

TARGETING IN HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMES



This humanitarian-focused targeting guide is one part of Trócaire’s broader targeting documentation. This package looks at targeting at the organisational level, the theory of targeting in programming and provides a glossary of targeting terminology, and humanitarian- and development-specific targeting guidance. The other documents can be located by clicking on the relevant parts of the image below.

Organisational Approach to Targeting

Targeting: Theory and Practice

Targeting by
Outcome Area:

G1, O1 | G1, O2

Targeting by
Outcome Area:

G2, O1 | G2, O2

Targeting by
Outcome Area:

G3, O1 | G3, O2

Targeting in
Humanitarian
Programmes

Glossary

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April 2019	4	Humanitarian unit	Input from humanitarian unit on specific areas
June 2019	Final	Humanitarian unity	Minor comment for consistency and formatting



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1. ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to help humanitarian programmes (both Trócaire staff and partners) identify programme participants. It focuses on targeting exercises conducted at the community level, once geographic targeting¹ is complete.

This guide draws on documentation from Trócaire's field experience, interviews with Trócaire and partner staff members, reviews of best practices and research documents, and field-based testing of selected tools. Additionally, case studies were gathered from several contexts (including Myanmar, South Sudan and Somalia, Ethiopia) to get a better understanding of targeting across different contexts.

For effective targeting, refer to this guide during the needs assessment and programme design stages of the programme cycle. The case studies, tips and decision trees may provide useful tools for those undertaking the targeting process with limited time.

2. INTRODUCTION

Individuals, households and communities are affected by conflicts and disasters in different ways. Their different socio-economic and geographic conditions determine their level of vulnerability. As a result, their underlying needs for assistance may be different. To ensure our programmes target the most vulnerable for assistance, we need a range of approaches.

Trócaire's programme targeting approach is grounded in our protection mainstreaming principles: do no harm, provide meaningful access, ensure accountability to programme participants, and promote participation and empowerment. All of Trócaire's targeting approaches use local, community-based mechanisms supported by partners. This ensures ownership, participation and shared decision-making for the identification, selection and validation of programme participants.

The assistance Trócaire provides is adapted based on the needs of different groups. For example:

- In South Sudan, Internally Displaced People (IDP) households receive emergency food distributions, whilst host community households receive food for agriculture and an allocation of seeds because they have access to land.
- In Somalia, targeting cannot be seen to support one clan over another at the risk of creating or deepening tensions and conflict between clans. Community participation and trust are highly important, and thorough analysis and understanding of the protective environment are critical to ensure a context-specific approach.
- In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan help/appeals desks have been used to address community concerns and clarify any exclusion errors or concerns during the targeting and confirmation of identification process.

The most effective targeting systems are likely to be found in situations where agencies have been present for a long time, have been funded to invest in systems to support effective targeting, and have built up a relationship with the communities.

¹ Geographic targeting requires coordination with relevant clusters and other stakeholders, and assessments and consideration of potential impact, partner reach, access and funding.

3. TYPES OF TARGETING

There are several different approaches to targeting, including 'blanket' targeting (often referred to as 'administrative' targeting), community-based targeting, targeting by referral, self-targeting or a mix of these approaches. For a general overview of these approaches, refer to Trócaires [Targeting: Theory & Practice document](#). More information on how to use these approaches in humanitarian programming is presented below.

3.1 Blanket Targeting

Blanket targeting (or 'administrative targeting') is often used in humanitarian programming. This approach uses a macro-level analysis to choose a geographic area to work in: potential programme participants are identified through the assessment of a specific region or administrative units (e.g. village, town, district). The most vulnerable individuals are then selected based on the overall needs assessment for the area's population. **A blanket approach should only be used for life-saving assistance in the immediate aftermath of a crisis.** Blanket targeting is best suited to cases of sudden-onset disasters, where most households have suffered similar losses or where a detailed targeting assessment is not possible due to lack of access, lack of time, security concerns or political sensitivities. In some humanitarian sectors (e.g. water supply) it is difficult to assist only certain groups or households and not others. In such cases, blanket targeting is inevitable.

3.2 Targeted approach

A **targeted approach** is used to distinguish between those in a defined geographic area who need humanitarian assistance from a given programme and those who do not. It involves using targeting criteria to select groups, households or individuals in a community who are most in need of assistance. It is most useful where individuals, households, or groups in the targeted areas have distinct differences in their levels of vulnerability, humanitarian need, capacity and assets. However, it is not possible to identify the target group or to select programme participants without defining the geographic scope of the programme. Even household targeting will still contain an element of geographic targeting (the initial process of selecting the area you intend to work in).

4. STEPS IN THE TARGETING PROCESS

Targeting should always be guided by the principles of appropriateness, do no harm, fairness, engagement with communities, transparency and flexibility². It should also be guided by protection mainstreaming principles. However, the programme participant selection process used will depend on the type of assistance and the local context.

Some specialised sectors like health, nutrition and protection are guided by specific eligibility criteria defined by international standards or national protocols. In these sectors, the targeting process is facilitated by the professionals providing the service and trained community health/nutrition/protection staff. Direct community-level screening and/or referral methods may also be adopted. Referrals from other agencies working in the area can also be used to select programme participants (e.g. families with malnourished children in a food security programme).

In certain programme sectors targeting focuses on the local community and geography. For example, this is the case with water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programmes (particularly water supply and hygiene promotion) as locations with critical water shortages and other associated risks (e.g. cholera) will be targeted. In this scenario, geographic targeting can be a lighter process which involves consultation of local leaders, key informants and a facility survey by technicians. To avoid exclusion when using **geographic** targeting, it is important to consider the access needs of vulnerable groups (e.g. people living with disabilities or the elderly). For instance, the location of a WASH facility is directly linked to whether or not certain groups can use it.

In contrast, a more in-depth targeting process is required in programmes where relief items are distributed (e.g. food, cash) or individual-level services are provided. For some types of assistance, the targeting criteria may dictate the participant selection approach due to confidentiality and stigmatisation risks (e.g. protection assistance). Stigma is an important social factor that must be carefully considered when targeting. While transparency is key to an accountable targeting process, publicly identifying or labelling individuals or households may lead to stigmatisation and discomfort for participants. Given this risk, targeting criteria at a community level may differ slightly from the criteria at the programme design level. For example, a food security programme may have an objective of providing supplementary feeding to people living with HIV. But, rather than sharing this specific criterion in public, proxy criteria like 'people with chronic illness' can be used at the community level.

Targeting is a pragmatic exercise requiring evidence-based judgement, compromise and, in some situations, active evaluation and modification of a strategy as the situation develops. "*Perfect targeting is an impossible ideal. The best that programme designers can hope to achieve is to reduce targeting errors to acceptable levels*".³ This means looking for potential errors that might occur at each step of the targeting process and, if possible, modifying the approach accordingly.

