



Tips on Selecting Assessment Indicators and Questions

This document offers UNHCR staff some tips on selecting indicators and questions within an [analytical framework](#). An analytical framework provides a structured approach to gathering and interpreting data, guiding UNHCR staff in making informed decisions. Effective selection of indicators and questions is crucial for accurate insights. The analytical framework guides the selection of indicators and questions, while the [data analysis plan](#) outlines how to process and interpret the data collected from these indicators and questions.

Analytical Framework	Data Analysis Plan
Includes objectives, conceptual framework, themes or sectors for analysis, and indicators/ variables	Includes data sources, collection methods, variables, indicators, and analysis methods and tools, timeline, and responsibilities for the analysis
Follows from the objectives for the assessment.	Follows from the objectives, conceptual framework, themes, and predictions for the assessment
Helps you find patterns, themes, and connections in the data	Helps you get reliable results from the data
Helps you communicate and collaborate with others	Helps you choose the best research methods and analytical tools

1. Ensure Clarity and Consensus on Objectives

Before determining which indicators and questions will be used, ensure that there is consensus on the main objective(s) of the assessment, including specifying how the results will be used to inform decisions or policies. See [Setting Assessment Objectives](#) for useful tips on formulating assessment objectives.

2. Identify Key Themes and Relevant Analytical Frameworks

Based on the predefined objectives, determine the main areas of concern and how these themes align with broader operational objectives. Use relevant [analytical frameworks](#) that correspond to the assessment objectives.

Tips when Selecting Indicators and Questions for your Assessment		
DON'T	DO	WHY
Jump straight to the questionnaire.	Ensure you have agreed objectives and an analytical framework – proceeding in a logical flow to the questionnaire.	To help follow a clear and logical path, ensure questions are aligned with goals, and avoid unused questions in the analysis phase.
Start creating your own questions without referencing established best practices.	Use existing questions that have been tried and tested, adapting only to the context when necessary.	To ensure that the questions follow established best practices, are valid and reliable, and save time and effort.
Reinvent the wheel – by coming up with your own unique analytical framework.	Use and adapted established analytical frameworks that link to your objectives.	To ensure that analysis is built on a strong analytical foundation, based on established research, and is consistent and comparable with other assessments.
Skip the piloting and testing of the questionnaire	Ensure you have time to pilot and test the questionnaire, and make changes based on the results	This will help you to spot and fix any glitches or issues with your questions, such as confusion, bias, or difficulty
Design and implement the questionnaire without planning for the analysis first	Ensure you are clear on how the analysis will be conducted in advance of implementation of the questionnaire – ensuring you have the resources to do this!	This will help you to collect the data that you need for your analysis, and avoid collecting data that you don't use later on.
Add questions for things that it would be “nice to know” – that are not linked to the analytical framework and assessment objectives	Ensure every question responds to a specific indicator that has a clear analytical purpose linked to the assessment objectives.	This will help you to focus on the essential information that you need for your assessment and avoid wasting time and resources on data that you don't use.

3. Establish Criteria for Indicator Selection

Draw on existing UNHCR indicators from analytical frameworks and other resources, refining these according to the following questions:

- What specific aspects of each theme need to be measured?
- Do the selected indicators cover a range of dimensions within each theme?
- Are the indicators relevant to the specific context and assessment objectives?
- Can the indicators be measured accurately and consistently?
- Are they sensitive to the needs of vulnerable groups?
- How can indicators and questions capture the diversity within the affected population?
- How well do the indicators capture the complexity of the issue?
- How can the indicators and questions capture the various facets of diversity within the affected population?
- Are there unique vulnerabilities or disparities that need specific attention?
- Is disaggregated data (age, gender, and other forms of diversity) necessary to enable a more accurate understanding of needs, priorities, and capacity?

When refining indicators, ensure that they remain 'SMART' (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound).

4. Revise and Formulate Questions

First look at what standard modules can be incorporated into the questionnaire. It may be that one indicator will be calculated from one or several questions.

First, check the appropriateness of the questions, by asking:

- Are the question(s) appropriate to the context, and do they put anyone at risk?
- Are there any biases or leading questions that could influence respondents' answers?
- Is it difficult for respondents to reply accurately (for example through a difficult recall period, or question complexity)?

Then, consider these aspects of question formulation:

- **Type of question:** Choose between open-ended, closed-ended, multiple choice, ranking, rating, or matrix questions depending on the data needed and the mode of collection.
- **Wording and phrasing:** Use clear, simple, and precise language that is understandable by the respondents. Avoid jargon, acronyms, double negatives, double-barrelled questions, or vague terms.
- **Scales and categories:** Use consistent and appropriate scales and categories for measuring attitudes, opinions, behaviours, or characteristics.

5. Next steps: Data Analysis Plan and Pilot Testing

Following this, a [data analysis plan](#) can be developed, that defines further the unit of analysis, methods of analysis and what software and tools will be used alongside responsibilities and timeframes. This plan should outline how each indicator and question will be analysed and what variables, tests, and techniques will be applied.

Before conducting an assessment, pilot test the selected indicators and questions to ensure their validity and reliability. Pilot testing involves evaluating the questionnaire with a small sample of the target population to identify errors, ambiguities, biases, or gaps within them.

Take the time after the piloting to ensure that changes based on this analysis are incorporated into the questionnaire and data analysis plan. Pilot testing also provides an opportunity to test the feasibility and accuracy of the proposed data analysis methods and tools, and to adjust if needed.

Additional tips when selecting indicators and questions



Build on Existing Best Practices: Utilize established analytical frameworks, indicator sets and question modules to streamline framework development and ensure best practices are adhered to.



Adapt to the context: While adopting existing practices, tailor them to the specific operational context for relevance.



Avoid Overburdening: Limit the number of indicators and questions to prevent excessive data collection that could overwhelm respondents or staff.



Consistency is Key: Ensure consistency across surveys and assessments to enable meaningful comparisons over time.



Engage Stakeholders: Involve relevant stakeholders in indicator and question selection to capture diverse perspectives.

References

[UNHCR Needs Assessment Handbook](#): A comprehensive guide on how to plan, design, implement, and use needs assessments in humanitarian contexts.

[UNHCR Emergency Handbook – Assessment Chapter](#): Focuses on conducting assessments during emergencies, providing guidance on rapid assessment methodologies and tools.

[UNHCR Socioeconomic assessment toolkit](#): Resource pack for planning and implementing socioeconomic assessments.

UNHCR-WFP Joint Analytical Framework: Set of tools to guide UNHCR and WFP country operations to reach a common understanding of households' ability to meet their basic needs.

UNHCR Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey (SENS) Guidelines: A set of guidelines and tools for conducting nutrition and health surveys among refugee populations.

UNHCR Health Access and Utilization Survey Plus (HAUS+): Guidance on measurement of disease prevalence, health status, health expenditure and knowledge and access to key health services based on a representative sample of the population.

UNHCR CBI Tools and Guidance: A resource for planning and implementing Cash-Based Interventions, which may be relevant for assessing the economic conditions and needs of displaced populations.

UNHCR Guidance on Gender-Based Violence Assessment in Emergencies: Provides guidance on assessing gender-based violence issues within refugee and displaced populations.