



Food and Agriculture Organization

**Guide for Joint Disaster Rapid Needs Assessment Survey Mission
Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihoods**

Hanoi - 2012

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1. Introduction

Vietnam due to its geographical location and characteristics is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. According to the Standing Office of Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control, in the decade from 2001 to 2010, disasters caused average economic loss equivalent to 1 - 1.2% of the country's GDP. Recent assessment projects that Vietnam will be one of the most affected countries by the climate change.

The government of Vietnam has recognized the need to mitigate the disaster risk including risks associated with the climate change. The Government has approved strategies and target programmes to address disaster risk management and climate change adaptation including the National Strategy for Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020, the National Target Program for Response to Climate Change, and the Action Plan Framework for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Agriculture and Rural Development Sector for the period 2008-2020.

Though the focus is shifting towards disaster risk management, emergency response can not be completely ignored due to the fact that Vietnam faces numerous natural disasters every year, ranging from floods and storms to earthquakes, droughts and other type of disasters. Immediate response and relief measures are needed to protect the lives and livelihoods. In order to make a plan for relief activities, the key point is to know what affected households need to maintain and rehabilitate their lives.

Thus, needs assessment plays an important role in responding to damages caused by natural disasters. A complete needs assessment assures that relief items will be sent properly. Many efforts have been taken to provide recommendations to improve the effectiveness of immediate responses as well as other mitigation efforts. However, still there are major concerns relating to disaster response:

- Difficulties of targeting disaster effected communities and households due to lack of detailed information;
- Co-ordination between agencies in assessing needs, communication and distribution of relief. Typical questions often raised are: “Who does what and where?”, “Who else is doing what in this locality?” and “How much money others are spending in a particular community?”;

The lack of interactions between agencies and government departments about the target communities by government, donors and other institutions creat ineffective way of responding to the natural disasters. The detailed information about the needs are crucial as recovery and rehabilitation and reconstruction begins soon after the emergency phase has ended, and should be based on pre-existing strategies and policies that facilitate clear institutional responsibilities for recovery action and enable public participation. Recovery programs, coupled with the heightened public awareness and engagement after a disaster, afford a valuable opportunity to develop and implement disaster risk reduction measures and to apply the “build back better” principle.

1.1. Objectives of rapid needs assessment in emergencies

- To provide supplementary information for rapid disaster response in agriculture and food security sector that clarifies, amplifies, and complements existing sources.
- To reduce the burden of multiple situation assessments on disaster-affected communities by UN agencies, Government institutions and donor agencies.
- To increase coordination and experience sharing between disaster management actors at all levels.
- To provide a comprehensive picture of the disaster situation in order to improve advocacy for appropriate donor, government, community, and agency response.

1.2. Scope of rapid needs assessment in the agriculture sector during emergencies

When disaster event occurs, within 72-120 hours, the inter-agency assessment will only focus on immediate response and early recovery needs. Drawing on lessons learned and on-going efforts of different agencies in disaster preparedness, the inter-agency assessment may expand its coverage, wherever possible, to gain information on vulnerability of communities to natural disasters and ability to cope with. This information will also serve for long-term disaster risk reduction efforts, which become an increasing interest by the donor and NGOs community.

1.3. Approach

The assessment is to be consistent with SPHERE standards, and will be conducted based on the principles of the Humanitarian Charter. This means that the Coordinating Agency (see below) and other participating agencies have certain responsibilities as defined by the document.

In order to take into account certain cross-cutting issues (e.g. children, gender, disability, HIV/AIDS etc.), the data should be collected, reported, and analysed in a way which is consistent with inclusiveness and highlights the specific needs of vulnerable groups.

The assessment in agriculture should cover needs related to immediate livelihood activities apart from assessing food demand of affected people. The assessment should take into consideration of the crop seeds and its accessibility for the local communities immediately after the disasters so that communities can re-start their livelihood activities in agriculture sector..

1.4. The Coordinating Agency

The coordinating agency for agriculture sector will be nominated by the Disaster Management Working Groups (DMWG) and will be confirmed by the participating agencies. This coordinating agency may perform sectoral or responsible for overall multi-sectoral coordination. The responsibilities of the coordinating agency in agriculture (if applicable) will be:

- Coordinating of trainings in agriculture and food and nutrition security as needed, but at least one time per year, on the JA checklists and process for members of the DMWG.
- Chairing meetings as needed (sectoral if applicable), but at least two times per year, to evaluate the progress of the JA mechanism and checklists.
- Maintaining up-to-date contact information for participating agencies and maintaining contacts with Vietnamese disaster management authorities and organizations (working specifically in agriculture sector).
- Keeping an up-to-date list of the human and logistical resources of participating agencies.
- Contacting agencies and calling a meeting in the event of an emergency/disaster.
- Coordinating, in cooperation with the Team Leader, the JA process.
- Disseminating the JA report, and coordinating a joint call for donor assistance as appropriate.

