work with local institutions and what opportunities exist for promoting participation? What do we mean by governance, and why is it important?**

Good governance has become central to issues of development. Governance reflects the local political and social institutions, formal and informal, and their responsiveness and accountability,
for example how well they uphold the law and defend people’s basic rights and participation. Poor governance exists where local political and social institutions are unresponsive to, or unrepresentative of their constituencies, lack accountability, fail to ensure law and order, and defend people’s basic rights.

Typical local governance functions include promoting community participation and generally upholding rights. This means that local relief committees are a form of local governance relating to the allocation of food aid. It is therefore highly likely that community-based targeting is strongly influenced by the quality of governance locally, if not already directly linked (by having the same individuals serving as local leaders present on the relief committee). Civil society generally refers to all public, not-for-profit instutions that are organized around shared interests, purposes and values, and that are apart from the government. For example NGOs, charity organisations, trade unions, religious organisations, community-based organisations, civic movements or advocacy groups.

Local governance falls within wider regional and national governance frameworks, including the higher level civil and political authorities. The civil administration is usually not part of the military, legal or religious structures of a country, and is usually concerned with the administration of public services or duties, while national and local political authorities hold the executive decision-making power. In complex emergencies, however, some of these roles overlap. Governance structures often include both a civil administration linked to a political system. In assessing local governance and their capacities for equitable food distribution, it is helpful to distinguish between their civil and political duties, currently and in the past. But as noted, these roles might be overlapping or conflicting. For example, in South Sudan, the multiple tasks of local chiefs included maintaining social cohesion, tax collection, maintaining support for the army and targeting the most vulnerable, which were not mutually supporting. In such contexts, traditional leadership structures are based on customary law, which have to somehow coexist with federal law. Where the two sets of law disagree, traditional leaders have to act autonomously from government in order to do what they consider best for the community.

In the context of international humanitarian action, there will be a new dimension of local governance linked to the provision of humanitarian assistance. The international humanitarian system is a form of governance that includes (government) donors, UN agencies, INGOs, national and local government, local NGOS and civil society. For the international system, humanitarian access to the affected population and humanitarian security are important issues which affect ways of working and the potential role of food relief committees (FRCs). It is often helpful to review relationships between the humanitarian sector and local partners. A useful tool for local stakeholder analysis is included in Section 2.

There are situations when it is unrealistic or premature to expect community-based organizations to target resources:

• Following a period of forced displacement, families have been forced to split up, and groups have become separated from their leaders
• Local communities are closely aligned to combatants and cannot avoid taxation or sharing their resources widely.
• Communities are liable to manipulation by political and predatory forces, for example where they are providing militias or self-defense units.

In such situations, humanitarian agencies may need to maintain close control and accountability of resources, and aim to develop more participatory processes in time. The first step is developing relationships, and mutual understanding. As much as humanitarian agencies wish to understand local civil society and governance, it is also important that local communities understand the principles of humanitarian action.

Methods and tools
How good is local governance, and what capacities exist within local civil society? Local governance capacities and performance provide a good indication of their potential for supporting fair, equitable and efficient food distribution. Familiarity with local civil society is also crucial where the aim is to promote community participation. Key points to consider include:

• **Attitudes towards the vulnerable.** What are the characteristics of a household or individual that is considered vulnerable? How are the “vulnerable” traditionally assisted? Do these systems still function and how have they evolved? What role does the wider community play in supporting the vulnerable?

• **Links with political leadership and legitimacy.** Do political leaders hold civil responsibilities? Often in emergencies political leaders take responsibility for humanitarian issues. While this may be necessary early on, as soon as possible civil and political roles need to be clearly demarcated where possible and ordinary civilians given responsible and accountable roles. How leaders were appointed and their relations with local people provide a good indication of their legitimacy. Also consider who people go to when they have problems or complaints. Attitudes to local leaders by government and civil society are also important to consider.

• **Representativeness and equity.** How are the views of youth, older people, women, minority groups, former combatants, etc taken into account? Are there groups that are regularly discriminated against (women, ethnic groups, minority groups, “foreigners,” those with HIV/AIDS, disabled, older people, displaced, etc.)? In Colombia, more participatory consultation tended to happen best where leaders gained the trust of communities.

• **Accountability and transparency.** How effectively do leaders communicate and through what mechanism? What can people do if they are dissatisfied or have a complaint about their leaders? To whom are local leaders accountable? How transparent are local leaders in carrying out their regular duties?

• **Gender equality.** Do women hold positions of power and influence? Are they represented in local politics or within civil administration?

Reaching conclusions
Assessments must generate conclusions and recommendations which are of direct use to program decision-makers. While targeting within communities is rarely feasible within the context of ongoing conflict, it is usually always possible to promote an element of participation and stronger engagement with community leaders and members.
Participation occurs progressively, and the process often starts with assessment. The learning and relationships developed during assessments serve as the foundations for future participation and participatory ways of working, so local involvement in assessments needs to be prioritized from the start of any program. The next section discusses means of incorporating information from assessments into program decision-making including, crucially, decisions about targeting.

**Summary**

- Assessment is the process of obtaining good information about the situation in order to be able to intervene. As such, there are many tools and methods for assessment. This section has specifically focused on assessment issues necessary for promoting community participation in food assistance programs. Many other tools exist for how to improve participation in food security assessment.
- For promoting participatory approach in complex emergencies, the key issues cluster around three questions:
  - Who’s who, and how has conflict affected different groups?
  - How do people normally organize themselves in communities, and how has this organization been affected by conflict?
  - How representative and effective is local governance?
- The following section discusses how to make use of the information generated to make programmatic decisions, including decisions about targeting.

Introduction
Response analysis is a distinct phase of the project cycle. It involves analyzing assessment results along with other secondary sources of data and identifying the range of possible technical options to address the identified needs. These options then need to be matched to a set of practical issues around resources, access and agency remit. Response analysis is a rational step between assessment and program design to help determine which set of response options is most appropriate under the given circumstances. Program design is the process of actually laying out the objectives, activities and interventions of a given program. Community participation in either is at best rare in complex emergencies.

Box 6. Representing the Views of the Community

There are many ways of representing the community and its views in response analysis and program design:
- Traditional organizations or leaders
- Administrative structures
- Distribution committees

Benefits
Community experience, knowledge and systems of leadership are valued.
A system is established through which people can be held accountable.
Communication to recipients is simplified through a few individuals.

Drawbacks
Any system of leadership can be unrepresentative and dominated by the powerful. This can lead to exclusion of minority and vulnerable groups. Elected committees can face difficulties if government officials feel that their authority is being undermined. Equal representation on committees in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, livelihood, etc. does not necessarily lead to equality in decision-making processes. Effective working relationships can only be built up through regular contact and support, which takes considerable staff time.

Enhancing community participation
Community participation can contribute positively to response analysis even though it runs the risk of raising community expectations and needs to be managed well. If community members have participated at the early warning and assessment stages of the project cycle, their involvement at the response analysis stage is likely to be more successful. It is here that the agency offering assistance can be most transparent and lay the cards on the table, explaining the identified needs and embarking on a consultation process as to the best interventions based on the agency’s remit and resources (including ability to raise resources) and access to the affected population. At the same time, it is an opportunity for select community members to voice issues of concern around the possible response options and provide a reality check of what is possible
and desirable in terms of logistics, culture and security. There is a risk in that those involved in early warning, assessment and response analysis that feeds into program design, may not be good community representatives.