It is important to understand that targeting is a process rather than a defined activity and relates to all aspects of the programme cycle. Generally, the targeting process can be broken down into five broad steps. The sections below provide a detailed discussion and context-specific guidance for each of these steps, and how to apply it to different targeting approaches.

² For more information on these general targeting principles, refer to Trócaire's [Targeting: Theory & Practice Document](#).

³ Devereaux S, 2000. Alternative approaches to targeting: theory and case studies. Ethiopian national food aid targeting guidelines workshop. Addis Ababa May 2000. IDS Sussex unpublished report



Step 1: Defining Objectives and Identifying Target Groups

Reaching consensus on the humanitarian objective is not always straightforward and it can be unduly influenced by organisational bias and capacity. Although different sets of standards and thresholds are available to gauge the severity of a situation and the response requirements, the information from these may be used differently in different contexts. For example, while a Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) Rate of X% might be considered low in some countries, it may be reported as critical in others and hence attract huge attention from the humanitarian community. There is also a common trend among governments of presenting a picture of the humanitarian situation in a country that suits their interests. For example, some governments might downplay the humanitarian needs to show they have succeeded in reducing poverty and are well equipped to manage disasters; while others may instead exaggerate those needs to benefit from humanitarian assistance. When assistance becomes available, some governments may put pressure on humanitarian actors to divert humanitarian funds from their original target towards supporting development and political agendas at the expense of the local populations affected by a crisis.

In contexts where there is such a risk of bias, it can be helpful to:

- coordinate with other relevant actors from the start. This includes participating in relevant cluster meetings and other networks from the very beginning when the cluster defines the wider assistance objectives.
- coordinate on needs assessments across organisations and humanitarian sectors so that the assessments are joint/inter-agency, robust and less subject to sectoral bias.

Case Study 1: In a country in Southern Africa, there were issues with the data being produced by government-led needs assessments. To help address this, agencies advocated for involvement in the process. Now, various agencies are a part of the process of undertaking needs assessments. This has led to an agreed joint assessment containing reliable data that has not been manipulated by political bias, which is owned by all of the actors involved.

In the absence of a common understanding of need, Trócaire's humanitarian programmes should analyse the disaster/crisis based on acute risk (actual or imminent threats and vulnerabilities). Such an analysis should be carried out in relation to the three 'core' threats to life:

1. subsistence: access to adequate food, water, shelter and clothing to sustain life;
2. safety: freedom from violence and coercion;
3. health: short-term nutrition and protection and disease outbreak⁴.

These three elements provide a stronger basis for analysis than assumed need alone. Therefore, assistance should be directed to those facing threats to their lives, health and subsistence needs.

Assistance objectives for Trócaire's programmes should be based on the findings of needs assessments and the areas of humanitarian need listed above. Programme objectives should clearly state *who* should get *how much* assistance, *when* and *why*. This requires a clear statement of rationale for the assistance provided. For example, situations where the primary rationale for food assistance is to save lives should be distinguished from those where the primary rationale is to protect assets or livelihoods. International standards, such as *Sphere*⁵, provide guidance on the minimum level of assistance for different sectors, while context-specific design factors should also be taken into consideration.

Where there is a shortage of resources, a careful balance needs to be struck between the numbers of people reached by a programme (as guided by the targeting process) and ensuring that programming adheres to international standards (such as Sphere) at a minimum. Priority should be given to those who are struggling to meet survival needs, assuming they have utilised all assets or are at risk of losing those assets. In such cases, it is important to consider:

- the possibility of coordinating with other actors if a programme's funding is too limited to provide meaningful assistance in isolation.
- the quantity of assistance. If the volume of assistance provided is reduced, it is important to ensure that it remains meaningful and meets minimum international standards.
- reducing the number of people assisted within a vulnerable group. It is preferable to reduce the overall number of people assisted, rather than excluding an entire vulnerable group.

Relevant Protection Mainstreaming/CHS⁶ Commitment

Priority groups most affected by the crisis are identified for the provision of assistance.

Assistance packages are designed to meet the differing needs of women, men, girls and boys of diverse groups.

Sphere standard: *Targeting objectives are agreed among the coordinating authorities, female and male representatives of the affected population, and implementing agencies.*

⁴ Although Trócaire has limited direct programming on health, many humanitarian interventions have an indirect impact on health e.g. WASH to reduce the risk of cholera, food assistance to improve nutrition, etc.

⁵ Sphere's flagship publication, the Sphere Handbook, is one of the most widely known and internationally recognised sets of common principles and universal minimum standards in humanitarian response.

⁶ The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) sets out nine commitments that organisations and individuals involved in humanitarian response can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. Further information can be found at [this link](#).

During the response phase of a crisis, meeting the minimum survival needs of the affected population should be prioritised. If these needs are not met, households may resort to negative coping strategies, (e.g. exchanging/selling assets, migration, early marriage, etc).

During the recovery phase of a crisis, humanitarian staff should consider the need to protect the productive assets of vulnerable groups, supporting them not just to survive but thrive after the crisis has passed.

Programmes may:

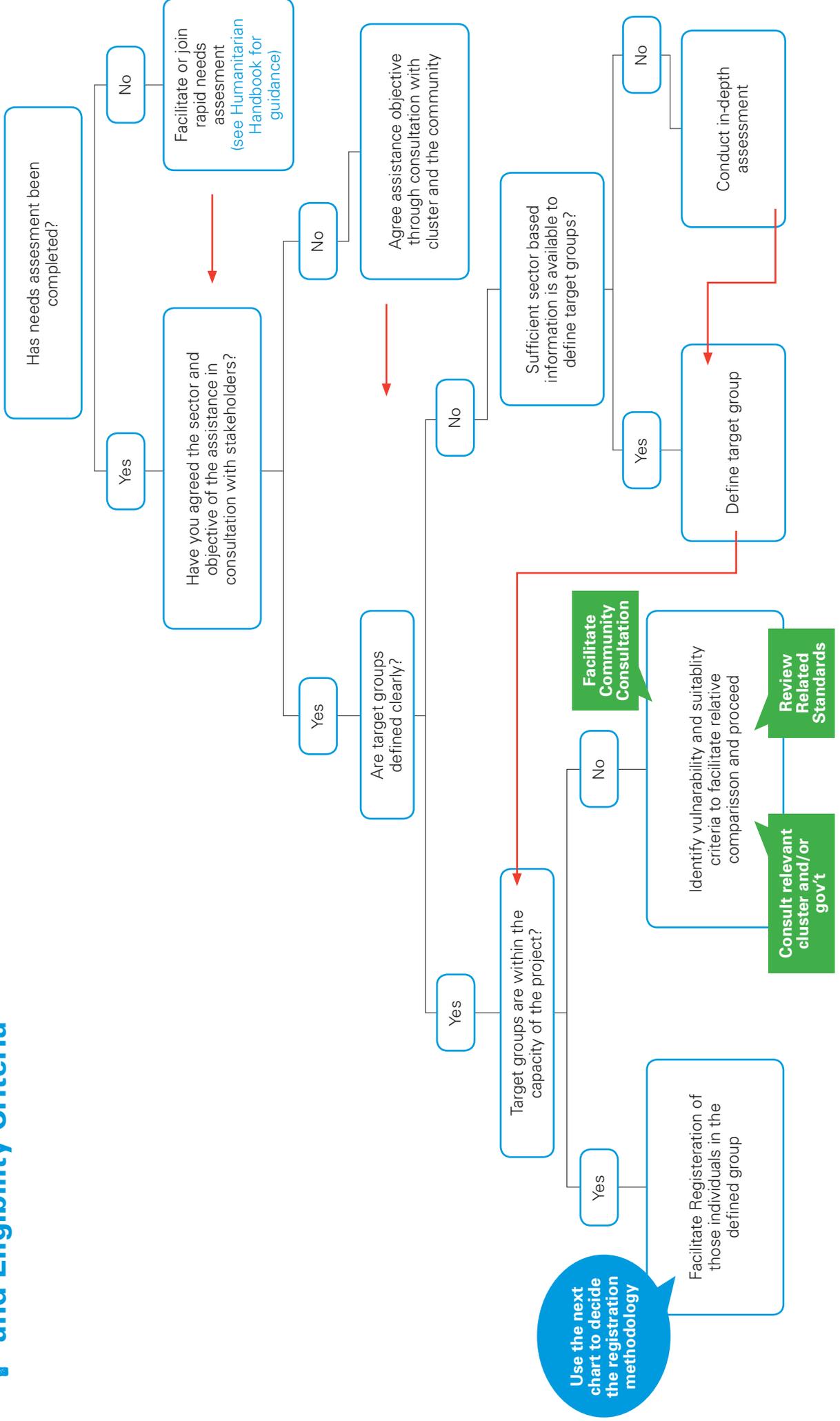
- target the most vulnerable, whilst taking into account multiple factors to ensure diversity among those assisted. These factors may include but are not limited to: sex, age, disability; social and economic conditions; poverty.
- target the better off to produce a 'ripple effect' for the benefit of the wider vulnerable community. These actions may include but are not limited to providing market support to those who can supply a local stable market; providing agricultural support for those who own land and grow produce; promoting new technologies/practices; advocating with legislators.

Determining when to transition from addressing survival needs to longer-term recovery can be challenging. It may be helpful to think about the following:

- There is a humanitarian imperative to ensure that we work to meet survival needs. Recovery cannot begin until these are met. Where these needs are unmet, Trócaire staff and partners should work with other stakeholders to support the most vulnerable to meet their basic survival needs.
 - We should aim to transition to the recovery phase as soon as possible, but this may not always be realistic as funding is usually allocated to assistance for basic needs. In such cases, it may be helpful to consider the programme from a resilience lens in order to access other funding sources.
 - It may be possible to draw on in-house development expertise to help inform such longer-term programming.
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Targeting Exercise: Process and Decision Tree

Chart 1: Process of Setting Objective and Eligibility Criteria



Step 2: Developing Targeting Criteria

Criteria (often referred to as 'selection criteria', 'participant criteria' or 'eligibility criteria') are the characteristics of individuals or households eligible to be selected as programme participants. These criteria are developed based on the assistance objectives defined in Step 1. For an objective to be able to meet the needs of a group of individuals or households (which are thought to require a certain type, quantity and quality of assistance) then the eligibility criteria must specify the characteristics of these individuals or households. The criteria must be both *inclusive* (to ensure that those who are eligible are not excluded) and *specific* (to ensure that those who are ineligible are excluded for objective and clearly defined reasons). Criteria may be based on vulnerability and capacity considerations, depending on the programme. The eligibility criteria adopted must ensure a practical way of identifying individuals or households during programme participant selection or at the location where they receive assistance.

The process of establishing 'eligibility' is two-fold: first, setting clear and relevant eligibility criteria; and second, applying the criteria in practice. When determining eligibility for a programme, a judgement needs to be made about which type of error is more acceptable: an exclusion error or an inclusion error. Reaching an acceptable agreement on eligibility criteria between the community and partners is a priority. Without this, irrelevant or inappropriate criteria may be adopted while useful criteria may be overlooked. In addition, exclusion and inclusion errors are likely to be accentuated.

In addition to considering eligibility criteria, it is essential to consider criteria that reflect the suitability of an individual, household or group to participate in a programme (e.g. their personal willingness to be involved in the programme).

Relevant Protection Mainstreaming/CHS commitments

Community members/groups are involved in the process to select criteria for targeting

'understanding the vulnerabilities and capacities of different groups'.

- **Sphere indicators:** Targeting criteria must be based on a thorough analysis of vulnerability
- Targeting mechanisms are agreed among the disaster-affected population.

Vulnerability and capacity: Where the objective of the humanitarian programme is to save lives or alleviate suffering (e.g. distribution of food or hygiene kits), eligibility criteria should be based predominantly on vulnerability. However, some programme modalities may require individuals or communities to have certain levels of capacity to benefit meaningfully from the support. For example, agricultural support requires the household to have access to land, while certain business support may require some level of experience in trade. Therefore, there may be some capacity criteria or suitability criteria to be included, regardless of the level of vulnerability of a particular individual or household. Furthermore, the willingness of an individual, household or group to participate in a programme should be considered as part of the suitability criteria.

Characteristics of strong criteria and top tips for using them:

When developing eligibility criteria, the following can be used as a starting point:

- **Do not include too many self-reported criteria** (criteria that only the individual or household can know) that can be hard to validate objectively (e.g. number of meals, negative coping strategy, monthly income etc).
- Use criteria that are practical and **not overly resource-intensive** to collect information on (e.g. household dietary diversity).

- **Use a combination of community-defined criteria** and those from **international standards**, (e.g. humanitarian programming should refer to the Sphere standards).
- Use a mix of objectively verifiable criteria that help to identify the **number of people in need** (e.g. dietary diversity) and criteria that help **prioritise based on vulnerability** (e.g. household composition).
- **Focus on socioeconomic criteria** validated by an analysis or needs assessment to minimise vulnerability criteria based on perceptions of individuals.
- **Avoid discriminatory criteria or those that could lead to stigmatisation**, such as those based on ethnicity, religion, disability and any other status. This may involve the use of proxy measures in some cases.
- **Strike a balance between criteria based on chronic vulnerability/poverty and level of disaster damage.** Do not assume that those who have lost the most are necessarily the most affected. For example, a household which has lost ten goats may be more vulnerable than a household which has lost 20 goats once other vulnerability factors and criteria are taken into account (e.g. family size and composition, access to education, health, livelihood diversification, income opportunities, debts, disabilities).
- **Carefully assess the consequences of using certain criteria** (see box 1 below); previous experiences show that people may adopt negative strategies in order to be eligible for external assistance.