2. Joint needs assessment procedure (Agriculture, food and nutrition security)

The key questions to be kept in mind during the needs assessment.

Who should be responsible for emergency response? All individuals, households, social organisations (Fatherland Front, Red Cross, Youth Union, Women Union, etc...), agencies (Army, Public security, CCFSC, National Committee for Search and Rescue, CFSC at all levels, etc...) and local community and their roles and responsibilities should be clearly understood by the team member. In addition, knowledge about support of international and national organisations as well as non-governmental agencies is crucial.

When we should undertake the emergency response activities? Emergency response must be undertaken during or immediately in the aftermath of serious disasters, when normal functioning mechanism and daily routine of the community are disrupted and/or devastated by disaster impact. When lives of people are in danger or threatened. When basic infrastructure and livelihood are damaged or destroyed while access to water, food, health service and other essential necessities are limited or unable.

Who and/or which groups should be prioritized? The priority has to be given to the hardest hit population when disaster occurs, consisting of the most vulnerable groups including children, the elderly, the disabilities, pregnant women etc. *A set of vulnerability criteria should be agreed and elaborated before the needs assessment mission and made known to all members of the mission.*

How is the coordination regulated? Coordination mechanism in emergency response was regulated in detail in Chapter V, Decree No 14/2010/ND-CP dated 27 February, 2010 of the government which specifies the assignment, decentralisation of all levels, sectors (*For more details see the Part IV, Item 1: Coordination mechanisms*).

Should we do damage assessment and relief need? Damage assessment and relief needs are of great significance that determine whether response activities are effective. Usually initial rapid assessment and collected information on destruction and disaster scale are main factors to consider if greater support from national and international communities is needed. It is such aid that creates better foundation for emergency response activities. The damage and loss assessment may be combined with needs assessment whenever possible.

Which response activities should we prioritize? First priorities are given to people search and rescue, then followed by rescuing agriculture and fishery infrastructure and then protection of structures for national security including flood and storm control structures such as dykes, reservoirs, etc.

What are the main sub-sectors in agriculture that we should respond in? The sub-sectors in agriculture are crop agriculture, livestock, fishery and forestry. Priorities are given to the main sub-sectors and food/nutrition. It is important to note that water and sanitation, health, infrastructure, and rural development, emergency shelter sites, logistics, education, protection, etc. are the other sectors in addition to agriculture sub-sectors.

How to balance the needs against existing capacities? Lessons learned from reality and worldwide experiences in responding to disasters often have shown that existing capacities (in initial phase right after disaster impact and can extend to reconstruction and recovery phase in particular circumstances) are not sufficient to cope with disaster’s devastation and damage.

Therefore, in case of severe disasters, in addition to national organisations, international humanitarian aid can provide particularly essential additional resources to diversify the assistance in both material and non-material form. The aids such as funding, human resources, rescue teams, response teams in emergencies, equipment including airplane,

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vehicles, machineries, mobile water purification machine, buoys, life jackets, canoes for relief and rescue, etc...), communications systems, project development software, essential food, water and sanitation etc, can take immediate effect and reduce the scale of devastation as well as losses caused by disaster.

While conducting needs assessment, long term solutions and investment for sustainable risk reduction and disaster preparedness should also be considered for more effective management of future hazard risks. Nevertheless, the implementation of short term humanitarian relief measures are still considered necessary as it is impossible to anticipate all potential scenarios of disaster.

What should be done in initial response? Initial response is closely related to early warning, life saving and search and rescue activities. Evacuation of population from danger areas to safe zones that is the most important initial response activity includes evacuating timely and to right people living in the mainland; instructing boats/ships working at sea to quickly leave the dangerous zone prone to storm, tropical depression to safe shelters. In the post disaster situation, especially in agriculture the needs assessment is about revitalizing the livelihood activities that have been lost during the disasters. **Procedure for joint needs assessment in agriculture sector**

The step-by-step procedure for joint needs assessment in agriculture sector is given below:

1. When a disaster occurs, the Coordinating Agency (CA) will be notified either by the Vietnamese authorities or by one of the participating agencies. In the event that a participating agency is aware of an emergency/disaster, that agency will communicate the available information to the coordinating agency as soon as possible, within a maximum of 12 hours. The agriculture sectoral focal point should maintain a established line of communication from the National sectoral focal points.
2. The Coordinating Agency will call a meeting of participating agencies within a maximum 24 hours of receiving information of a disaster. The coordinating agency CA will send an e-mail to the participating agencies, followed immediately by phone contacts with the designated contact persons.
3. In the hours before the meeting, the CA and participating agencies, particularly those with contacts in the disaster-affected area, should attempt to gain as much preliminary information as possible about the nature, scale, and damage of the disaster. It would be very helpful to have all these data if a comprehensive baseline data is available beforehand. Participating agency representing agriculture and food security sector should also make necessary preparations to ensure that the relevant human and/or logistical resources are informed of the situation and ready to be mobilized in the event that a JA is launched.
4. During the meeting, the CA will present a summary of the available information on the emergency/disaster, with input as possible from other agencies. Thereafter a decision will be made as to whether to send a JA team. The decision should be based on the following criteria:
 - The emergency/disaster has occurred in a location where at least one of the participating agencies has permission to operate; or there has been a call for international assistance by the Vietnamese Authorities. Sectoral nature of the assistance should be discussed and agriculture and food security focal point should clarify the requirements based on its discussions with the Government focal agency.
 - The emergency/disaster appears beyond the coping capacity of the local community and authorities.
 - The emergency/disaster presents the risk of significant loss of life, injury, or disruption to the livelihood of the affected communities. The agriculture and food security aspect should look into the detailed impact on the subsectors.

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- The situation would not, and is not expected to, jeopardize the safety of the assessment team.

These criteria are meant as guidelines – decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

5. In the event that a decision is taken not to launch a joint assessment, the reasons for the decision and any follow-up steps and/or monitoring will be recorded and communicated to all participating agencies.

6. In the event that a decision is taken to launch a joint assessment, the meeting will appoint a Team Leader and team members. The joint assessment team should depart as rapidly as possible, but within a maximum 24 hours of the decision to launch the Joint Assessment, subject to the approval of local authorities.

In addition, the coordinating agency and participating agencies will identify what logistical support is needed and who will contribute it. The coordinating agency or the organization with permission to operate in the disaster-affected area should also contact the appropriate local authorities to make the necessary arrangements for the assessment team.

Depending on the scale and complexity of the disaster, it is expected that teams will range from around 6 members. Team members will be chosen based on the following criteria:

- a. Trained in the JA process (required)
- b. Experience with the relevant type of disaster (preferred)
- c. Knowledge of the disaster-affected area (preferred)
- d. Possesses sectoral (including sub-sectors) expertise which complements other team members (preferred)
- e. Has previously participated in a Joint Assessment (JA) mission (preferred)

These criteria are designed to ensure the quality of the assessment, while providing opportunities for the staff of all participating agencies to gain experience. Wherever possible, at least 1 member of the team should be from an organization with permission to operate in the disaster affected area. Both men and women will be members of all teams, and men and women will be given equal opportunities to participate.

The criteria for selecting the Team Leader are the same as those above, with the difference that preference will be given to those who have already participated in a JA mission.

7. The assessment process itself should not take more than 120 hours (5 days). The Team Leader is responsible for the assessment results, and efforts should be made to gather all of the information contained in the rapid assessment tools. The Team Leader will determine the most appropriate delegation of the team’s human resources in order to maximize the relevance and quality of information gathered. The Team leader is also responsible for withdrawing the team if she/he feels that conditions do not guarantee the safety of the team.

8. The Team Leader is responsible for transmitting the information collected to the CA. A provisional report, approved by the Team Leader, should be made available to all participating agencies, as well as other disaster management actors (including Vietnamese authorities as appropriate) within 24 hours of the completion of the assessment. This report should contain both details of the disaster as well as recommendations on the appropriate courses of action.