**Selecting the response (What?)**

Response options for direct food assistance in complex emergencies include:\(^{15}\)

1. Blanket or targeted general food distribution (GFD)
2. Food or cash for work (FFW/CFW) or food for training (FFT)
3. Selective feeding through mother and child health clinics, schools and other institutions

Responses are not mutually exclusive, and can combine the modalities. In this way, theoretically, whilst the response options are limited, they are quite flexible. In some countries, for example, Colombia, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, the pattern seen in food interventions is to start with a general food distribution, followed by a gradual scaling down of general food rations for all to a smaller case load often with the introduction of FFW, FFT and the selective feeding modalities. In other countries, notably Sudan and Somalia GFD has continued for years where threats to food and livelihood security remain.

The type of food assistance modality selected should be based on the food security analysis and program objectives. Additional modalities would include the use of food vouchers, although this would be contingent on market and trader networks. Community empowerment through participation is rarely an objective in itself in emergency operations—it is usually more of an end to the objective of improving food assistance programs. The main food assistance options are briefly laid out below.

**General food distributions**

GFD are usually designed to meet a nutritional and food security objective. In complex emergencies, GFD is often the default modality and the emphasis is on ensuring logistical capacity to deliver the food regularly since access to the affected population and ensuring enough resources to meet needs are of prime concern. In some of the most severe complex emergencies, associated with high degrees of violence and abuse, GFD has been provided in the form of cooked food to individuals in complex emergencies as dry food rations may be diverted by more powerful people, or stolen from recipients when they carry it home.

**Means of increasing community participation in blanket GFD.** Community participation in blanket GFD can be improved through involvement in:

- The selection of geographical locations to begin the deliveries.
- The selection of geographical locations for end distribution points.
- Determining the ration composition itself.
- Selecting recipients
- Assisting in distribution
- Involvement in an appropriate time frame for an exit strategy.
- Forming Relief Committees.

\(^{15}\) For a complete review of emergency food security response options, see Maxwell et al. (2009) *Emergency Food Security Interventions.* Humanitarian Practice Network Good Practice Review Number 10. London: ODI.
• Being part of the monitoring system.

Targeted GFD results in fewer people getting a food ration and there needs to be a clear reason for doing this, even in complex emergencies. Case study evidence suggests that inadequate resources often mean that less food is available for the affected population, so geographical prioritization is needed and often communities selected for food assistance are given enough rations to cover a certain percentage of the population. The consequence of this is usually community tension, abuse of power by leaders with entitlements over food, exclusion, and redistribution of food. These consequences can be seen to be minimized through increased contact with the community, a luxury which AGENCY staff can often not afford in complex emergencies, such as Darfur and Afghanistan, when millions of people need to be assisted.

Even where the case loads are smaller, successful targeting within a community is rarely picked up by monitoring systems, and appears to create more tension, indicating that it is best to provide food for the whole community, even if this means covering a smaller geographical area. If only a percentage of the community needs food assistance, some of the other modalities that aim to reach different profiles of recipients may be more appropriate than a targeted food distribution.

**Means of increasing community participation in targeted GFD.** Community participation in targeted GFD can be improved through:

- Considering the community’s own vulnerability criteria to identify food aid recipients.
- Keeping an active data base of recipients that is managed by the community using transparent vulnerability criteria acceptable to the community.
- Reducing the food ration when resources are scarce, i.e. giving the same number of people less food, rather than reducing the number of recipients, so that communities do not need to re-target a subset of the original intended caseload.

**Food and/or Cash for work (FFW/CFW) and food for training (FFT)**

These food assistance modalities require able bodied workers who self select for specific tasks which either benefit the community or the individual involved. These modalities involve fewer amounts of food or cash payments below prevailing daily wage rates and often link with an institution or organization that can secure materials, supervise public works, provide specialized training, etc. and in the case of cash, where banking systems or financial infrastructures to support cash distributions exist. In rural communities, the community members themselves can play the roles of technical experts to supervise activities.

**Means of increasing community participation in FFW/CFW and FFT.** Community participation in FFW/CFW/FFT can be improved through:

- Consulting to see who is likely to be attracted to FFW/CFW/FFT. Do not assume it will automatically appeal to the most vulnerable.
- Consulting with the community on an appropriate mechanism for non-able bodied households to participate in FFW/CFW/FFT through other people.
- Being aware that large households will have more able bodied people available to participate in FFW/CFW/FFT than smaller households such as single headed households.
- Actively seeking out those who might be excluded from FFW/CFW activities.
• Choosing FFW/CFW and FFT projects that are meaningful to the community.
• Discussing exit strategies from the start and seeking advice on how the community will ensure those selected for the FFW/CFW and FFT project will meet their food needs once the project ends.

Selective feeding through MCH clinics, schools and other institutions
Selective feeding programs target the malnourished and nutritionally vulnerable with food aid and sometimes medical care. In acute emergencies, feeding programs are usually run by international NGOs. In more protracted crises, which may continue to see high levels of acute malnutrition this is more often done through clinics etc. School feeding is another type of targeted food distribution, and the objectives may be linked both to improving school attendance or nutrition. These are sometimes inappropriate in acute complex emergency situation settings, as they require institutional set-ups and longer time frames to coincide with the school calendar year. However, many complex emergencies can become quite protracted, necessitating these programs.

Means of increasing community participation in selective feeding programs. Community participation in selective feeding programs can be improved through:
• Consulting with the community when designing the intervention and ask for views on how long the assistance will be needed and what other mechanisms exist to meet their needs.

Selection of food assistance recipients
The food assistance modality to some extent determines the recipient profile, from the whole community through GFD to pregnant and lactating mothers in selective feeding programs. A characteristic of complex emergencies is the lack of up-to-date knowledge about the affected population: the severity of the situation may have been assessed, but most programming decisions are based on assumptions of the possible number of affected. This is often good enough in the first instance to get food assistance to those most in order to save lives. The other food assistance modalities rely on different selection criteria based on vulnerability status; more precise figures can be obtained since the case loads are generally smaller and involve a registration system, as in FFW and FFT; and nutritional vulnerability, as in selective feeding programs.

Means of increasing community participation in selecting recipients. Community participation in recipient selection can be improved through:
• Establishing whether there is really a need to select within a community rather than distribute to all members. This analysis is related to assessment findings, available resources and access and community perceptions.
• Ensuring agreement on easily identifiable selection categories with community members using community definitions of need and vulnerability that do not require complex cross checking.
• Assessing existing community institutions (see Section 3) and, if need be, establishing food/relief committees that seek out recipient and non-recipient views and feedback on the food assistance mechanisms.
• Ensuring transparent communication of the recipient selection criteria.
Ensuring the community understands their entitlements and length of time the assistance will be needed, so that they can plan.

Sharing monitoring mechanisms with community and requesting ideas from them on how to ensure the intended recipients receive food assistance.

Discussing the possible and likely sequential order of food assistance modalities from the outset with the community so that they can plan.

Understanding seasonal factors that affect food availability, access and utilization so that responses are designed with this in mind.

Agreeing on how to detect whether things are improving or worsening in terms of food security.

Identifying ways to overlap intervention modalities, e.g. GFD to be followed by what type of intervention based on what criteria.

Addressing the issue of food sharing from the beginning.

