



Essential Needs Analysis

A holistic approach to Zero Hunger

WHAT ARE ESSENTIAL NEEDS?

While there is no rigid list on what constitutes essential needs, there is general consensus that these include requirements—food, water, sanitation, clothing, shelter and life-saving health care— which people need to meet to ensure survival and a minimum level of physical and mental well-being

In a situation of hardship or when affected by shock, vulnerable households often have to prioritize their limited resources across multiple essential needs to survive, at the expense of their well-being.

ESSENTIAL NEEDS ANALYSIS

Due to the interdependent nature of essential needs, there is growing consensus that analysing and addressing them coherently

across sectors would positively impact households' well-being.

By taking into account the existing linkages between different needs, an essential needs analysis (ENA) helps the international community place the whole range of households' needs at the centre of programmatic decisions. Not doing so may lead people to redistribute resources at the expense of their well-being.

WHY DO ESSENTIAL NEEDS MATTER TO FOOD SECURITY?

A household's ability to meet food and nutritional requirements depends on its ability to also meet other essential needs. This is because other needs interact with food security – whether by competing for limited



resources or by reinforcing a household's ability to achieve food security and nutrition.

Food security and nutrition objectives can only be sustainably tackled if livelihoods, access to safe drinking water, minimum hygiene standards, basic education and basic health concerns are addressed.

Similarly, health objectives are better achieved if access to nutritious food and safe drinking water is also guaranteed; universal education is only likely if girls and boys enjoy equal access to schools; livelihood objectives cannot be strived for at the detriment of protection, the environment, or gender equality goals.

A true understanding of food security therefore requires analysts to look beyond households' basic food consumption and adopt a holistic approach of examining how households' essential needs interplay with each other.

WFP AND ESSENTIAL NEEDS

WFP encourages Country Offices to **undertake essential needs analysis where appropriate and regardless of modality**. This broader approach allows WFP to obtain the best possible results in food security and nutrition. An essential needs analysis allows us to:

1. **Understand** a wide range of households' needs, how they affect one another, and the trade-offs households face to meet them.
2. Coordinate with partners to provide a **holistic and harmonized response** which addresses multiple and intrinsically linked needs, thereby making a more significant difference to vulnerable households.
3. Within that overall response, ensure that WFP's contribution is designed in an **integrated manner** (multiple modalities and programmatic variations), considering all the elements that affect food security and nutrition such as health, sanitation, etc.
4. Contribute to **longer-term outcomes** through understanding of the multiple dimensions of poverty and interlinked needs, which also enables WFP to better align with governments' and development partners' efforts in social protection.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR?

WFP has prepared an [interim guidance package](#) on how to carry out an essential needs analysis, how to calculate a Minimum Expenditure Basket; and how to undertake a

supply assessment of goods and services for essential needs. The essential needs analytical approach has been adopted into assessments in several countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Turkey and Bangladesh for the Rohingya response. Minimum Expenditure baskets have also been developed in a number of countries to facilitate the establishment of evidence-based transfer values and targeting criteria.

Workshops focusing on the essential needs analysis and how to apply it have been carried out in Turkey and in the West Africa region.

IS THE ESSENTIAL NEEDS APPROACH WORKING?

- In Turkey, 1.3 million Syrian refugees receive cash transfers to cover essential needs such as food, rent, medicine or clothing. The first monitoring results released at the end of 2017 showed that food security rates have improved among beneficiaries, and that 95 percent of them consume a diverse nutrient-rich diet with cereals, proteins and fresh food and vegetables daily. Cash beneficiaries were less likely to use emergency coping strategies such as selling assets or taking their children out of school compared to households with a similar profile not benefiting from the transfer system.
- An operational study in El Salvador compared the effect of food vouchers, cash to cover food security needs, and cash to cover essential needs on food security indicators. While all three modalities achieved positive results on food consumption, the group receiving cash transfers to cover more than just food needs better maintained acceptable food consumption three months after completion of the project. The study attributes this to the flexibility that the extra cash portion gave households to save, plan and generally build resilience to unexpected shocks.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

The essential needs approach is currently being applied through a number of field studies driven by country demand. As the methodology is rolled out and its applications tested, the interim guidance will be refined and improved over the course of 2019. Support to Regional Bureaux and Country Offices is continuously provided by VAM and CBT to integrate an essential needs analytical lens in assessments and programme planning. Where needs and opportunities arise, trainings and workshops will be provided for staff and WFP partners.