9. Following the report, the members of the DMWG will meet as is customary to coordinate their response.

Annex I. Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihood Checklist for assessment in emergencies (Rapid)

I. Basic details (where, when and what and who)

Villages/Commune	District	Province	Date/
Type of disaster and on-going insecurities	Information collected by	Source of information	Contact details of source

	Men	Women		Children		
		Pregnant	Others	< 6 months	6 months – 5 years	5-16 year
<i>Total population of the commune</i>						
<i>Number of people affected</i>						

II. Needs related to food availability, access, utilization etc.,

1. How many people need food support? For how long?
2. How much food does family still have in stock?
3. Are there household members with less access to food than others? Why?
4. What are the main foods normally consumed in this area? Describe the typical dietary pattern and frequency of consumption of the main foods.
5. Which groups (livelihood, ethnic, sex, or age) are the most at risk of losing their access to food?
6. Are there gender differences in food access strategies and their success and/or sustainability?
7. How has normal food availability been affected by disaster?
8. What (if any) is the scale of food aid needed?
9. How has the normal market system for food changed now?
10. List the current (note date and location) and 'normal' prices of each major food source? Establish how to access market prices on a monthly basis?
11. What are the critical terms of trade for food for the affected population? (How do they measure how expensive their food is, i.e. price of their main staple food, e.g. grain, compared to sale-price of their main source of cash, e.g. livestock. (e.g. 1 cow buys only 100kg wheat now compared to 300kg this time last year)
12. How did each livelihood group access food prior to the crisis? (men, women)
13. Identify groups/households by the most important means by which they access food, e.g. pastoralists, commercial/subsistence farmers, fishermen etc.? (men, women)
14. Is there any communal relief food stock available in the commune? If yes how much stock? whom and how it can be distributed to?
15. What are the options for implementing food aid, in terms of food supply and management of the distributions?
16. Which groups and individuals are more/most and less/least affected?
17. How much do households expect to harvest from the affected crop?
18. What adaptations have been adopted to cope with limited food availability? Are there any short-term jobs instead? (men, women) Do people have to reduce no. of meals per day?

III. Needs related to livelihood security

19. What are the main livelihood groups (or income groups, wealth groups) in the affected area? (men, women)
20. How many people need livelihood support? (men, women)
21. How are people prepared for necessary inputs after the disasters (seeds, fertilizers and other inputs)
22. If not prepared, how easy is their access to the inputs (Are the crops seeds supplied by breeding centers, businesses or cooperatives?)
23. How many households requiring supports for crop seeds, fertilizers and other inputs after the disasters?
24. How has the purchasing power of the affected groups (i.e. their cash available for buying food) changed, and why? (include effects of e.g. unemployment, inflation).

IV. Needs related to nutritional security

25. Has the typical dietary pattern changed? How? How is food normally prepared and cooked? How has this been affected by the current situation? Are cooking utensils available in households?
26. What are the infant feeding practices amongst affected communities? (include here details of breast-feeding, weaning practices, food taboos.)
27. What information on the current nutritional situation exists? (e.g. recent nutritional surveys, nutritional surveillance data, food security and early warning information.) Quote directly the summary data, and append or send the data.
28. What information exists on the nutritional situation in the area prior to the current crisis? Were there any existing nutritional problems, which may have worsened in the current situation (such as endemic micronutrient deficiencies and possible causes, stunting, seasonal fluctuations in acute nutritional status)? (NOTE: Much of this information can be obtained away from the scene, like at the country office or via the Web; so assessment time on the scene can be economised by getting this information before or after.)

V. Institutional assessment

29. What formal and informal local structures are currently in place through which potential interventions could be channelled?
30. What is already being done to address the current situation? By whom, with what funding? How frequently? Where? Why (i.e. are there any identifiable agendas aside from humanitarian relief)?
31. What nutrition interventions were already in place (before the current emergency) organised by local communities, individuals, NGOs, government organisations, INGOs, UN, religious organisations etc.? Include details of nutrition policy, past, ongoing and lapsed, and planned long-term nutrition interventions, and programmes which are being implemented/planned in response to the current situation.
32. Children and pregnant or lactating women are especially vulnerable to malnutrition. Have nutrition assessments to date focussed on these groups? Are existing food aid programmes targeting these groups for supplementary rations or other special treatment?
33. Other remarks

INFORMATION SOURCES/

Observation/

Interviews & PRA with members and leaders of the affected population (especially women & children)

Local government offices, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture

UN representatives, NGOs and other agencies

Maps/aerial photographs.

References

1. National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020;
2. Implementation plan of National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020;
3. Flood and Storm Control activities for the period 2000-2010 Final Report of Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control;
4. National Target Program to Respond to Climate Change;
5. Action Plan Framework for Adaptation to Climate Change in the Agriculture and Rural Development Sector for the period 2008-2020;
6. Documents on Post-disaster Loss and Needs Rapid Assessment - Disaster Management Working Group (DMWG);
7. Guiding document used to Post-disaster Coordinate Response and Eecoverly – SCDM project funded by UNDP;
8. During Flood and Storm Needs Assessment– Document used to Vietnam Redcross.