In reality, communities rarely have any involvement in funding or timing decisions. From their perspective, food ration composition and case load numbers change over time. This is why the food assistance modality is so linked to the timing of the intervention and the distribution method. In complex emergencies all of these questions should be considered and discussed with the community to choose the most appropriate distribution method to meet their immediate and seasonal needs.

Unfair distribution mechanisms can quickly exacerbate community tensions and worsen exclusion as one sector of the community suddenly has power over another. Where leadership styles are likely to be unrepresentative or predatory, agencies need to take extra care to engage and increase transparency and minimize the opportunity for such leaders to divert resources or subject distributions to their own objectives.
Box 8. Community Participation in Targeting in Colombia

A group of IDPs were preparing their return to their land of origin, after years of waiting for the government to support their return officially, and WFP was approached to provide food assistance for this group. After listening to the food assistance criteria developed by WFP with its two government counterparts, the community requested food rations for about 90 percent of the community. They excluded 10 percent from the list because they acknowledged they did not fit the criteria set by WFP, as they were not returnees (they have never left their place of origin). The community accepted the set criteria and understood the logic behind the entitlement. WFP did not have physical access to the location the returnees were travelling to, and provided food for the 90 percent on the list. Who got food was decided by the label “returnee,” a concept understood by all.

There is no way of ascertaining whether those returning were more nutritionally vulnerable than those who had stayed behind, or whether the community had agreed to redistribute the given food among themselves in a different way. However, there was a clear participative process that made it easy to identify who was eligible and who was not. WFP did not have to put in place a heavy monitoring system to check that the correct 90 percent of the community got the food. A trust relation between WFP, the community and its leaders allowed for this. This trust relationship was ascertained through direct contact with the community. Often socio-economic criteria related to assets and income sources or quality of diet are less easy to understand by all community members. Seeking out clear ways of defining eligible recipients is a successful method of simplifying targeting. However, in this case the community was cohesive enough for the set criteria to be a practical way of getting food assistance. WFP rations in Colombia are given for a maximum of three months, and this minimizes scope for community tension to be exacerbated by prolonged assistance.
### Figure 6. Benefits, Risks and Limitations of Participatory Mechanisms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Risks/Limitations</th>
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| Distribution of cooked food to individuals  | • Only way of guaranteeing access to food by the politically vulnerable.  
• Reduces risk of theft and taxation.       
• No registration or ration cards needed.   
• Overcomes problems of lack of fuel, utensils, water, and physical weakness. | • Creates population concentrations. Risk of attack and military recruitment. Also health risks associated with overcrowding.  
• High cost, because of high staff and material needs.  
• Food needs to be stored and can therefore be stolen or looted. |
| Distribution direct to households based on registration and ration cards | • Ensures that households receive food.  
• Initial control over recipient figures  
• Less risk of diversion by elders and taxation by military and administration.  
• Undermines abusive leadership.         | • Over-registration of more powerful groups, leading to unequal distribution.  
• Difficult to register mobile populations, movement is increased at times of insecurity.  
• Little recipient participation.         |
| Distribution by community-based relief committees | • Faster than distribution on the basis of registration.  
• Empowers people and makes them more responsible.  
• Create social contracts.                
• Reduces overhead costs, Can specify gender balance.  
• Enhances agency understanding of local society. | • Local representatives are under pressure to favor relatives and the more powerful, and divert to the military.  
• Local representatives may exclude outsiders, such as the displaced.  
• Agency needs to identify the politically vulnerable and ensure they are represented.  
• Time consuming to establish truly representative committees.  
• In acute crisis, traditional leadership may take over. |
| Distribution by local partners              | • Possibility of strengthening civil society.                           
• Reduces overhead costs.                  
• Access to areas inaccessible to international staff.  
• Contribute local knowledge.              | • Possibility creating large number of new NGOs.  
• May not be neutral or impartial, because of their ethnicity and political affiliation.  
• Under pressure to favor the powerful and divert to military. |
| Distribution by traditional elders           | • Distribution according to social and cultural values.                  
• Likely to be recourse mechanism for unfair distributions or if elders take more than considered acceptable.  
• Reduces overhead costs.                  | • Outsiders (e.g. displaced) and socially marginalized likely to be excluded.  
• Difficult to monitor.                    
• Under pressure to collect tax and likely to take part of food aid because of their status. |
| Distribution by local government            | • Quick and efficient if local infrastructure sufficient.  
• Fair distribution if accountable.        
• Builds local capacity.                   | • Cannot be a neutral action.  
• High cost if infrastructure needs to be reinforced.  
• Exclusion of certain groups if unaccountable.  
• Taxation if resources are scarce.  
• Government may be responsible for crisis; e.g. forced displacement. |

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16 Adapted from Jaspars (2000).
Benefits and risks of community participation in response analysis and program design in complex emergencies

While there are clear benefits of greater involvement of the community in targeting and distribution, there are also undoubtedly risks associated with community participation. These are summarized in Figure 6. Two particular risks should be highlighted beyond what has already been discussed in these Notes. These include community-led exclusion, and poorly thought-through exit strategies.

Exclusion of vulnerable groups

Powerful groups within communities, and some leaders, may exclude others from the distribution process. When relief committees are set up with members of the community who are not normally given power or voice, there is a chance that they may be at risk themselves for taking on a new social status. Functioning relief committees are an effective way of mitigating the abuse of power. Where this is an issue, rotation of relief committee members may help remove the burden of the people who have assumed this new responsibility and lessen the risk of threat, coercion and nepotism. One of the most successful strategies to mitigate exclusion is to provide food for short periods of time and re-assess them and the situation periodically. Even protracted conflicts are not stable and have periods where there is more acute need. Constant assessment of changes can help identify when to provide GFD and ensure that it is not just a default response to a complex situation. Other food assistance modalities can then be brought in with specific aims in mind. This can only be achieved through as much regular contact with the affected population as possible. The message that they have not been forgotten is often more valued than the food assistance itself. The need to phase out of the GFD mode and provide other solutions is as important as implementing GFD itself. This should be discussed with the community from the outset.

Inadequate exit strategy

Careful consideration of the timing of the interventions and the most appropriate exit strategy is needed from the start. There may be a need to admit that food assistance will not actually be a suitable solution, although it is likely that food assistance will not be declined if offered to communities. The EMOP, PRRO and budget revision tools at the disposal of AGENCY staff allow for resource allocation to match unmet need and the community needs to be aware that progress towards intended aims will be monitored and will partly dictate whether further funding will be available.

Summary

• Response analysis and program design are crucial steps in the process of delivering food assistance in complex emergencies, but only rarely does the recipient community play a significant role in determining these.

• The main decisions here involve the kind of food assistance to be made available, and the selection of the actual recipients.

• There are costs and benefits to community involvement. At a minimum, an approach to improve participation should “do no harm,” making an assessment of community institutions—as laid out in Section 4—critical.

Introduction
This section provides guidance on implementing plans for targeting and distribution and on maximizing participation to identified target groups. This includes the ways in which participation can help select recipients and ensure that the most vulnerable population groups effectively receive the planned food rations. It assumes that an assessment has already provided information on the representativeness and accountability of local governance structures, which will inform who to work with in doing the distribution itself.

Sections 4 and 5 identified three main ways of representing the community in food distribution methods: local government, traditional leadership, and newly created relief committees. Agencies have to work with these local institutions, but not all of these will be equally accountable or representative. The challenge is to know how accountable they are, and how to build on the capacity of these local structures. At the same time, in working with local institutions care needs to be taken not to compromise impartiality as any of these local structures may have positioned themselves in relation to the conflict due to their ethnicity and political affiliations.