Box 1: Kenyan Nutrition Programme

A nutrition programme in Kenya (2001) was providing food rations for families with children admitted to nutrition centres. As a result, in some families, children were intentionally underfed to ensure access to food for the family. It was also felt that the programme was unethical, by providing food only when malnutrition had occurred rather than intervening to prevent it. Using these criteria alone may also be inaccurate where a child is malnourished primarily due to other factors (e.g. disease or inadequate care).

Table 1: Common targeting criteria used and suggested indicators

Category	Common indicators	Important things to consider
Household (HH) composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family size - Sex of HH head - Age of HH head - Number of under 5s - Presence of pregnant and lactating mothers - Number of people with disabilities or chronically ill people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check assumptions when looking at the head of a household. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o a single adult male-headed HH may, in practice, be a child-headed HH or an elderly person-headed HH. o a single adult male-HH who has a lost a female adult may have high vulnerability to food insecurity in contexts where women bear responsibility for household food preparation, household water provision, household nutrition, growing of subsistence crops, etc. - Be clear on the definition of 'family' used. Is this all persons eating from the same cooking pot? How does this apply in situations of polygamy/informal polygamy?

Disaster damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lost family member • Family member seriously injured • Displaced from home • Lost most of HH assets • Livelihood destroyed (e.g. land/animals) • Loss of labour opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do other actors/agencies have this information? Who are the key stakeholders at the community level (e.g. leaders, health workers, teachers, social workers)? Coordinate with other agencies to identify how to get this information. - Is it possible to validate the information? - These criteria need to be balanced against underlying vulnerabilities.
Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live below the poverty line • HH has no formal education • HH with minimal asset base • HH with no land • HH with no source of income • HH depending only on daily labour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinate with agencies or partners around underlying vulnerabilities. - Do partners or other actors have information on vulnerability levels prior to the crisis (e.g. from other programmes)?
Coping strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household depending only on daily work • HH begging • HH selling productive assets • Child labour • Child marriages • Increase in domestic violence • Substance abuse • Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) • Other negative coping mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider using the standard Coping Strategy Index (CSI) for the food security indicator (CSI, livelihood based CSI, reduced CSI). - Consider whether there is a need to refer or link to other services (e.g. protection services, health, education services). - Consider using organisational structures to support/identify at-risk groups.
Food security indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food consumption score (FCS) • Household dietary diversity (HHDD) • Household hunger scale (HHS) • Reduced coping strategy index (RCSI) • Malnutrition indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider the potentially negative consequences of using some criteria, such as the nutritional status of children (see box 1) or HIV+ status. - Consider both acute food gaps and chronic food insecurity. - Consider seasonal variation in food access. - Assess the reasons for the food gap to decide assistance modality. For example, is the food gap a result of production failure and lack of income, or market constraints? - Coordinate with health actors for nutrition-related indicators.

<p>Access to services and resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No access to clean water • Limited access to health services • No access to sanitation • Distance to market • Poor access to natural resources (e.g. firewood, shelter construction materials) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider access to resources as criteria for any assistance. Individual's survival will depend on access to various services (e.g. a nutrition programme should consider access to WASH services). - Distance to market as an indicator may not apply equally to all. Some communities may have access to other resources, and may not be as dependent on access to markets as others.
<p>Social network and humanitarian assistance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having no support from relatives • Living in unfamiliar ethnic or religious community structure • Not receiving humanitarian assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Examine how power dynamics have shifted since the onset of the crisis. - Consider what barriers might be preventing people from receiving assistance - Examine whether there are new vulnerable groups that need to be considered - Consider who can help to identify families without support? - Coordinate with other agencies to avoid duplication, and consider sharing information on programme participants (but remain mindful of GDPR requirements).
<p>Social protection mechanisms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to safety net programmes 	<p>Safety nets are a key to cope with small shocks and hence should be considered as criteria.</p>

The final criteria should contain:

- a mix of those from different categories listed above selected for their relevance;
- additional criteria related to chronic vulnerabilities and disaster-related vulnerabilities.

It is important that the chosen eligibility criteria are aligned with the relevant activated cluster's targeting criteria (where this exists).

Step 3: Applying Criteria to Select Programme Participants

To apply the criteria in practice, it is important to decide on the selection process and criteria in light of local dynamics, the nature of agreed targeting criteria, capacities and humanitarian principles, including *do no harm*. A review of different targeting mechanisms could be conducted alongside a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) analysis of different options. The SWOT analysis should include aspects of potential error, security, safety, protection, different costs, time and human resource requirements.

Sphere Standard guidance:

The selection of agents involved in targeting should be based on their impartiality, capacity and accountability. Targeting agents may include local elders, locally elected relief committees, civil society organisations, local NGOs, local governmental institutions, or international NGOs. The selection of women targeting agents is strongly encouraged. Targeting approaches need to be clear and accepted by both recipient and non-recipient populations to avoid creating tensions and doing harm

Common Methods to Apply the Criteria:

- Simple judgment of every household (HH) using set criteria, cross-checking this with different groups of the community.
- Decision to select if the HHs satisfy at least a minimum number of criteria.
- Using a government/clinic/school list that has been provided.
- Matrix method: HH will be eligible if they satisfy a minimum number of criteria from the different categories ([click here to see a sample tool for the matrix method](#)).
- Scoring method: each household is assessed based on an agreed weighted score allocated for each selected criteria ([click here to see a sample tool for the scoring method](#)).

The following chart provides guidance on what identification process to follow for different contexts.

Chart 2: Actual Programme Participant Selection Steps (continued from the above steps in the previous decision tree)

