



World Food Programme



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Targeting and prioritization

Operational Guidance Note

January 2021

Targeting and prioritization

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Research, Assessment and Monitoring Division.

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These guidelines have been prepared by the Needs Assessment and Targeting Unit of the Research, Assessment and Monitoring (RAM) Division and benefitted from extensive consultations, reviews and feedback by the Emergency and Transitions, Cash-Based Transfers, Safety Nets and Social Protection, and Asset Creation and Livelihoods Units/Divisions within the Programme and Policy Department, as well as colleagues in selected regional and country offices.

The document aims to guide WFP country offices in strategic and operational decision making related to targeting and prioritization and draws upon best practices and lessons learned from WFP operations during the period 2016 to 2020.

The guidance note will be regularly updated, ensuring alignment with other internal guidance documents and directives. This version focuses on programmes that aim to improve households' food security or their economic capacity to meet food and other essential needs. It will be expanded to cover a broader range of activities based on learning from the joint RAM/PRO targeting capacity strengthening project, field experience and consultations in 2021.

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1 Introduction

The number of hungry people in the world has been rising over recent years. Nearly **690 million people** were undernourished in 2019, representing 8.9 percent of the world’s population. This is an increase of 10 million people in just one year and nearly 60 million in five years.¹ According to the 2020 Global Report on Food Crises, 135 million people in 55 countries suffered from acute food insecurity in 2019.²

The rise in hunger is being driven by conflicts and climate-related and economic shocks. These huge challenges are being exacerbated by COVID-19: WFP estimates that in the 80 countries where it operates, the pandemic is putting an **additional 121 million people** at risk of acute food insecurity – an 82 percent increase compared to pre-pandemic numbers.³ The World Bank estimates that up to 150 million additional people could fall into extreme poverty by the end of 2021, which would constitute the worst setback in poverty reduction in at least three decades.⁴

Humanitarian needs have been outstripping available resources for the past 10 years and the gap continues to grow. In 2019, although WFP revenue increased by 10 percent reaching a record USD 8 billion, contributions were still insufficient to cover the needs of targeted populations, leaving a funding gap of USD 4.1 billion. The gap has continued to widen in 2020.

Needs-based targeting ensures that WFP assistance is aimed at helping the right people, in the right place, at the right time and in the right way. With resources shrinking in relation to needs, there is a growing urgency for WFP to clarify how needs are translated into the number of people to be assisted, how these people are selected and how further prioritization steps are taken during times of resource constraints. A recent internal audit emphasized the need to **“establish targeting as one of the core activities of WFP’s operations”**.⁵

WFP does not promote a “one-size-fits-all” approach but rather acknowledges the need for decisions to be driven by knowledge of the local context and taken jointly by country offices and key stakeholders.⁶ The overall objectives of targeting and prioritization are as follows:

1. Ensure that those most in need receive the assistance they require and that as many of the people in need as possible are reached given resource constraints (minimize exclusion errors);
2. Minimize the unintentional distribution of assistance to the non-vulnerable (minimize inclusion errors);
3. Accurately determine who should receive assistance; and
4. Maintain transparency and integrity throughout the process in order to secure community trust and local engagement in the approach taken.

Targeting and prioritization is a continuous and cross-functional exercise led jointly by the Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Unit (VAM) and Programme staff. It requires the involvement of various cross-function support units and other teams such as Monitoring, Protection, Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), Technology (TEC), Resource Management and Partnerships. Most commonly, targeting is led by country offices in close collaboration with local partners, with technical resources and advice sought from the regional bureaux and headquarters as needed.



Photo: Cesar Lopez/WFP

¹ FAO et al. 2020. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI)*.

² WFP. 2020. *Global Report on Food Crises*.

³ WFP. 2020. *Global Response to COVID-19: September 2020*.

⁴ World Bank. October 2020. *“COVID-19 to Add as Many as 150 Million Extreme Poor by 2021”*.

⁵ WFP. 2020. *Internal Audit of Beneficiary Targeting in WFP*, Office of the Inspector General Internal Audit Report AR/20/07.

⁶ WFP. 2017. *Refugee Assistance Guidance Manual*.