This section covers how to work with these different institutions, setting up FRCs, introducing measures that will enhance the accountability, and participatory mechanisms for actual targeting and distribution. Finally, some examples are given of alternative targeting mechanisms if community-based targeting is not possible because of unequal power relations within the community that leads to a high risk of elite capture.

Working with impartial, capable and accountable local bodies
The role of government, civil society, and relief committees
Effective targeting and distribution systems work with the most accountable local institutions. Other criteria for the selection of distribution agents include their impartiality and capacity (see Box 9 below). Accountable local institutions may exist in some cases, but in others, they will need to be strengthened or complemented with other systems to make them more accountable. In some cases, new institutions will need to be created.

In most complex emergency situations, distribution mechanisms will involve all three forms of local governance mentioned above: local government, traditional leaders, and relief committees. Their relative roles vary according to the accountability, impartiality and capacity of each. In stable contexts, the first choice is usually to work with local government to distribute food. In conflict situations, however, government institutions may be weak, absent, or represent one side of the conflict.
Box 9. Sphere Food Aid Management Minimum Standard

**Distribution standard.** The method of distribution is responsive, transparent, equitable, and appropriate to local conditions.

**Indicator 2:** Efficient and equitable distributions are designed in consultation with local groups and partner organizations, and involve the various recipient groups.

**Indicator 4:** Recipients are informed well in advance of the quality and quantity of the food ration and the distribution plan.

**Guidance note 1:** The selection of distribution agents should be based on their impartiality, capacity, and accountability. Distribution agents might include local elders, locally elected relief committees, local or international NGOs or government.

The role of government in food distribution varies from the administration of humanitarian assistance, verifying lists of recipients and ensuring registration. In situations of internal conflict it is also necessary to have systems for independent monitoring to ensure neutrality and impartiality.

Working with local or community-based organizations has advantages in that it promotes participation. Local organizations contribute valuable local knowledge, and may be able to access areas that can not be reached by international staff. On the other hand, they are likely to be subject to political pressure to favor dominant groups or to divert food towards militias or warlords. As a general rule, it is preferable to work with emerging or existing civil institutions than to create new ones. At a minimum, agencies should aim not to undermine such emerging institutions. But there are caveats to this general rule. Community-based organizations have proved to be suitable CPs for WFP in some contexts, for example in Colombia where they are often representative of the whole community and know individual households well. In Sierra Leone, in contrast, CARE found that Village Development Committees were essentially controlled by elites who excluded the most vulnerable from distribution. Decisions on whether to work with existing local organizations for targeting and distribution needs to be based on a good understanding of how accountable and impartial they are (see Section 4).

Traditional governance may include a number of different institutions that are concerned with resource allocation, and which may have a role in food targeting and distribution. Traditional leaders are the most obvious group, but in some contexts, religious leaders are also part of traditional governance. Traditional leadership may also be divided into those with more political and military roles and those who manage the day-to-day affairs of the clan or tribe. Where accountable systems remain intact, in terms of having checks and balances within the system, there is considerable scope for working with them to ensure effective targeting. This is more likely to be the case in small rural communities than in large IDP camps. Some examples of how food targeting and distribution can build on accountable traditional governance are given in Box 10. In many conflict environments, however, existing leadership or institutions become too politicized and enmeshed in the conflict to ensure fair distribution.

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17 Archibald and Richards (2002).
**Box 10. Checks and Balances Within Traditional Governance and Targeting**

In rural populations in Somalia, traditional governance provided some measure of representation and accountability in food distribution. Clan leaders are responsible for security, conflict resolution and resource allocation within the clan. Sub-clan leaders appoint a *Gudi* (village leadership committee) during a consultative process, which is responsible for managing the day-to-day affairs of the clan. In food distribution, the *Gudi* makes an initial decision on selection of recipients, or how the distribution is done. The traditional leaders provide oversight, and women’s groups can advise. The sheikh may be consulted to resolve disputes, which is also part of his traditional role. The traditional governance system therefore provides some checks and balances.

In South Sudan, following the crisis of 1998, and the failures of relief committees WFP worked through the local leaders, in particular the lower level of leadership—*gol* leaders—who are directly responsible for resource allocation within a particular lineage group and within which there is a system of mutual claims and obligations. These leaders can also be held accountable, through the court system, whereas relief committees as an externally imposed system cannot.

The establishment of some form of food relief committee is recommended in all situations. At a minimum, such a committee can assist in disseminating information on targeting criteria, the distribution system, ration sizes, etc. and provide a forum for providing feedback on the distribution system as well. In other cases, such committees may be responsible for selecting the recipients and/or distributing the food to them. Their responsibilities will need to vary according to the accountability of existing governance mechanisms; in other words there is a greater need for involvement of an RC and AGENCY staff itself, when existing governance mechanisms are considered unaccountable.

Another reason for setting up relief committees, even though in some contexts existing institutions may be accountable, is to ensure representation in significant numbers of women, the poorest, minorities, or marginalized groups. Setting up separate committees is a way of ensuring representation from these groups. Also, as noted in Section 4, in situations of conflict, political and military roles of local administration or local leadership may over-ride functions of civil administration and thus a new institution to fulfill civil administration functions is necessary.

Most targeting and distribution methods evolve over time. In the initial stages of a crisis associated with acute conflict and displacement, working with “community” representatives to identify the most vulnerable and to prepare recipient lists is often the only option. Close monitoring will show whether this method is effective in reaching the most vulnerable, or whether the distribution is subject to diversion, manipulation, or exclusion of some groups, in which case distribution methods will need to be changed.

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18 Note that representation on committees alone is not enough to ensure women and marginalized groups are involved in decision making and included in the distribution. Close monitoring of these groups in particular is also required.
Establishment and roles of food relief committees (FRCs)

A food relief committee (FRC) is one way of promoting representation and participation in decision making around food distribution. It is also a way of establishing an institution responsible for food distribution, which is separate from the more political and security functions of other forms of leadership or governance.

Setting up food relief committees is difficult in complex emergencies, as their establishment requires good access to the conflict affected population, knowledge of local governance and how this has been affected by conflict. It therefore requires time on the ground to work with and get to know communities. Without these conditions, the establishment of a FRC should not be attempted. When the situation has stabilized to a degree, representative relief committees can be established in complex emergencies. Unrepresentative relief committees have been associated with significant diversion of food aid and exclusion of vulnerable groups. The best way to protect against these risks is to ensure some form of independent monitoring, and to introduce additional measures to improve transparency and accountability. These are discussed in the sub-sections below. When conditions are conducive, the members of FRCs may be selected to represent certain sections in the camp or geographic areas (as happened in Darfur). Alternatively, they can be elected by the population they represent, sometimes at a public gathering.

The FRC needs to be gender balanced and represent all ethnic and/or minority groups. Obstacles to this can be the traditional lower social status of women in many societies and, often, their lower levels of literacy. Similarly, since some minority or politically weaker groups are marginalized because they are excluded from decision making in traditional governance systems, they are likely to be also excluded from decision making on targeting and food distribution unless active steps are taken to ensure their participation. Behavioral or cultural change will be difficult to achieve in most contexts. This means that agencies have to ensure that marginalized groups are able to take part in “elections” of FRCs and/or monitor and consult with marginalized groups separately. This can only be done if agencies have in depth knowledge of the social and political economy of the conflict affected populations.