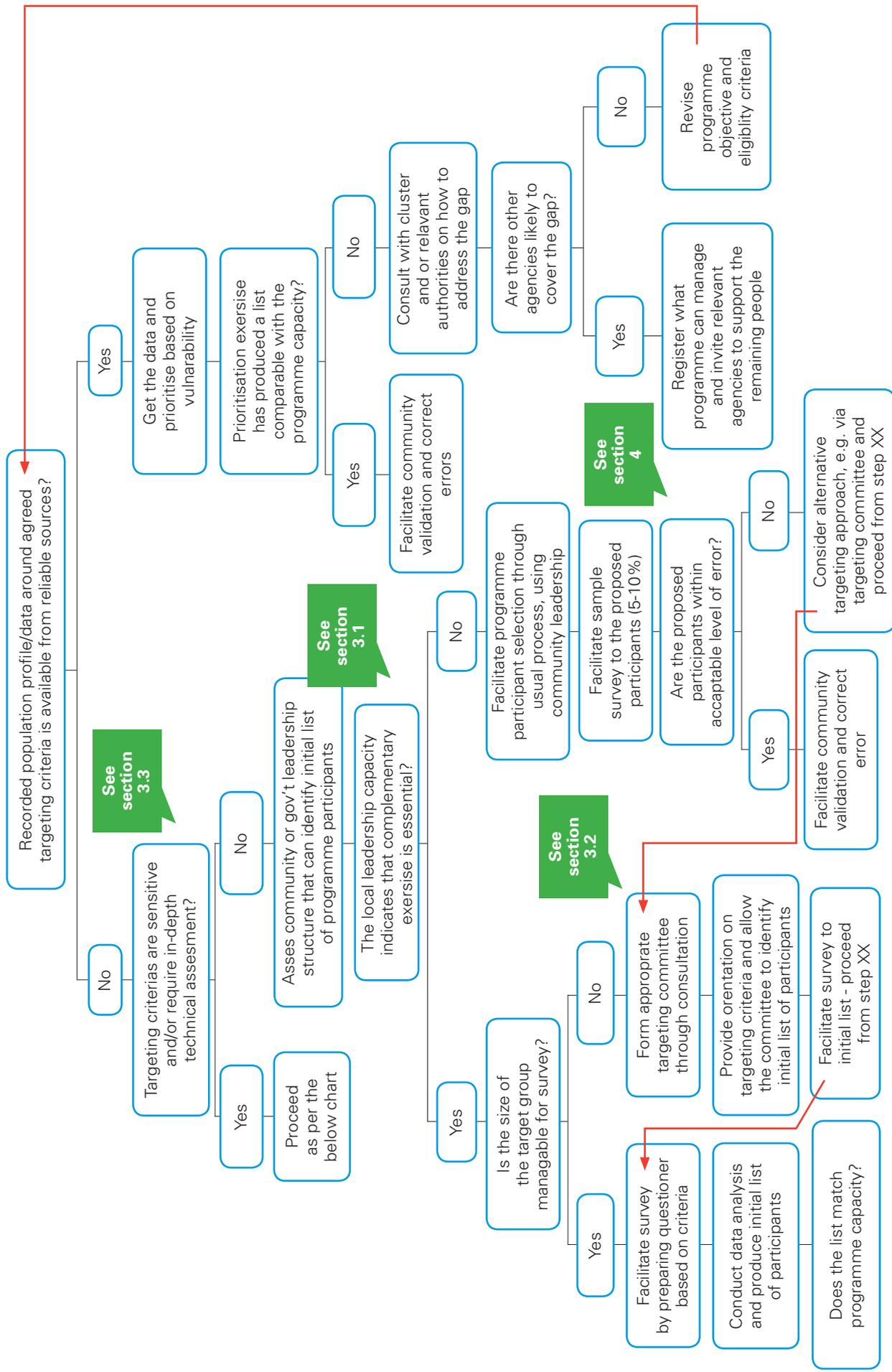
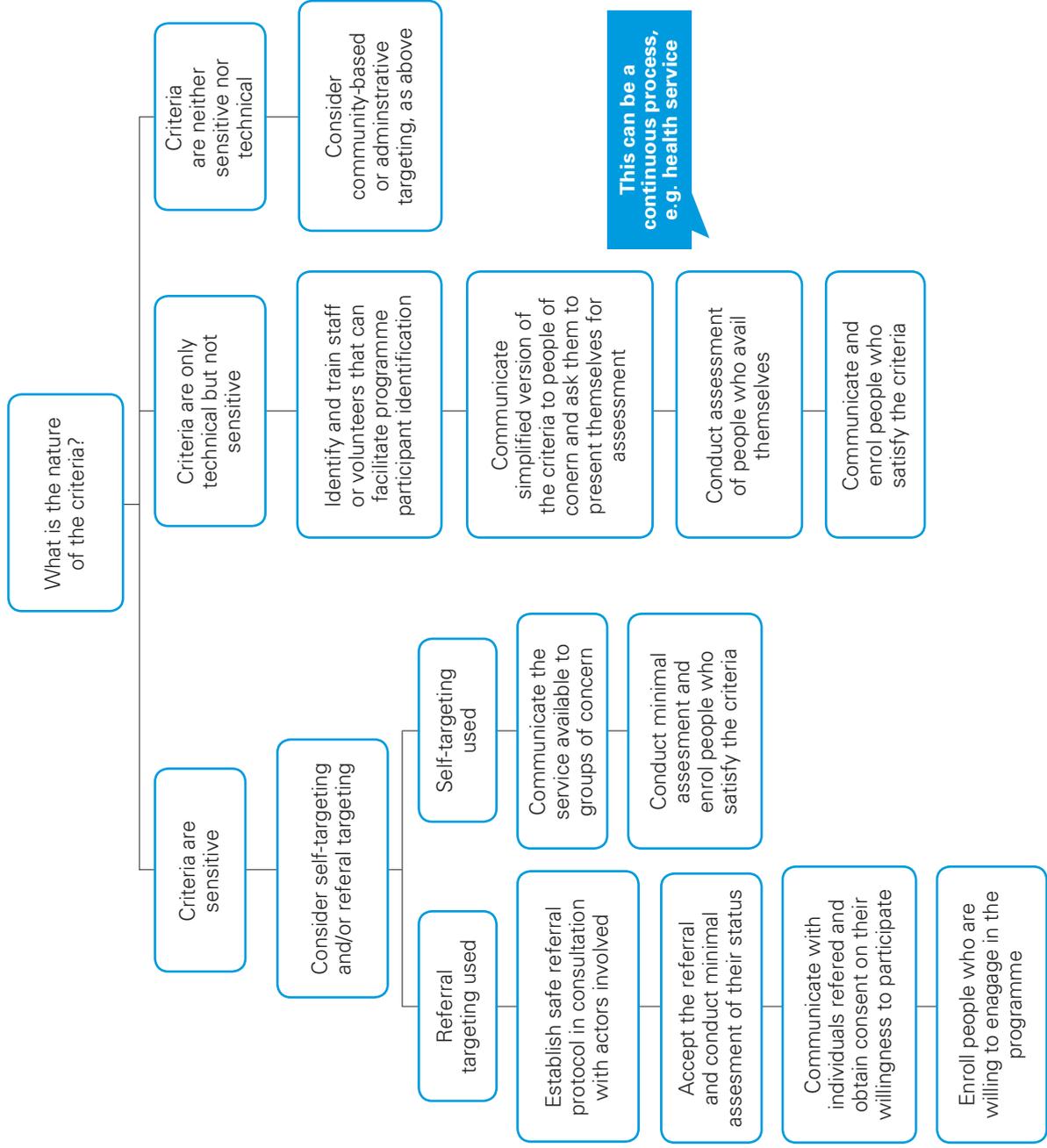


Chart 3. Flow Chart for Targeting Involving Sensitive and Technical Criteria



Step 3.1 Programme Participant Selection through Community Leadership (Conventional Community-Based Targeting)

The approach involves identifying the relevant community leadership structure and communicating the details of the assistance, including the suggested targeting criteria. It is usually the quickest and most economical method for a programme participant selection exercise. To be effective, this approach usually requires a cohesive community with a value system that protects the most vulnerable groups. However, there are often underlying power dynamics that need to be understood to ensure specific individuals or groups are not excluded. Providing support can reinforce pre-existing social problems and inequalities, particularly in communities which have either significant differences among individuals (e.g. along religious, ethnic or caste lines), large numbers of recent arrivals or whose leadership is objectively corrupt.

