Introduction

In an effort to standardize data collection in Iraq, in January 2018 the Iraq Assessment Working Group (AWG) proceeded to develop the Common Database of Indicators (CDI), a repository of Cluster-generated and -endorsed indicators.[1] The database is developed to support humanitarian actors on the design of program-specific needs assessment surveys. Available online: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/node/168141

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on how and when to use the CDI. The guideline and the tool are targeted toward Clusters (including their coordinators, information managers, and assessment focal points), UN agencies, international and local NGOs (including the field managers monitoring and evaluation officers, assessment officers and/or team leaders) and other field practitioners involved in needs assessments.

IMPORTANT:

- Although significant effort was placed into the CDI development and several rounds of reviews have been conducted, the database remains a dynamic document where further improvements should be considered based on feedback from implementing partners and the changing humanitarian context in Iraq. The document is maintained by the AWG who will facilitate edits/updates as needed, with a minimum of a yearly review.
- Assessment objectives, methodology, and understanding of the limitations of the data are crucial for any assessment process. The database and this guidance note does not cover these topics. Please consult with AWG and/or cluster focal points on methodology when developing an assessment tool.

Terminology

Focus Group Discussions / Community Group Discussions	Semi-structured interviews with small groups (6-12 people), typically using both a set question route and follow-up probes, to collect information about people's experiences, feelings, and preferences. Used as a qualitative approach to gain an understanding of the needs in the community.
Household surveys	A structured tool that is conducted at household level. It supports a quantitative approach to data collection and permits generating statistics that measure the impact of a crisis in the community as well as the prevalence of need.
Key Informant Interview	(Semi) structured questionnaire to collect qualitative information on the experiences, feelings and preferences of the community. A key informant is an individual with prior and specific knowledge of certain aspects of the community (e.g. community leaders, farmers, members of women's groups, health workers)
Indicator	Characteristic of a population or environment which is subject to measurement (directly or indirectly) and can be used to describe one or more aspects of the emergency. As much as possible, indicators should be expressed relative to a denominator (e.g. rate, percentage, number)
Indicators used at household level	Refers to indicators that can be used once the situation stabilized, to adjust ongoing response, inform detailed planning and programming, and joint monitoring.
Indicators used at community level	Refers to indicators that can be used in the first 72 hours to two weeks for initial needs assessments or rapid multi-sectoral assessments to inform planning of immediate humanitarian response and define the focus for detailed/follow-on assessments. Community level indicators can also be used further along the response if security and access constraints persist (e.g. western Anbar is still largely inaccessible to many humanitarian actors). If an organisation is looking to expand their intervention to an area outside of where they have a base/resources, a qualitative tool designed with community level indicators will be easier to implement than a HH survey.

What is the Common Database of Indicators?

The CDI is a repository of cluster-endorsed needs assessment indicators developed in consultation with clusters coordinators, information management officers, and working groups in Iraq, with technical and expert

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[1] AWG meeting minutes 16/1/2018, 19/2/2018, Iraq AWG survey 12/2017

support from REACH Initiative and Handicap International. Global IASC-endorsed indicators on Accountability to Affected Populations and guidance from Washington Group on Disability were also considered to the extent possible.

The CDI offers organizations a set of indicators to flexibly choose from and combine across the following sectors:
- Clusters: Education; Food Security; Health; Livelihoods; Protection (General Protection, Child Protection, Gender-based Violence, Mine Action, Housing, Land and Property); Shelter-NFI; and WASH;
- Cross-sectoral or cross-cutting indicators: Population Movement, AAP, Disability, and Cash.

The CDI provides indicators for two units of measurement:
- Household surveys
- Community-level assessments

The CDI is divided into six excel sheets as follows:
- Tab 0 **Read me**: includes excerpts from this guidance note.
- Tab 1 **All_Indicators_HH**: Includes a comprehensive list of sector-specific indicators to inform household-level survey design.
- Tab 2 **Prioritized_HH**: Includes core indicators prioritized by each Cluster to inform the design of multi-sectoral needs assessments surveys. Every questionnaire should include at the minimum the core indicators of the sectors in which needs are being assessed.
- Tab 3 **All_Indicators_Community_KI**: Includes a comprehensive list of sector-specific indicators to inform community-level survey design (key informants, focus group discussions).
- Tab 4 **Prioritized_KI_community**: Includes core indicators prioritized by each Cluster to inform the design of multi-sectoral needs assessments surveys. Every questionnaire should include at the minimum the core indicators of the sectors in which needs are being assessed.
- Tab 5 **Abbreviations & Terminology**: key acronyms and assessment-related terminology explained.