The FRC can play a helpful role in the management of food distribution, including:
- Informing recipients of time and date of distribution.
- Mobilizing group leaders for distribution.
- Receiving food and accounting for it.
- Providing security for the food from the time it arrives until it is distributed.

Ideally the FRC also has a role in facilitating community participation in decision making around who is most vulnerable and should therefore be first in line to receive food aid. In theory, the FRC separates its administrative function of targeting from the more political functions of traditional leadership. In more stable contexts, FRCs have been involved in:
- Setting the criteria that should be used for recipient selection (which can be based on assessments). These criteria may then be discussed in a public meeting.
• Registering recipients for the program. The list of recipients may be read out at a public meeting, so that everyone in the community has input in ensuring that only the poorest or worst affected, and all those meeting the selection criteria, are included in the program.
• Gathering feedback on the targeting and distribution method from the community, and informs the agency monitor.\textsuperscript{19}

In many cases those on the relief committee have close links to traditional leaders and some are likely to be traditional leaders themselves. As Section 4 explains, the role of these traditional leaders will likely have changed as a result of displacement and interaction with the humanitarian community and are likely to be motivated by political as well as humanitarian objectives. As discussed in more detail below, FRCs might play a greater role in targeting where the conflict is more protracted and food aid is in response to a specific natural disaster.

Experience of targeting with relief committees in complex emergencies has often been negative, as the most powerful people within the community frequently also control the relief committee. As a consequence, food aid is diverted towards more powerful groups and the most vulnerable are excluded. Additional checks and balances MUST therefore be introduced. Even a truly representative FRC alone is not sufficient to ensure that food aid reaches the most vulnerable. Checks and balances are described in the next section.

In some situations, a CBO can fulfill the same functions as a FRC. In Colombia, CBOs are often formed by communities who are informally hosted to help them access the services provided by humanitarian actors. Communities that have been able to organize themselves in this way are well represented by the CBO and this same CBO can represent the community for food distribution.

Registering those in need of food aid is one of the most effective ways of making sure that the most vulnerable receive their food entitlements. Registrations are difficult to adapt over time, however, particularly if numbers needing food aid goes down, but ration entitlements have become closely linked with IDP identity (as in Darfur). The next section discusses other ways of maximizing the possibility that the most vulnerable receive their food rations, and that minimizes diversion or inclusion errors. A couple of more unique and innovative examples of developing additional checks and balances are shown in Box 11; the use of “community animators” by CRS in Darfur, and the establishment of three separate committees in a small IDP camp in Jowhar.

Box 11. Innovative Ways of Introducing Greater Accountability in Distribution

Catholic Relief Service in Darfur has introduced “animators” who support and assist a number of FRCs. They are selected by the FRC and paid by CRS. Their role is particularly important when CRS has no access. Their role includes: acting as local food monitor; reporting any problems within the committee, e.g. internal divisions that they would not otherwise know about; record keeping; training the FRC; reporting on the movements of recipients; total food distributed per site; specific problems; and exact rations.

In a small IDP camp in Jowhar, IDPs set up three different committees with responsibilities for different aspects of the food distribution. People interviewed felt this resulted in a fair distribution system. The committees included:
- A camp committee that prepares list of all the households in the camp. This is the committee that decides everything.
- An implementation committee that helps with the distribution relief items.
- A follow up committee that monitors, makes sure there were no mistakes.

Measures to improve transparency and accountability

A number of different principles have been identified for community-based targeting and distribution. These principles are indicated in Figure 7, which also outlines types of participatory activities that ensure each of these principles is adhered to. The more acute the conflict, or the greater the inequality in power relations between groups (and therefore the potentially more predatory nature of powerful groups) the more important it becomes to try and implement as many of the activities possible. The more transparent, accountable, and impartial the system of distribution, the more likely it is that the most vulnerable receive their entitlements and that diversion is minimized. This section gives examples of how some of these activities have been carried out in complex emergencies.

Community involvement in targeting decisions

In most complex emergencies, targeting is done first on the basis of geographical area, livelihood zone, and/or “categories” such as IDPs, residents, returnees. This is appropriate, particularly in the first stages of an acute crisis, when the nature and severity of food security is to a large extent determined by belonging to one of these categories. Over time, this may no longer apply, however, and it is often necessary to adjust programs and target on the basis of food security rather than category, or focus on particularly vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities, women, urban displaced, or communities who are prevented from movement.

Figure 7. Principles of Community-Based Targeting and Distribution

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Principles</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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| **Transparency**    | Circulate information about food entitlements for targeted households or communities.  
                       | Distribute in a public place.                                                
                       | Publicly call out names of those eligible for food aid.                     |
| **Accountability**  | Involve communities in assessment and determining targeting criteria.         
                       | Include different social, ethnic, political groups on local committee or institutions responsibility for targeting and distribution.  
                       | Provide a mechanism for complaints and feedback to those responsible for making targeting decisions.  
                       | Make it possible for communities to change committee members in case of complaints.  
                       | Conduct independent monitoring during and post-distribution.                |
| **Impartality**     | Base food allocations on an objective assessment of needs.                   
                       | Assess the need of all groups, and engage all stakeholders in decision making.  
                       | Distribute food according to household size.                                 
                       | Monitor receipt of agreed rations to intended recipients.                   |
| **Gender sensitivity** | Consider women as heads of households and recipients of relief.           
                       | Ensure gender balance on local committees responsible for making targeting decisions.  
                       | Time distributions so they do not interfere with women’s other responsibilities.  |

Adapted from Jaspars et al. (1997); WFP Food and Nutrition Handbook

Even though assessments might indicate that some households are more in need of food aid than others, it is difficult to target households within a community in complex emergencies. Perceptions of vulnerability often differ between insiders and outsiders, where community representatives feel everyone is affected by conflict, and therefore everyone is considered entitled to external assistance, but outside agencies try to target on the basis of socio-economic criteria. Another key reason why community leaders do not feel able to target is because excluding certain households presents security risks for those doing the selection or for the food aid recipients.

Often community leaders identify vulnerable households and implement traditional safety net mechanisms. However, customary systems often do not apply to the distribution of external resources. Even if food aid is initially provided to a limited number of selected households, redistribution of food aid following a “targeted” distribution is therefore an inevitable feature of targeting and distribution in conflict situations. The nature of re-distribution varies, however. In South Sudan in 2008, redistribution was done to provide some assistance to families who had been excluded, and represented a community perspective. It also represents a very different view of vulnerability—one with a significantly longer time frame and a different view of reciprocity.

In Somalia, on the other hand, there was a sense that everyone was entitled to food aid but security considerations were a major reason for community leaders to redistribute food. Redistribution prevented community violence over who received and who did not receive assistance. In many cases, this significantly diminished the nutritional impact of a general food distribution, but it nevertheless represented the community’s view of what should happen with
external assistance. Where specific nutritional impact is required from the perspective of the humanitarian imperative, other methods should supplement GFD.