It is important that the targeting process is endorsed by the community's leadership. However, it is also important that they do not take full control of it for it to remain objective. It can be helpful to ensure that Trócaire's targeting approach is clearly understood and then invite input on the approach.

It is generally understood that targeting settled populations is more straightforward than targeting pastoral populations. In pastoral populations, community relationships and obligations may exclude the possibility of targeting specific households because the assistance may simply be shared amongst all. Additionally, while certain protracted refugee situations may appear similar to a settled community, community-based targeting may not be appropriate. Displaced populations accustomed to the regular provision of assistance for basic needs may be unwilling to participate in a targeting process because of the belief that everyone deserves the assistance ([see Myanmar case study](#)). The high frequency of distributions in many displacement contexts would pose considerable time burdens on an organisation using community-based targeting where the 'community' setting may be quite artificial as families are dispersed among different communities. The arrival of new people and their level of vulnerability may not be known by the community representatives or leaders.

Step 3.2 Using Context-Specific Committees for Programme Participant Selection

Forming context-specific committees to facilitate the selection of potential programme participants provides an alternative approach where the conventional leadership structure lacks capacity, is biased or known to abuse its power. Committees should have representatives of different community groups including individuals who might be excluded, such as vulnerable women, minority groups or people living with disabilities. However, the community itself should suggest the composition of the committee. Another way to improve targeting is to involve women-only groups in the process as well as in the provision of assistance. However, targeting assistance in this way requires a renegotiation of social roles. This can take time and can risk alienating certain groups and inciting conflict. In locations in South Sudan where this renegotiation was not done, the system was perceived locally as having been imposed. As a result, after the food was distributed the chiefs immediately redistributed it ([see case study from South Sudan](#)).

The best way to work with targeting committees will depend on the context. However, there are some general guidelines to bear in mind:

- Be aware of power dynamics.
 - Be aware of political influence.
 - Provide relevant support and tools to the committees where possible.
 - Be aware of the burden/pressure upon the committees.
 - Understand the community context in terms of how individuals engage and participate.
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- Bear in mind that it is possible to have different committees with different memberships. For example, women-only, a mix of women and men, representatives of vulnerable groups, respected community members.

Box 2: Targeting in South Sudan

In South Sudan, the targeting approach has evolved significantly. Women are selected from the community to form a targeting selection committee. The targeting process and criteria are shared with the women and the wider community, including leaders. The all-female committee then identifies the most vulnerable people or households in the community based on specific criteria. Finally, the lists provided by the women are validated by Trócaire and partner teams. ([See South Sudan Case Study for more information](#)).

Somalia

In Somalia, validation committees were set up and supported by Trócaire to ensure programme participants met the criteria.

Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, a community-based targeting approach was used. The process involved developing targeting criteria at mass community gatherings, drawing up an initial list of beneficiaries by selection committees and then validation by partners and local leaders. In Borena zone, community meetings were held with the committee to decide on selection criteria, to select participants and to confirm their identities ([See Case Study](#)). In South Omo, an established Compliance and Relief Committee consisting of community members conducted the targeting, facilitated by the partner, and the list was validated by the Woreda and Kebele administrators.

Relevant Protection Mainstreaming/CHS commitment

Community members/groups are involved in the process to select criteria for targeting.

Programmes build on existing strengths in the communities.

Step 3.3 Programme Participant Selection by Agencies

As indicated in the decision tree above ([Chart 3. Flow Chart for Targeting Involving Sensitive and Technical Criteria](#)), an initial list of potential programme participants should only be identified by agencies themselves in two situations:

1. **When targeting criteria require assessment by professionals** (e.g. medical issues) **or where criteria are too sensitive** (e.g. gender-based violence survivors) **to be disclosed to local leadership/communities**. In such situations, technical staff or trained volunteers should facilitate the selection. The identification process for sensitive criteria may also be facilitated as part of a larger community engagement exercise (e.g. when targeting survivors of SGBV, the selection criteria may be open to women and girls within a particular age range). Due to the potential for stigmatisation, the assistance modality itself should be kept confidential. Additionally, other members of the community that are not in this group may also be included so that individuals are not identified.
2. **In the absence of accountable local community leadership or government structure that can facilitate targeting within a margin of error**. However, this method should only be used if the numbers of potential target groups are manageable, such as displaced people in specific camp ([See case studies for South Sudan and Ethiopia](#)).

Programme participant selection by agency staff will usually require an assessment of every individual or household in the vulnerable group (e.g. all children under 5 for a nutrition programme). The method used for this approach can be a house-to-house survey/screening using a standard questionnaire or checklist⁷. The key to the success of this targeting approach is collaborating with the leadership ([See case study from Ethiopia](#)) and the quality of the survey design. As a result, facilitating proper negotiation with the community leadership and training of the staff or volunteers (enumerators) used for the household survey will be vital ([See here for a document on Tips for Enumerators](#)). In addition to identifying the most vulnerable people or households eligible for the programme, the survey can also be designed to identify their real needs. This information can then be used to improve the programme to provide adapted assistance based on needs and capacities.

Box 3: Ethiopia NFI and Shelter response

In Ethiopia, a project providing Non-Food Items (NFI) and shelter assistance to IDPs used staff and volunteers to identify an initial list of programme participants. The process involved a survey of 4,200 households (HH) using digital data collection (Kobo Toolbox) and analysis (Microsoft Excel). The survey employed 16 enumerators (six project staff and ten volunteers from the local Red Cross) and took three weeks to finalize.

In addition to identifying the most vulnerable IDPs, the survey was also used to assess the needs of every household. This information was used to help design the NFI package based on the needs for each household. As a result, the project was able to reach 3,500 HH (1,500 HH more than originally planned) compared to the original plan of providing a standard package for every household. The survey also helped to disprove a false report by local authorities on the number of IDPs in their villages. Strong resistance from the local authorities was mitigated by continued negotiation and involvement of higher-level government officials from the zone.

Conducting a survey, even within small groups, can be expensive. Therefore, a cost-benefit analysis of adopting such an approach is an important step. The use of digital data collection and management solutions can significantly minimise the cost involved and make the process more efficient ([see sample tool](#)). To further manage the cost involved in this process, the survey should be carefully designed so that the data collected at this step can also be used for registration and baseline data needs (see Section 5: Budgeting for more).

