

Assessment Types

Assessment Classification

One common humanitarian classification is the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) emergency phases. Each phase has its own particularities and priorities that prompt assessments to look for different answers and use different dedicated tools.

Note that in emergency situations, processes are intentionally shortened to speed up and facilitate immediate response. Assessments done during the recovery phase or in the development project may have other timelines, thoroughness and use other tools.

Initial

An initial assessment is the one performed in the first hours following a disaster, usually within the first 72 hours. The intention of an initial assessment provides a quick overview of the situation in a moment when there are more questions than answers. An initial assessment should not be confused with a detailed situation report, but only regarded as a highlight of the main facts and gaps in the information.

Initial Emergency Assessment:

Purpose	Time	Access to information sources	Typical information sources	Importance of assumptions	Type of assessment team
First impact evaluation of the crisis.	Within the first 72 hours .	Very Limited: Movements are usually restricted and communications not always functioning.	Relies on previous networking, coordination groups and official sources if any.	Very High: Few things are confirmed, assumptions must be made based on previous experience	Preferably a representative with experience in emergencies.

Adapted from IFRC, [Guidelines for assessment in emergencies](#) & IASC, *Classification of emergency phase*.

Rapid

Guided by the initial assessment and incorporating the new developments, rapid assessments are generally produced within the first two weeks of the emergency. Rapid assessments provide information about the needs, possible intervention strategies and resource requirements. They also comprise situational, resource, and needs assessment in the early, critical stage of a disaster and are intended to determine the type of immediate relief response needed. This assessment can be conducted internally or, as a component of a general assessment format (i.e. [Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment \(MIRA\)](#)) as a coordinated effort among different partners.

Rapid assessments aim to identify:

- The impact a disaster has had on a society and its infrastructure, and the ability of that society to cope with changes.
- The most vulnerable segments of the population that might need to be targeted for assistance.
- The level of response by the affected country, its internal capacity to cope with the situation, and the level of response from the international community.
- The most urgent relief needs and potential methods of meeting them most effectively.
- Coordination mechanisms.
- Significant political, cultural, and logistical constraints.

Rapid assessments also seek to:

- Make recommendations which define and set priorities for actions and resources needed for immediate response.
- Highlight special concerns regarding the development of the situation.
- Draw attention to geographical areas/substantive sectors needing in-depth assessment.

Rapid Assessment:

Purpose	Time	Access to information sources	Typical information sources	Importance of assumptions	Type of assessment team
Immediate response / lifesaving activities.	Maximum two weeks after the crisis.	Limited: Security and/or safety can limit movement and access to people as well.	Secondary information, local services (health, water, etc.), NGOs, government, affected population/ household visits, partners and close providers.	High: Insufficient time to verify all the information. Situation is still volatile.	Experienced generalist, with previous exposure to emergencies.

Adapted from IFRC, [Guidelines for assessment in emergencies](#) & IASC, *Classification of emergency phase*.

In-Depth

An in-depth assessment should be conducted following the initial and rapid assessment only where information gaps have been identified, where further information is needed to inform programme decision-making, and to measure programme outcomes or for advocacy purposes. Initial and rapid assessments provide the basis for subsequent in-depth assessments that deepen (but do not repeat) earlier assessment findings. During an in-depth assessment, it is important to focus on the situational changes before and after the disaster.

Each in-depth assessment will be unique, taking into account the individual circumstances and relevant factors, the identified gaps and the actual information needs of the organisation. Please reference the [Logistics Assessment](#) section of this guide for logistics related information.

In-Depth Assessment:

Purpose	Time	Access to information sources	Typical information sources	Importance of assumptions	Type of assessment team
Medium term operational plan.	Less than one month after the crisis and/or each time is considered needed.	Commonly Accessible: Possibility to visit enough locations and interview a full range of informants.	Secondary information, and primary information gathered through a full range of informants.	Low: Sufficient time to interview full range of informants. Coordination with partners is mandatory to avoid duplication and ensure the reliability of the data collected.	Generalist, possibly supported by specialists.

Adapted from IFRC, [Guidelines for assessment in emergencies](#) & IASC, *Classification of emergency phase*.

Continual

It is important to continue different assessments as needed. Continual assessment involves regularly updating information on the situation and seeking relevant feedback from the beneficiaries in order to facilitate decision-making on long-term activities. Effective continual assessments help to spot changes when they occur.

Continual Assessment:

Purpose	Time	Access to information sources	Typical information sources	Importance of assumptions	Type of assessment team
Evaluations, monitoring and research.	Information collected regularly throughout the operational period.	Full normal access.	Primary and secondary information gathered through selected informants, based on indicators, with a standardised and planned exercise generally conducted by the organisation's staff.	Medium: Assumptions based on indicators and informants, but these can be verified from other sources.	Organisation staff during the normal activities development.

Adapted from IFRC, [Guidelines for assessment in emergencies](#) & IASC, *Classification of emergency phase*.

Information Gathering Methods

A standard methodology to collect the data and/or manage the information obtained through the assessment is not only encouraged, an assessment won't work without standard inputs. Deciding what information is needed and how the data will be collected is crucial to achieving the assessment objectives. Indicators should be selected not on the basis of the organisation's interests and capabilities but on the basis of needs on the ground in order to design the most appropriate intervention.

Data can be qualitative or quantitative - both are needed, but the way they are collected differs. While gathering quantitative numbers and statistics is easier and provides figures that build assumptions, qualitative data requires a deeper understanding of the context, time to get find the appropriate sources, and staff trained to extract and analyse the information.

Data collection methods:

Direct Observation	Direct observation is useful for cross-checking formal and informal information or reports. Informal discussions are usually the most straightforward approach to assessing infrastructure and logistics.
Surveys	A survey is a series of standard questions asked of a predefined group of respondents drawn from a representative sample of the population. Surveys usually involve questionnaires that could include quantitative or qualitative questions and can be carried out remotely through the internet or phone. It is important to carefully design the questions and sampling method with the goal of seeking reality and not just confirm the organisations' assumptions.
Interviews	Interviews are a powerful tool, however good judgement will be needed to decide what sort of information the informant can usefully provide. It is crucial to select the key informants who have specific knowledge about one topic and determine the best approach to address them. While individual interviews represent the quickest way to obtain technical information and allow individuals to talk about sensitive issues, group interviews promote interaction among people by encouraging an atmosphere of constructive debate.