

Rapid Assessments Summary Sheet



Definition

A rapid appraisal of the immediate emergency phase, intended to provide a qualitative, cross sectional snapshot through observation, key informant interviews, focus group discussion and secondary sources.

What do I need to know?

- An initial rapid assessment is an essential step in determining whether an emergency exists and if so what the immediate priorities of the affected population are.
- An initial rapid assessment should be conducted as soon as possible after an emergency, ideally within the first week.
- The assessment will likely be qualitative in nature but should include quantitative information when available.
- The aim is to describe the current situation, outline the public health needs and plan priority interventions.
- The duration of a rapid assessment depends on the size and geographical distribution of the population affected, the security situation, access to the population, transport and logistics, the human resources available and the methods used.
- A more thorough assessment, with detailed qualitative and quantitative data and interventions plans, should be completed as soon as possible after the rapid assessment based on the recommendation of the rapid assessment.
- The findings from the rapid assessment need to drive the program priorities and interventions.
- Disseminate findings of the rapid assessment immediately to facilitate concept paper writing, to seek fund, guide deployment of personnel.

What are my objectives?

- Assess the extent of the emergency, identify the principal needs and gaps, and identify potential health threats to the population.
- Define and prioritize the type and size of interventions and priority activities and provide information needed to plan the implementation of interventions.
- Broadly share information with the international community, donors and the press in order to mobilize human and financial resources.

Who should be on the team and what are the tasks?

Team Composition

The specific skill required vary with the type of emergency but include the following:

- Public health /epidemiology
- Nutrition
- Logistics
- Water and sanitation/environmental health
- Other skills depending on circumstances

Tasks

- Designate team leader
- Prepare a rapid health assessment checklist (SC has existing rapid assessment tools available)
- Prepare a timetable of assessment
- Assign tasks
- Obtain necessary equipment (e.g. computers, scales, lab supplies)
- Organize visas, transport, vehicles, fuel
- Set up a communication system – radio, satellite phone
- Inform local authorities – get permission to travel
- Inform potential donors and key decision-makers

How is data collected?

- Review of existing information – begin prior to field trip (UN website – WHO, OCHA, WFP)
- Visual inspection of the affected area – cross-sectoral walks
- Interviews with key informants in the affect areas – affected community, camp leaders, health workers
- Rapid surveys – sometimes convenient sampling to assess malnutrition level, or number of cases with diarrhea

What information is essential to collect?

This is an example of essential information needed, depending on the context you might need to add more, and sometimes not all information is available:

- Background of the emergency
- Estimate size of affected population and population movements into and out of the area
- Map of the site – usually done by OCHA, if not hand drawn
- Environmental conditions
- Security conditions and access (roads, bridges, ports, airfields etc)
- Health and nutritional status of the population affected by the emergency
- Major health threats – communicable and non-communicable diseases
- Diseases of epidemic potential
- Existing health facilities and staff – capacity to deal with the affected population
- Estimation of recent mortality rates
- Surveillance system in place prior to the emergency
- Availability of food, water and shelter
- Extent of involvement of the local authorities, especially the Ministry of Health
- Presence and activities of international or local organizations

- ❖ Document adapted from **Communicable Disease Control in Emergencies: A field Manual, WHO 2005.**
- ❖ **Health Cluster – rapid health assessment tool available in the SC Emergency Health and Nutrition Toolkit resource library**