The challenge is to ensure that any redistribution happens in an equitable manner, that vulnerable households are not excluded, and that food aid not diverted in the process. A first step is to accept the reality of redistribution by discussing and agreeing on targeting criteria with implementing agencies, local leaders and/or relief committees, and reaching a compromise solution, even if this means that targeting is not done using the criteria determined in an assessment. Measures such as informing all stakeholders of the amount of food allocated and its purpose, and establishing complaints mechanisms can also help ensure an equitable distribution. In many complex emergency contexts, an ethos of distributing assistance to all those affected is more likely to reach the most vulnerable. Conversely, exclusion of vulnerable households is more likely if targeting to a small proportion of the population is attempted.

As for other emergency contexts, there are some situations when community-based targeting has been possible. These include:

- Where a local institution (newly established or traditional) is able to involve all groups or communities within the village.
- Where small communities governance structures are relatively intact. This was found more often in rural resident communities than in displaced communities.
- Where a process was followed whereby everyone agrees to the targeting criteria (ideally discussed in public meetings).
- Where the immediate cause of food insecurity is a natural disaster (even if the underlying cause is conflict) and not everyone is equally affected.

Annex 6 gives examples of community-based targeting in complex emergencies (see case studies on Um Labanaya in Darfur and Wath Malual in Bahr el-Ghazal). However, in each of these the immediate cause of the food insecurity something other than conflict.

Community participation also has the advantage of being able to identify pre-defined target groups, such as IDPs and returnees, particularly when the numbers are relatively small and displaced people or returnees are integrated with resident populations. Community leaders belonging to these groups will be in a better position to identify and register people belonging to their groups than implementing agencies. This can only be done, however, where relationships between hosts and IDP/returnees are good, and where displaced people or returnees still have strong and accountable leaders with them. Note the example on recent displacement from a war zone in the case study on Jebel Kujur in Annex 6.

In urban populations, there are examples where people come together as a “community” around a common task to be performed, for example as part of FFW activities. In this case, participation is not only essential to initiate FFW activities, but the activity in itself promotes a sense of community in places where community and social structures have broken down. In Colombia, FFW programs were often linked to other government initiatives such as housing schemes. More common were FFT programs were people received training on new skills in government run centers for IDPs, allowing a sense of a new beginning among recipients.
Involving all stakeholders

Public meetings involving all stakeholders are an important aspect of ensuring transparency. Public meetings can be held to discuss the objectives, the amount of food aid allocated to the villages, to elect the FRC, and to determine criteria for recipient selection. This ensures a transparent process from the beginning, which minimizes the risk of diversion of assistance or exclusion of certain groups. Once the whole process is known by everyone, it becomes more difficult for militia or other powerful groups to influence the process or for people who are not vulnerable to be included. Holding public meetings with all stakeholders needs to include not only traditional leaders (including from minority groups), but also religious leaders, women’s groups, IDPs, landlords, and in some cases militia, businessmen, MPs, other government officials, etc.

This needs a reliable and flexible food aid pipeline and delivery system, and the possibility for implementing agencies to spend sufficient time in the particular locations where distribution is due to take place. This is not always possible in complex emergencies. In insecure contexts, the risks to agency staff and the risks associated with distribution must be carefully weighed up. A process of community mobilization will reduce the risks to recipients associated with distribution, but requires more time on the ground, therefore increasing the risk to staff. It is clear that the more contact time, the more chance there is of building up a trust relationship. In Colombia, the use of mobile phones has somewhat helped replace face-to-face contact.

Providing information on entitlements

Providing information on entitlements (targeting criteria, ration timing, size, etc.) is a key strategy for improving the accountability of targeting and distribution. There are a number of ways of doing this, such as posting a notice at the distribution site with the ration entitlements, giving the relief committee the responsibility for disseminating this information in advance of the distribution. These methods are possible when there has been a registration, or at least the number of recipients is known.

Where no registration has taken place, a number of alternative solutions have been used. Providing information on entitlement for one ration card can still be useful even if this ration is later shared amongst a number of different households. This will help prevent diversion. Another alternative is to ensure that recipients know the entitlement for the whole community and to distribute this in a public space, so they can judge for themselves whether the available food has been fairly distributed.

Complaints mechanisms

Every food distribution system needs a complaints mechanism that is separate from the group or committee responsible for distribution. Relief committees can be responsible for receiving feedback on the distribution, and this is then communicated to the implementing agency. There also needs to be a more independent complaints mechanism, where complaints about the committee or certain members can be made. This is most important in systems where checks and balances do not already exist. People channel their complaints most often to their traditional leaders, who in this role would also have been responsible for settling disputes. Again, the need for a separate complaints mechanism needs to be determined on the basis of an assessment of the accountability of existing leadership, as complaints through bad leadership structures are not
successful. In more cohesive communities, complaints often result in food sharing. Other examples include:

- Providing a phone number to call on ration cards in case there are any complaints.
- Identifying independent monitors to whom recipients know they can bring complaints about the FRC or others involved in distribution.
- Where traditional leaders (chief, sheikh, or sultan) are responsible for oversight of the FRC, allow them to play a role in handling complaints. In some cases, they were also responsible for re-distribution.

Parallel lines of authority create some measure of accountability. This was the case with FRC and local leadership in Darfur, and clan leaders, the Gudi, and religious leaders in Somalia.

**Other ways to target vulnerable groups in complex emergencies**

In addition to the methods described above for ensuring that food aid effectively reaches the most vulnerable groups, there are a number of other methods that can be used when community-based targeting or distribution is really not possible. These should be used particularly in situations where food aid is insufficient to meet needs, where existing institutions are not accountable, or where the measures described above are not possible due to limited access or are otherwise not effective. There are several ways of minimizing diversion:\(^\text{20}\)

- Distributing at regular intervals, or distributing small quantities of food aid on a regular basis.
- Distributing low value foods minimize risk of theft; e.g. foods which are considered women’s or children’s foods.
- Targeting clearly identifiable groups such as children under five or malnourished children.

In addition, strategies to maximize receipt by the most vulnerable include:

- Distributing to the smallest social (or resource sharing) unit.
- Distributing directly to the malnourished.
- Distributing a less desirable food (e.g. blended foods directly to children).
- Distributing cooked food.

**Distribution of blended foods as a safety net**

Blanket supplementary feeding for children less than five years of age is one of the most effective ways of targeting particular vulnerable groups and of minimizing diversion. This is both because it involves a clearly defined target group, and because blended foods have not been subject to theft or diversion in the same way as other food commodities. In situations where diversion of general rations is widespread, blanket supplementary feeding programs for under-fives have been successfully implemented.

**Distribution of general rations to families of malnourished children**

This is one way of targeting sometimes used in more extreme situations. The criteria are clear and easily understood by everyone and are perceived to be objective. It is therefore likely to reach those who are eligible. With this type of targeting, is also less likely for the general ration give to families to be shared or diverted, as it goes directly to households and is not re-distributed by community elders. There are a number of concerns, however, about this form of targeting:

\(^{20}\) Taken from Jaspars (2000).
• This might be seen as forcing families to keep children malnourished as an extreme coping strategy to access general food rations.
• Lack of food is not the only underlying cause of malnutrition, and other underlying causes are not addressed.
• There is anecdotal information that families will share malnourished children to access general rations.
• Food insecurity is not always manifested in malnourished children. In some societies children are preferentially fed and adults (mothers) become malnourished.
• The coverage of feeding programs in dispersed rural populations is notoriously low, so ensuring that all households with malnourished children are reached will require much more capacity than agencies currently have.
• This form of targeting cannot target households without children under the age of five.