For each indicator, the CDI aims to provide the following:
- Domain/category – thematic area that the indicators seeks to evaluate
- Question - to use/adjust in the field
- Response options (exhaustive and exclusive set of options)
- Constraints on the response options (e.g. select one, max. three)
- Guidance for the enumerators/analysis for questions that are more complex and/or sensitive

When to use it?

The CDI offers a set of indicators to flexibly choose from and combine when an organization/Cluster wants to:
- Develop/roll-out an organization-specific multi-sector assessment tool
  e.g. NGO x is looking to program in education, protection and livelihoods and seeks to develop a multi-sectoral tool to assess the needs of the communities.
- Revise the existing organization- or Cluster-specific tools
  e.g. MCNA VI survey

When not to use it?

- The CDI cannot be used to develop/conduct/replace technical sector-specific assessments (e.g. structural shelter damage assessments or nutrition assessments require technical and health experts).
- The CDI is not designed to support the development of direct observations sheets.
- Indicators should not be picked randomly to design a tool, if a more appropriate needs assessment tool is already available. For this, consult the Iraq Catalogue of Assessments Tool available online here: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/node/168141

Why should I use the CDI?

- Save organizational time and resources by using well-designed Cluster-endorsed indicators that have gone through several revisions processes.
- Helps you develop multi-sectoral assessment tools, especially if there is limited technical capacity/expertise within your NGO and/or no standardized assessment tools are available.
- Standardized indictors allow for data reported by your organizations to be comparable and in line with the reporting objectives of the Clusters in Iraq, which in turn, supports a more rigorous analysis of needs.
- A rigorous analysis of needs increases the quality of the Humanitarian Needs Overview and Humanitarian Response Plan; this empowers each Cluster to conduct evidence-based advocacy and fundraising with donors on behalf of their partners.
- Standardized indictors provide a minimum degree of confidence that the data collected in a given community by a fellow NGO/agency will constitute needs data that is relevant and accurate for your NGO/agency as well. Indirectly, this supports to minimize assessment fatigue and unnecessary intrusion in the lives of the communities you are seeking to help.
- When indicators are common and data collection is harmonized, the humanitarian community can report consistently on quantifiable data to inform humanitarian intervention. In this way, the assessment findings of your organization are more likely to feed into Cluster-specific needs analysis and therefore used also at a more strategic level (vs. limiting the use of the data for programmatic intervention).

What do I do with the data/findings?

- Share reports or key findings, and anonymized datasets when applicable, with the relevant Cluster focal points and the AWG.
- The Cluster Information Management Officers are responsible to upload Cluster-sanctioned assessments on the Iraq Assessment Registry here: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/iraq/assessments/map

Contacts:

- Assessment Working Group (AWG) contacts
  - Alexandra Goldsack, REACH Initiative, AWG Co-chair, alexandra.goldsack@reach-initiative.org
  - Nina Yang, REACH Initiative, Assessment Officer, nina.yang@reach-initiative.org
  - Alexandra Lazau-Ratz, OCHA, AWG Chair, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, lazau-ratz@un.org
- Information Management Working Group (IMWG) contacts
  - Reem Nashashibi, IMWG Chair, Head of OCHA Information Management Unit, nashashibi@un.org
  - Kuda L. Mhwandagara, Information Management Officer, mhwandagarak@un.org
- Cluster focal points: contacts are updated on a monthly basis and available for download on Hr.Info here: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/iraq

All Cluster partners are encouraged to use indicators from the database when conducting assessments to ensure harmonized data collection and share assessment findings with Clusters who can upload these on the Iraq Assessment Registry (https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/iraq/assessments). This enables more sector-specific analysis to be conducted within the Cluster and enhances coordination.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF DATA COLLECTION IN IRAQ!