Assessing Health Needs

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Section A

What Are Assessments?
Purpose of Assessments

- To identify what people’s needs are
- To define baseline status for future comparison
- To determine what changes have occurred as a result of the program
- To identify program weaknesses or gaps
Rapid Assessments

- Similar to planning other health activities
- Pace is accelerated in the emergency
- Needs are often more urgent
  - May differ from those before flight
Rapid Assessments

- Selecting priorities may be difficult
  - Consider consequences of inaction
- Identify critical needs, then repeat assessment week later for less urgent needs
Assessment Checklists

- Many checklists exist
  - For example, OFDA’s *Field Officer’s Guide* (FOG) download at www.info.usaid.gov
- Need to understand how they are used
- Are not a substitute for understanding the environment
Possible Assessment Questions

- Why have things happened?
  - How did things get the way they are now?

- What is likely to happen next?
  - Are people ready to go home?
  - Are more people coming?
  - Is cholera likely to break out?
  - Are there any possible outbreaks of hostility?
Possible Assessment Questions

- What is the situation in the host country?
  - What are the common local diseases?
  - What kind of support is available?
  - Is the host population compatible?
  - How will things develop?
Basic Planning Cycle

- Not unique to refugee situations
- Provides a basic approach to address needs that have been identified
Basic Planning Cycle: Step 1

Assessment

Gather data needed to design programs
Basic Planning Cycle: Step 2

Identify Problems

Determine what are the major problems
Basic Planning Cycle: Step 3

What are the most critical problems? Consequences of not addressing them?

Set Priorities
Basic Planning Cycle: Step 4

Are there other ways of dealing with problems?

Consider Alternatives
Basic Planning Cycle: Step 5

Choose Solutions

Example: CHW program, expand local services
Basic Planning Cycle: Step 6

Take Action

Implement Program
Basic Planning Cycle

Assessment

Identify Problems

Set Priorities

Consider Alternatives

Choose Solutions

Take Action
Section B

Conducting Assessments
Conducting the Assessment

- Assessment is the basis for program development
  - Poor assessments lead to weak programs
Conducting the Assessment

- Basic principle is to determine the following:
  - What are the needs now?
  - What are the likely future needs?
  - What resources are available now?
  - What resources will be needed?
Thinking in a Systematic Way

- **What has happened?**
  - What is the impact on the community?
  - What is the impact on the household?
  - What is the impact on the vulnerable individuals/groups?

- **How is the situation likely to change?**

- **What is the political environment?**

Continued
Assess Specific Problems

- Are there problems with shelter and clothing?
- Are there problems with water for cooking, washing, bathing?
- Are there problems with food and fuel?
- Are there problems with disease threats?
- How is the community coping with illness?

Continued
Assess Ways of Assisting Target Groups

- Are vulnerable populations in danger?
  - How can protection be organized?
- What must be done immediately to ensure survival?
Assess Ways of Assisting Target Groups

- What must be done immediately to ensure survival?
  - How can this assistance be delivered?
  - What are the target groups?
Assess Local Resources

- How can displaced people help themselves?
  - What are people doing now?
- How can displaced people help themselves?
  - What unmet needs are there?
Assess Local Resources

- How much assistance can the host government provide?
  - What are the government policies that will affect assistance?
Assess the Host Population

- How have the refugees affected the local population?
- How will assistance programs affect the host populations?
- Is there poaching of health workers by high salaries?
Assess the Host Population

Set Priorities and Objectives

- Are local services and drug supplies overwhelmed?
- What are the needs of the host population?
Assess the Host Population

- Does the host have common unmet needs that can be addressed?
Developing an Assistance Program

- Setting of mission
  - Why are we here?

- Identification of needs
  - Should be specific and quantified wherever possible
  - Needs will serve as basis for monitoring program impact
Set Priorities and Objectives

- Selecting priorities
  - What can we do?
  - What do we want to do?
- Clear objective as basis of strong programs
  - Objectives must be measurable
  - Indicators for each must be easily assessed
- Have alternatives to program design
Define Strategies and Alternatives

- Strategies to implement objectives
  - How are we going to do it?
  - Clear series of tasks set out
  - Identify required resources
- Consider alternatives in program design
Program Monitoring and Evaluation

- Monitoring system needed to assess progress towards objectives
- Evaluation based on objectives
  - Are the objectives the correct ones?
  - Have they been reached?
  - Is there clear evidence of impact?
Program Monitoring and Evaluation

- How will the program be altered based on this information?
- Establish evaluation criteria right from the beginning of the program
- Determine the feedback mechanisms for informing the health workers and community who participated in evaluation process