



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Assessment and Monitoring
Resource Centre

Developing Assessment Recommendations

Charting a course of action: The role of recommendations

Assessment recommendations play a pivotal role in guiding humanitarian response efforts in refugee and displacement contexts. They not only provide a roadmap for action but also ensure that the needs and aspirations of displaced populations are at the forefront of decision-making. This document outlines the fundamental principles and steps for developing effective assessment recommendations, emphasizing inclusivity, evidence-based approaches, and clear communication.

Assessment recommendations are **actionable proposals derived from the findings of assessments** conducted in refugee and displacement contexts. These recommendations are instrumental in **shaping policies and programming** in support of displaced populations. They guide decision-making, inform resource allocation, and drive policy formulation.

In the context of **joint assessments**, where various organizations and partners collaborate to collect and analyse data, **recommendations serve as a common ground for prioritizing interventions** and fostering a **harmonized response**.

Key principles: The foundation of effective recommendations

Effective assessment recommendations are grounded in several key principles:



Inclusivity: Engage a diverse range of stakeholders, including affected communities, local authorities, humanitarian partners, and experts. Recommendations should reflect a variety of perspectives, including those of vulnerable groups.



Evidence-Based: Recommendations should be firmly grounded in data and analysis, making them more compelling and credible.



Relevance: Recommendations should address the most pressing needs and challenges faced by displaced populations, considering the unique circumstances of different groups.



Specificity: Recommendations must be clear, actionable, and easy to understand. Vague or overly general recommendations can hinder implementation.



Feasibility: Consider the practical constraints of implementing recommendations, including available resources, local capacities, and logistical challenges.

Linking findings with recommendations

Assessment recommendations should directly stem from the findings of data analysis (including quantitative and qualitative). The findings are the raw insights derived from the analysis of assessment data, and recommendations are the actionable strategies developed in response to these findings. This ensures that recommendations are a targeted response to the identified issues.

Differences between Findings and Recommendations in Assessment Reports		
	Findings	Recommendations
What are they?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The insights derived from analysed and processed assessment data Answer questions like "What is the current situation?" or "What are the key issues?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actionable proposals developed in response to assessment findings. Specific and actionable strategies for addressing identified issues. Answer questions like "What should be done to address the findings?"
What is their purpose?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a snapshot of the current state of affairs The basis for generating recommendations and inform decision-making. Essential for identifying problems, trends, and areas that require attention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action-oriented and guide decisions on how to address issues identified in the assessment findings. Used to shape policies, allocate resources, and drive actions that improve the situation. Provide a roadmap for addressing the findings effectively.
How are they formulated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through data collection, processing, analysis, and interpretation. Often involve statistical data, surveys, interviews, and other research methods to quantify and describe the situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulated based on the findings, and expert knowledge. Require careful consideration of the data, context, and stakeholder input. Should be specific, actionable, and tied directly to the findings.
Example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75% of the households in the refugee camp lack access to clean water and sanitation facilities, increasing the risk of waterborne diseases and poor hygiene. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNHCR and the government should prioritize the provision of safe water and sanitation services to the camp residents, in collaboration with partners. Including installing water tanks, pumps, pipes, taps, latrines, showers, and waste disposal systems. UNHCR and partners should also conduct hygiene promotion campaigns and distribute hygiene kits to the households.

Formulating recommendations

1. **Engage key stakeholders:** Engage a diverse range of stakeholders in the recommendation development process building on agreed assessment findings that included affected communities, local authorities, humanitarian organizations, and experts. Ensure transparency and inclusivity by conducting consultations to gather input and feedback.
2. **Data-Driven Decisions:** Link recommendations to the findings based on a thorough analysis of assessment data, ensuring they are informed by quantitative and qualitative evidence. Don't forget to utilize secondary data that can be triangulated with primary data to identify any outliers and to check findings and assumptions.
3. **Identify Root Causes:** Go beyond surface-level issues to identify and address the root causes of problems, rather than merely treating symptoms.

Example of a root cause analysis

"The main causes of food insecurity among the displaced population was the lack of access to land and livelihood opportunities. The team traced this problem to the underlying factors of land tenure insecurity, legal restrictions on employment, environmental degradation, and market barriers. The team also examined the consequences of food insecurity on health, nutrition, education, and protection outcomes."