Box 4: Diversity of Need in Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, during the mudslide response in 2017, partners identified the most vulnerable families affected by the disaster and then diversified the assistance packages to meet the differing needs of the identified. For example, families where children had lost their school books and clothes received school start up packs, where peoples small businesses were destroyed received business restart assistance and households that lost their household items received NFI kits.

⁷ Various sector-specific tools can be adapted to different contexts and are available to support such surveys (See Annex 3) <https://trocaire.app.box.com/folder/93418225737> - The method used for this approach can be a house-to-house survey/screening using a standard questionnaire or checklist.

Box 5: Ways in which communities can participate in targeting when pure community-based targeting is neither feasible nor appropriate:

‘Ground-truthing’ means developing definitions of what it means to be vulnerable, and who is vulnerable, in a given situation and community. This can include validating indicators or criteria that have emerged from statistical analysis or expert taskforces. Feedback from the community can help to determine whether people agree with the targeting approach (and therefore whether it will work in practice or will generate large numbers of complaints); how questions on specific indicators should be asked; and whether the proposed approach will miss any important factors in vulnerability or vulnerable groups.

Testing questionnaires and other data collection methods, in advance of a large-scale survey, can help to identify and improve any questions that might be sensitive or unclear to interviewees.

Using community representatives to pre-screen cases that have appealed (after being excluded during the first stage of targeting) can also support community engagement in the process.

In contexts where self-reported bias (when respondents are not reporting actual facts, for various reasons) are expected, the enumerators may facilitate the interview together with a member of the crisis-affected community (selected by the community to support the targeting process), provided that no sensitive data is being collected. Similarly, enumerators’ observations can be used to cross-reference respondents’ answers to questions with verifiable indicators (e.g. condition of shelter).

Step 3.4 Targeting by Referral

Vulnerable people that satisfy the agreed targeting criteria can be referred by other agencies or other programme teams within the organisation working in the same community. This approach is usually adopted when the targeting criteria are sensitive making it difficult to identify vulnerable people through community mobilisation and direct surveys. Referral should also be used when new, vulnerable people are likely to emerge throughout the implementation of the programme (e.g. health facilities referring malnutrition cases for nutrition assistance). To adopt referral as a targeting approach, the programme should be designed to accommodate new participants beyond those initially identified (e.g. contingency assistance). Establishing confidential information management systems and effective referral mechanisms are key to the success of this approach.

Depending on the nature of the targeting criteria/target groups, various other actors (including community-based organisations, peer support groups, school clubs, and religious and clan leaders) may be used to identify and refer potential participants.

Step 3.5 Self-Targeting

Self-targeting is an approach whereby programme assistance will be open to anyone who belongs to the identified group of concern or satisfies agreed criteria. It is usually practised in two circumstances:

1. When the assistance package is only attractive to the specific group of people that the programme intends to target (e.g. cash/food for work programme).
2. When the targeting criteria are too sensitive or difficult to assess (e.g. survivors of SGBV)

In both cases, further assessment of applicants for assistance may be conducted to ensure that participants are registered only when they satisfy the criteria. This also helps prevent the programme from becoming over-subscribed.

Protection Mainstreaming Commitment:

Staff and partners are trained on when and how to refer cases.

Staff and partners have information on existing protection services and how to contact them.

Step 4:**Validating Initial List of Programme Participants**

Validation is a process of checking whether things are going as planned at different moments in the targeting process. For instance, it may involve communities discussing and providing input to the identification of target groups, the definition of the criteria, the application of criteria and the final selection of programme participants.

Validation can also involve checking that the targeting approach is being implemented as intended and that the intended people are being reached by the programme (e.g. through monitoring field visits).

The process of validation provides opportunities to improve and refine the targeting process when necessary and to address exclusion and inclusion errors as they arise.

It is important to note that this step does not apply to the health and protection sectors, or to referral targeting, because of the nature of criteria used.

Step 4.1 Validation of Initial List of Potential Programme Participants by Different Stakeholders

Validation ensures that the initial list of proposed participants satisfies the agreed targeting criteria and that inclusion and exclusion errors are within acceptable limits. Regardless of the method used for selecting programme participants, it is important to consider the likely scale of inclusion and exclusion errors, which are defined as follows:

- **Inclusion error:** the proportion of total people who receive assistance who are not members of the intended target group
- **Exclusion error:** the proportion of the intended target group who do not actually receive assistance (people who meet the criteria but do not receive anything)

The inclusion of those who do not correspond to the established criteria leads to the exclusion of intended participants and/or the dilution of rations so that people receive less than they should. The constraints inherent in emergencies will inevitably lead to targeting errors, and minimising inclusion errors requires careful political analysis of the context and the points at which diversion could take place. However, Trócaire should work carefully with partners to find the right balance between exclusion errors (which may be life-threatening) and inclusion errors (which are potentially disruptive and wasteful).

It is impossible to determine whether inclusion or exclusion errors are more important. This decision will depend mainly on the aims and context of the programme, including the proportion of target group members in the population. It will also take account of the feasibility of excluding non-target groups, the resources available for the programme, and the relative costs and benefits of the different options. For life-saving assistance, it is generally recognised that the acceptance of a certain inclusion error is less harmful than risking an exclusion error, which would leave people with unmet survival needs without assistance.

Community validation: The steps involved in validating the initial list of proposed programme participants will depend on the type of approach used to select those participants (as discussed in [Step 3](#) above). However, in all approaches, the final list should be shared with the wider community (if safe and appropriate to do so) through relevant channels (e.g. community meeting, posting the list in public places). Community meetings can be held at a level deemed most appropriate for a given programme, such as sub-area-level meetings or village-level meetings. It can be useful to ask at such meetings who is not featured on the list, or present at the meeting, who should be.

Safety and security issues need to be assessed before displaying a participant list in public. Ensuring an effective complaints handling system is in place to manage and address community complaints should also be part of the validation exercise⁸.

Helpdesk/complaints mechanisms: Communities need to be given the chance to raise their complaints about the targeting process and mechanisms must be in place to investigate and correct issues accordingly. This requires staff to actively promote the helpdesk and complaints handling channels in communities. It also requires a mechanism to investigate any inclusion and exclusion errors identified between the initial lists of participants being shared and the confirmation of the final list. Exclusion errors are usually identified through the complaints mechanism. Sometimes, issues are brought to light by feedback or the channelling of information through trusted community members, such as priests or teachers.

In some contexts, it might be useful to hold contingency stock to ease the process of addressing complaints. To accommodate this, the initial list of participants proposed should be slightly less than the number the programme planned to address (up to 10%).

Documentation: All Trócaire supported programmes involving individual- or household-level distribution or service provision interventions should have a registered participant list, documented in an agreed template. The level of detail of the participant profile documented in the registration book will depend on the nature of the programme and context. However, all programmes should aim to have participant information disaggregated by age, sex and disability as a minimum. Storage of participant information should consider safety, confidentiality and GDPR⁹ regulations.