**Distribution of cooked food**
The distribution of cooked food has been done in the most extreme conflict related humanitarian crises, as the only feasible way to make sure that the politically vulnerable were included in the food distribution. This was done, for example, by the ICRC in Somalia in 1992, and by CARE in Kisangani, DRC, in 1997. It is now being used again in Mogadishu in 2008/09, as other forms of general food distribution were associated with violence. In Colombia, wet feeding was one of the modalities used in urban centers for neighborhood canteens. CBOs mainly run by women would run canteens and provide subsidized lunches to vulnerable families in their neighborhood. The urban setting allowed for pockets to be fed with little cost to the recipients. WFP targeted neighborhoods with high IDP concentrations.

**Implications for protection**
Poorly targeted or mismanaged food distributions can put recipient populations at significant risk. Targeting one community while ignoring others (on the basis of anything other than clearly articulated need for assistance!) can endanger the group selected to receive food. Likewise, targeting one group within a community—unless it is crystal clear that the needs of the group are significantly more than those other groups—can lead to violence. The exclusion of vulnerable groups will also lead to the adoption of livelihoods strategies which entail risks to safety, as well as a higher risk of malnutrition and mortality.

Food aid is sometimes used to prevent this kind of violence. However, experience tends to show that unless food assistance is transparently allocated on the basis of demonstrated need, it tends to undermine the impartiality of humanitarian assistance, raising expectations that whoever demands food will get it. Often communities have needs other than food, and these should not be ignored, even if the agency immediately involved are not directly involved in the other areas of intervention.
Summary

- This section has discussed means of involving the recipient community in the implementation of food assistance programs.
- This might be done through several mechanisms, including working through existing (traditional) leadership institutions within the community; initiating FRCs; or in some cases working through local government. The determination of which kind of institution to work through depends on location specific considerations. In some cases, local institutions may be the best; in other cases, they may be under the control of belligerent parties in the conflict, and thus be incapable of representing the views of everyone in the community. Targeting within communities is not always possible in complex emergency situations, for reasons of security and because of the social networks within communities.
- Providing information about entitlements and establishing complaints mechanisms are good ways of improving the accountability of distribution.
- When targeting has to be done, but is not possible through participatory mechanisms, it may be necessary to distribute cooked food to individuals; to distribute blended foods to under fives as a safety net; or to target families of malnourished children.
- All of these have significant implications for humanitarian protection. Adherence to humanitarian principles—particularly impartiality or the allocation of assistance solely on the basis of demonstrated human need (not some other criterion) is the best means of reducing protection risks in the medium to long term.

Monitoring and evaluation of food assistance programs is an overlooked component of participation in complex emergencies. As with other sections of these Program Guidance Notes, this section emphasizes not only community involvement in monitoring and evaluation, but also monitoring and evaluating the nature of participation. In practice, monitoring and evaluation are not necessarily separate activities. They are discussed separately here only for conceptual clarity—not because one is a totally separate activity from the other.

**Monitoring**

Monitoring a food assistance program includes monitoring the targeting system itself. In complex emergencies limited access to the affected population has led relief agencies to devise more innovative monitoring mechanisms through remote control and community-based approaches. Monitoring has shifted from a control measure to a mechanism for redesigning the project so as to improve the way it meets its intended aims. This opens up scope for more community participation and ownership of the monitoring process.

Ultimately monitoring is about ensuring that food goes where and to whom it is intended and that it has the intended impact. With regard to targeting, this can be broken down into two main aims:

- To see who is benefiting from the food allocated (detecting inclusion and exclusion errors).
- To ensure the targeting process is in line with program objectives and is appropriate to the context.

In complex emergencies where the food allocations may fall short of the affected population’s needs, there is an increased possibility for exclusions errors as the numbers targeted are restricted to meet food resources rather than vulnerability. This is the most difficult component to deal with as outsiders with limited contact time with the affected population. Simply expecting the community to implement a distribution to a specific number of people is open to much interpretation. The monitoring system should capture the reasons behind the exclusion and inclusion errors in an attempt to understand the community’s rationale and leadership systems for deciding who is eligible for food and who is not, regardless of the imposed eligibility criteria from outside.

**Monitoring targeting issues**

Monitoring is an attempt to answer the basic questions about the food assistance program: “Are the right people getting the right food at the right time to help them meet the project objectives? If not, why not and what can be done about it” The monitoring instruments most commonly used to answer the above are:

- Food basket monitoring.
- Post distribution monitoring.
Post-distribution monitoring (PDM) themes

PDM normally involves follow-up with a sample of the recipients of the food assistance program. To monitor trends, information is collected at household level on the following topics after each distribution to monitor trends:

- Household composition.
- Household food security situation and coping strategies.
- Access to food aid over last thirty days.
- Food assistance received (amount, knowledge of entitlement and awareness of set distribution days).
- Food collection system (who collects the food, how far they have to travel to reach the distribution point, how food is transported and whether it involves any cost).
- End-use of food assistance.
- Perception of the distribution process.

This information is part of process monitoring and directly feed back into program design in case there is a need to change the implementation process. These tools require access to the distribution site and recipient population. In complex emergencies this access may be limited, and it is often difficult to select a statistically representative sample for the household visits that allow results to be extrapolated beyond the households visited. In addition to the above, food assistance programs will also include impact monitoring and evaluation components. These are discussed in the next section.

Food monitors

Food monitors usually have the responsibility for applying the monitoring tools and reporting back to the implementing agency. Typical food assistance programs include agency monitors as well as monitors hired by the community. Community-based approaches require more community involvement in this process and feedback to the community itself, not only the relief agency. This means revisiting the role of the food monitor and changing the focus of the topics to be monitored so that they include the community’s interests as well. In complex emergencies where access to the affected population may be limited and sporadic, the role of community monitors (or the community animators mentioned above) may be particularly important.

Possibilities for community involvement

Community based monitoring is rare in food assistance programs in complex emergencies. There is an underlying assumption that in complex emergencies community members are being placed in a stressful situation if they are requested to monitor the distribution of the food, because they may disclose practices that are inappropriate but which, as community members themselves, they may not be able to disclose to outsiders. The question remains as to exactly how much responsibility for tracking the targeting and distribution methods should be placed on the community itself. The potential strengths and challenges of community-based monitoring are discussed in Figure 9.
Figure 9. Strengths and Challenges of Community-Based Monitoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths of community-based monitoring</th>
<th>Challenges of community-based monitoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The monitor role could be made more constructive through enhancing opportunities for dialogue and communication between stakeholders, and increasing the flexibility of CBTD processes. Monitors would then become facilitators of change, rather than “monitors” of the efficiency of CBTD from an external perspective.</td>
<td>• The monitor role is put under strain due to the necessity of bridging conflicting sets of agendas and ideologies between stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Monitoring processes have effectively picked up issues regarding the efficiency of CBTD interventions (such as the nature and extent of ration dilution and targeting efficiency, as well as changes in socio-economic dynamics.</td>
<td>• Monitoring processes have been less effective in changing and adapting the system to better meet its overall goals, and increasing accountability between key stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• CBTD field monitors are potentially a significant asset in building CBTD into an effective institution to meet changing poverty scenarios.</td>
<td>• Monitoring processes have not been effective in changing and adapting CBTD to better meet its overall goals, and increasing accountability between key stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Monitoring processes have effectively picked up issues regarding the efficiency of CBTD interventions.</td>
<td>• In relying on communal relations to achieve efficiency in targeting and distribution, CBTD does not pay sufficient attention to local social dynamics and values, with the result that it may increase underlying vulnerability in the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Groups within the community who are not usually involved in community matters, notably women, increase their participation.</td>
<td>• Some groups may control process to the exclusion of others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taken from Oxfam review of community based targeting (2007).