4. **Prioritization:** Assess the urgency and potential impact of each recommendation to determine priorities and allocate resources effectively.
5. **Conciseness:** Keep recommendations concise and straightforward, avoiding jargon.
6. **Context Consideration:** Be mindful of the broader context and potential unintended consequences of recommendations, considering cultural, social, and political factors that may influence implementation.
7. **Response capacity:** Consider the capacity of organizations involved, including UNHCR, governments, and humanitarian and development partners, to implement the recommendations. **Ensure that recommendations are aspirational yet realistic** and achievable.
8. **Be clear on "who":** Don't leave it open to interpretation as to which actors should undertake each actionable recommendation. For a recommendation to be actionable, this should be assigned to a stakeholder, or group of stakeholders, preferably with their participation.

Assigning Recommendations to Others


Recommendations sometimes miss the identification of the correct target(s) to implement the recommendations. For example, the recommendation; "populations should be protected from violence" does not specify who should protect them from violence. While assigning recommendations with others should be coordinated with relevant stakeholders, conducted respectfully, and with an analysis of what is feasible, UNHCR and partners can also formulate its recommendations for others.

For examples of recommendations formulated for different actors, see the 2019 UNHCR co-authored report [Profiling of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Third Country Nationals not registered with the Asylum Service in Thessaloniki, Greece](#).


9. **Be clear on timing:** The report should provide information about when each recommendation is expected to be achieved (short, medium, long term) and define what is meant by short (e.g., within the next 1-3 months), medium (e.g., within the next year), and long term (e.g., within the 2-3 years).

Examples of how to formulate recommendations

The following three examples illustrate how to improve assessment recommendations for clarity and specificity:

 **Weak recommendation:** Increase assistance to the refugees in the camp.


This recommendation is vague and lacks specificity. It does not provide clear guidance on what type of support, how much, for whom and which actors should be involved.

 **Strong recommendation:** UNHCR should increase its Cash-Based Interventions in the camp, prioritizing the most vulnerable households, especially those headed by women and the elderly. This is based on the findings that 75% of refugees reported insufficient income to meet their basic needs, with 65% expressing a preference for cash assistance over in-kind support.

This recommendation is specific, measurable, and evidence-based. It clearly defines the type of intervention (Cash-Based Interventions), and the target beneficiaries (vulnerable households, with a focus on female- and elderly-headed ones). It also ties the recommendation to assessment findings, making it more compelling. The expected timeframe for this recommendation is short-term (within the next 3 months).

 **Weak recommendation:** Launch skills training programs for displaced adults, emphasizing marketable skills that align with local economic opportunities, and facilitate access to microfinance services.


This recommendation is too general and lacks detail. It does not specify what kind of skills training programs, how they will be delivered, or why they are needed.

 **Strong recommendation:** To enhance the livelihoods and self-reliance of displaced adults, UNHCR and partners should launch skills training programs that equip them with marketable skills (e.g., carpentry, tailoring, or hairdressing) aligned with local economic opportunities. Facilitate access to microfinance services, providing financial literacy training and linking beneficiaries with favourable terms and conditions offered by microfinance institutions.

This recommendation is specific, actionable, and relevant. It defines the purpose (enhancing livelihoods and self-reliance), specifies the type of skills training programs (marketable skills aligned with local economic opportunities), and outlines a comprehensive approach that includes both skills training and access to microfinance services. It provides a clear path for implementation. The expected timeframe for this recommendation is medium-term (within the next year).

 **Weak recommendation:** Set up a mechanism to address gender-based violence in the camp.

This recommendation is too vague and does not provide details on how the mechanism will operate or what it will entail.

 **Strong recommendation:** UNHCR should establish a community-based protection mechanism in the camp to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV) cases. The mechanism should involve training and supporting refugee volunteers in conducting awareness-raising activities, providing psychosocial support, and referring survivors to specialized services.

This recommendation is specific, outlines the purpose of the mechanism, and provides clear steps for implementation, including training and support for refugee volunteers and the range of activities they will be involved in. It outlines a comprehensive approach. The expected timeframe for this recommendation is short-term (within the next 3 months).

Monitoring recommendations

Effective recommendations are dynamic and evolve with changing circumstances. To monitor the implementation of recommendations:

1. **Establish clear indicators, timelines, and responsible parties** for each recommendation.
2. **Regularly review progress and adjust** to ensure intended impact.
3. **Consider follow-up assessments** to measure effectiveness and inform future decision-making.