⁸ See [Trócaire's guidance on Complaints Handling](#).

⁹ The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016/679 is a regulation in European Union law on data protection and privacy for all individuals within the European Union and the European Economic Area. It also addresses the export of personal data outside the EU and EEA areas.

Relevant PM and CHS commitment

A fair and impartial response mechanism is in place to ensure feedback is acted upon.

All data collected is disaggregated by sex, age and disabilities.

Practical examples:

In South Sudan, a female staff member was available at the help desk for women who wanted to ask questions or understand why they had not been selected. In DRC and South Sudan, help/appeals desks have been used during the targeting and confirmation of identity process to clarify any exclusion errors or concerns around the process.

In Ethiopia (Tigray) and South Sudan (Yirol), our partners identified additional people (up to 10% more than the programme's capacity) as contingency in order to compensate for people withdrawn from the initial list through the validation process (including through complaints).

Step 5:**Confirming the Identity of Programme Participants**

It is not only the criteria and their application which is central to the success of a targeting approach. Assistance choice, delivery methodology and timing can also contribute to the achievement of targeting objectives. Ensuring that the intended recipients are actually receiving the assistance is a common concern. In most assistance scenarios, confirming the identity of individuals can be a significant challenge, particularly in cases where most participants have little or no documentation. Depending on the community dynamics, assistance type and distribution/service frequency, different approaches may be used.

For one-off distributions, confirming the identity of those receiving assistance is usually conducted through local leadership or distribution committees. This means the leadership or the committee has to confirm whether the individuals listed in the registration book are present to receive the assistance package.

For more frequent service provision or multiple cycles of distribution, it can be helpful to produce programme participant identification (ID) cards, often referred to as ration/service cards. Programme participant lists (without ration cards) may be sufficient when distribution is on a community basis.

Ration cards

A ration card/programme participant ID is usually used when the individual is entitled to multiple cycles of distribution (e.g. monthly food, cash) or access services (e.g. health, nutrition).

The ration cards should:

- specify the name of the ration cardholder, the number of individuals in the household who depend on the cardholder for relief, the address (village, camp sector) and the expiry date.
- have numbers or boxes, that can be checked off at the time of distribution.
- be difficult to counterfeit, have a unique sequence number and be durable.

Ration cardholder

For general food distributions to households, the ration card should be issued in the name of the head of household. Ration cards should be issued based on principles such as:

- *For monogamous families comprising a wife, husband and their dependents, or a single parent/guardian and their dependents:* the wife, or the single parent, is registered as the ration cardholder. They may be given the opportunity to designate another family member to collect the household's ration on their behalf.
- *In polygamous settings where an individual has more than one spouse:* each spouse is registered as a ration cardholder for themselves and their dependents; the head of the household is either included as a member of one of these units or registered as an individual ration cardholder, according to their choice. This applies in all polygamous settings regardless of whether the head of the household shares their time among separate households formed by each spouse and dependents or heads a joint family household in which all spouses and dependents cook and eat together.

Programme participant list: For one-off distribution or service delivery, distribution lists might be sufficient, provided they detail the programme participant's name, location, ID card (if they have one) and commodities to be distributed. On the distribution day, the identities of participants are confirmed through the help of local leadership or distribution committees. After receiving the items, participants will sign on the distribution template prepared (illiterate participants may use a fingerprint instead).

Biometric registration: In recent years, agencies have been increasingly using biometric registration to track displaced persons. Information such as fingerprints, iris patterns, DNA, or signatures are collected to identify participants. Biometric registration provides real-time data, limits paperwork, and improves efficiency. In this approach, when agencies first engage with programme participants they enrol them into a database holding biographic, biometric, and eligibility information. In subsequent interactions, the agency can then confirm the identity and eligibility of a participant through a simple fingerprint check. Each time assistance is distributed, the system logs an encounter with an established identity, connecting the form and quantity of assistance to an actual person. As with all types of personal data, the safe storage of this information must be considered ([See guidance on data storage](#)).

Trócaire has not established the capacity for biometric registration. The use of existing biometric information from other humanitarian actors should only be considered in collaboration with Trócaire's Digital Data advisor and the humanitarian team in order to assess the risks and factors of biometric registration.

5. BUDGETING FOR TARGETING

Any targeting approach will require investment in resources, and the related costs should be budgeted for from the start. These might include:

- Time required
- Staffing
- Additional volunteers
- Equipment (e.g. tablet/phone for digital surveys)
- Cost of questionnaire printing
- Logistical costs
- Communications costs

It is generally assumed that targeting approaches that require higher degrees of accuracy will require greater resources. However, the evidence for this is limited. Each type of targeting approach carries different budgetary costs and human resource requirements. Some carry costs for the implementing agency, while others carry costs for the community. The costs of a particular targeting system should also be considered in relation to the extent to which objectives have been effectively achieved.

To optimise targeting cost, targeting can be combined with other programme cycle management processes. Targeting elements can be incorporated into pre-existing budget lines, for example:

- **Needs Assessment:** once the broader area of humanitarian need is established (by humanitarian coordination or initial assessment) and area of focus has been decided, targeting can be combined with any sector-based detailed assessment.
 - **Baseline Survey:** if the programme assistance package has already been decided (e.g. the project result framework has been developed) and the target group broadly defined, baseline data collection can be combined with the targeting process. This can be done by including project indicators in the data collection for the targeting exercise.
 - **Programme participant registration/preparation of master programme participant list:** it is common practice to use a standard template to facilitate registration. Templates typically include information on family composition and the assistance package to be provided ([see registration template for a sample](#)). However, it is more efficient to use information previously collected in one of the programme cycle management processes. For instance, it is possible to generate a distribution list from data collected during the identification of vulnerable groups (if a survey was involved). If the programme participant identification approach is community-based, the participant profile requested during the registration process can be used to confirm whether the profile of the proposed individuals satisfies the criteria set. In this way, it serves as a means of validation.
 - **Working with other programmes for targeting:** the targeting objective can be achieved when working with other programmes, including other organisations working in the same community, by establishing referral mechanisms.
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I ANNEXES

- Overview of Steps in the Process for Community-Based, Administrative and Mixed Targeting
 - Overview of Steps in the Process for Self-Targeting in the case food security programs
 - Overview of Steps in the Process for Self-Targeting in the case of a protection intervention
 - Overview of Steps in the Process for Referral Targeting
 - List of sector-specific standard indicators for targeting with suggested tool;
 - Annex – case studies;
 - Of the shelf targeting questionnaire including digital tools;
 - Registration template.
 - Safe distribution checklist
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Acknowledgement

The guide is the result of a consultative process across the Global Humanitarian team which was led by Dejene Fikre (Regional Humanitarian Advisor) and a task team of Maria Collison (Strategy & Impact Adviser) and Deirdre McArdle (Humanitarian Manager – Operations). Editing was done by Grace Duffy (Strategy & Impact consultant).

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