Means of increasing community participation in monitoring

Several things can be done to increase community participation in monitoring:

• Revisit the traditional role of the food monitor who is employed to check and control that recipient lists are correct, that food rations are the right size, that the intended recipient is the one receiving the ration during the distribution, that the recipient is able to take the ration home safely and cook and consume it.

• Ensure that the monitoring captures whether the food is being consumed by the intended recipients when the food assistance program has a nutritional and food security aims.

• Increase community participation in monitoring the food basket.

• Discuss with the community how best to detect when food is diverted or redistributed and whether this improves or worsens the intended aim of providing food assistance.

• Include community-based monitoring which includes input from non-recipients as well as recipients.
• Expand monitoring variables to address effectiveness and equity as well as efficiency (this has been done to some extent through the CFW monitoring).
• Institutionalize channels of communication and feedback between micro and macro level bodies to enable concerns raised by monitoring to translate into action and change.
• Get FRCs to take a greater role in management through appropriate capacity building activities.

Well known participatory assessment tools and techniques such as focus group discussions, role plays, transect walks, etc. can be used for monitoring as well. There is no need to limit monitoring to form-filling.

**Evaluation**

Evaluation includes assessing the effectiveness, timeliness, relevance and impact of an intervention. The regular monitoring information discussed in the previous section should form the basis of any evaluation. In this section, we are concerned both with participatory evaluation methods for food aid targeting, and with evaluating participation in targeting.

**Participatory ways of evaluating food aid targeting**

In terms of process, the objectives of evaluation are the same as those for monitoring: to determine inclusion and exclusion errors, and whether people are getting their food at the right time in the right quantities according to program objectives. *Effectiveness* considers whether the project is in line with local needs, and therefore whether program design and objectives are based on assessments of need. In terms of *impact*, an evaluation should consider not only impact on nutrition and food security, but also its social, political and security impacts.

Interviews with food aid recipients and those who were excluded from distribution (non-recipients) should form a key part of any evaluation. It is important to ensure that interviews include marginalized or minority groups. Interviews should also be conducted with others who are either directly involved in, or who influence, targeting; for example, traditional leaders, local authorities, relief committees.

**Key questions**

Key questions to ask recipients and non-recipients on targeting are about perceptions of vulnerability, whether the right people were targeted, and about re-distribution—essentially process questions around inclusion and exclusion error. Key questions around participation in targeting include the involvement of populations in the different parts of the project cycle—assessment, project design, including targeting criteria, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

Key questions on inclusion and exclusion error might include:

• Who do you think was most vulnerable to food insecurity/conflict?
• Do you think there were obvious differences between those who received food aid and who did not? Or recipients could be asked why they thought they were selected, but others not, and if there are others in a similar situation who were not selected.
• Do you think there were any families who were vulnerable or in need of food aid who were excluded? Why do you think this was? Are there any people who received more than others?

On re-distribution, the following key questions might be relevant:
• How have you used the food aid? Did you share any food aid with others? How was this organized? With whom did you share food aid? How much did you give away?
• Does anything else happen that takes food away from you after receiving it (theft, diversion, taxation, etc.)? Who and why? What do you do about it? What could you do about it?

Impact
Assessing impact should cover whether the project has met its stated objectives. In terms of food aid targeting, these are usually nutritional or food security objectives. As determining nutritional impact is difficult in any circumstance (as food insecurity is not the only underlying cause of malnutrition), one easy way of determining nutritional impact is by asking about consumption, or use of food aid. Food security impact can range from simply increasing food availability in the household, to increasing income as it does not have to be spent on food (which can in turn be invested in livelihoods), to increasing the price of livestock (because smaller numbers are sold), or increasing people’s bargaining power for wage labor. Assessing impact against stated objective in the project document is one way of assessing impact, but way is to ask people themselves what they would expect the impact of a project to be. A key tool for this is a new guide on *Participatory Impact Assessments: A Guide for Practitioners* (Catley et al. 2008). This method asks project participants what changes in their lives they expect to occur, or have occurred, as a direct result of the project.

In conflict situations, it is also important to look at the wider social, political and security impact. If unrepresentative or unaccountable institutions are involved in—or in control of—food aid targeting, there is a danger that this can feed into and reinforce unequal power relations. It is important to assess these relations as part of an evaluation. This can be done using some of the same conflict analysis tools described in Section 4.

Food aid targeting can both reduce or increase tensions within or between communities, and thus affect risk of violence and protection. This is often the case in situations where amounts of food aid to be targeted are small and needs are high. In such instances too, if vulnerable people are excluded they may face protection risks, by having to undertake livelihood strategies that entail risks to their personal safety. The distribution itself is also sometimes associated with violence. If women in particular were targeted, the impact on their safety should also be investigated.

Questions to ask regarding social impact and impact on protection might include:
• What was the impact of targeting on security? What measures were taken to minimize these risks (by the agency and by the community)?
• How did the targeting affect relations between different communities and within communities?
• *Recipients:* Were there any risks associated with being a recipient when others in the same community were not included?
• **Non-recipients**: During the period of food distribution, how did you meet your food needs? What were some of the risks associated with these strategies (risks to livelihoods as well as personal safety)?

**Means of assessing participation in targeting**

Assessing participation in targeting is essentially about examining the methods that were used in targeting and distribution and how appropriate, relevant and effective they were. The previous sections show how the effectiveness of participation largely depends on the representativeness, accountability and transparency of selection of a relief committee or distribution agent. This in turn may depend on how conflict has affected governance in the population in question. Evaluating the effectiveness and impact of participation therefore requires and analysis of governance, as described in Section 5, to determine whether participation of the particular institution chosen for distribution—whether traditional leaders, relief committee or others—was the most accountable institution possible in that context. It is important not only to interview recipients and non-recipients, but also the key institutions involved in food targeting and distribution about their roles and responsibilities and how these have changed.

General questions for recipients and non-recipients might include whether they were involved in determining their needs, and in selecting households to receive food aid. Questions should also cover how they relate to the “distribution agent.” So for example:

• How was the committee selected? How were you involved in the selection?
• Do you feel adequately represented? If not, how could you be better represented?
• Within the committee, who do you think has the most influence on decision making?
• What are the complaints mechanisms about the functioning of the relief committee?

It is also important to check about other accountability mechanisms, such as how people were informed of their entitlements and about the actual way that the targeting and distribution was going to be done.

**Summary**

• One of the objectives of monitoring and evaluation is to determine inclusion and exclusion errors, and whether people are getting their food at the right time in the right quantities according to program objectives.
• Monitoring usually includes food basket monitoring and post-distribution monitoring. Evaluation is typically more concerned with the impact of food assistance. In this context, it is also necessary to monitor the extent and quality of participation in the food assistance program.
• To improve community involvement in monitoring, it may be important to reconsider the traditional role of food aid monitors—contrasting this role with that of animators, discussed in Section 5.
• It is important to involve the recipient community in the discussion about diversion and redistribution—and the extent to which this alters or impacts the objectives of the food assistance program. Involving FRCs more directly can improve monitoring.
• Many good tools have been developed for participatory impact assessment. These are described in Section 2.