1.1 About this guidance

While there are several country-level targeting guidelines, corporate WFP guidance has not been updated since 2006.⁷ Building on recent experience and best practices implemented by WFP country offices, this document gives an overview of the targeting and prioritization process that cuts across the entire programme cycle, from initial needs assessments and context analysis to programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It explains different targeting approaches and outlines the roles and responsibilities of the various units and stakeholders in order to offer practical guidance for country offices on how to undertake targeting exercises. The document is harmonized with the *Joint Targeting Principles*⁸ and *Joint Guidance: Targeting of Assistance to Meet Basic Needs* produced with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for refugee contexts.⁹

Targeting and prioritization is conducted for WFP's different programme activities, and different approaches are used depending on the context, type of activity, etc. **This version of the operational guidance note focuses on programmes that aim to strengthening households' food security or their economic capacity to meet food and other essential needs in an emergency, protracted crisis, recovery or social protection context.** It does not cover all aspects of community-based or individual assistance programmes such as food assistance for assets (FFA), school meals or nutrition programmes, which often have different objectives that inform their targeting strategies. However, **targeting and prioritization decisions must be made and implemented in a coherent and coordinated manner in order to achieve the most effective combination of activities and targeting actions to meet the overall objectives of country strategic plans (CSPs)** and other planning documents.

This guidance is designed for WFP programme/activity managers and VAM officers; however, others such as monitoring and evaluation (M&E) staff, protection focal points, management and partners may also benefit. The user is led through four targeting and prioritization steps:

- i. Conducting a needs assessment;
- ii. Choosing and validating a targeting approach;
- iii. Selecting beneficiaries; and
- iv. Monitoring targeting processes and outcomes.

1.2 Key terms and definitions

The following definitions of key targeting and prioritization concepts are used throughout the document:

Needs assessment: Needs assessments use qualitative and quantitative tools to identify the number of people who require external assistance in order to meet their minimum food (and other essential) needs. Needs assessments also help to assess geographic and seasonal differences in needs, the impact of shocks and trends in vulnerabilities and risks. A sound and comprehensive assessment should inform responses.

Profiling: This is the process of identifying the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of different segments of the population (e.g. food insecure/vulnerable groups). A profiling exercise can be based on a quantitative household survey with a statistically representative sample, qualitative assessments, or ideally a combination of both. It helps to formulate potential eligibility criteria.

Targeting: This is the process by which populations are selected for assistance, informed by needs assessments and programme objectives. A targeting system comprises mechanisms to define target groups, targeting methods and eligibility criteria; identify eligible communities, households and individuals; and monitor the outcomes of targeting decisions.

⁷ See WFP/EB.1/2006/5-A Targeting in Emergencies – Policy Issue; WFP. 2009. Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) Handbook; and WFP. 2009. Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment & Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) Guidelines.

⁸ WFP and UNHCR. 2017. Joint Principles for Targeting Assistance to Meet Food and Other Basic Needs to Persons of Concern.

⁹ WFP and UNHCR. 2020. Joint Guidance: Targeting of Assistance to Meet Basic Needs.

Prioritization: Prioritization is driven by resource constraints. When identified needs cannot be met with available resources, the process of prioritization should ensure that the most vulnerable people within the targeted population are prioritized for assistance.

Beneficiary selection: The process of implementing targeting and prioritization decisions including preparatory steps, the application of selected eligibility criteria to generate a beneficiary list, enrolment in the programme and the provision of assistance.

Registration: Data collection for beneficiary information management – registration – is the process of recording, verifying and updating information on a defined population in order to register them for direct assistance or another clearly defined purpose such as inclusion in a shock-responsive safety net. Data collected during registration exercises can include individual and household-level information. It can consist of data gathered through a WFP initiative, e.g. direct registration into SCOPE, or data imported from third parties such as UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), non-governmental organizations or governments.

Targeting errors: Targeting requires finding an equilibrium between what is feasible given time, resource and other constraints, and the estimated accuracy. All methods of targeting come with some type and extent of error. This document sets out measures to minimize the inclusion and exclusion errors that can occur in the targeting design and implementation phases.

Validation (of targeting method): No targeting method can guarantee perfect targeting of an intended population. Qualitative and quantitative validation can help to assess the appropriateness and accuracy of different targeting methods prior to decision making in order to minimize targeting errors and ensure acceptance by the affected population.

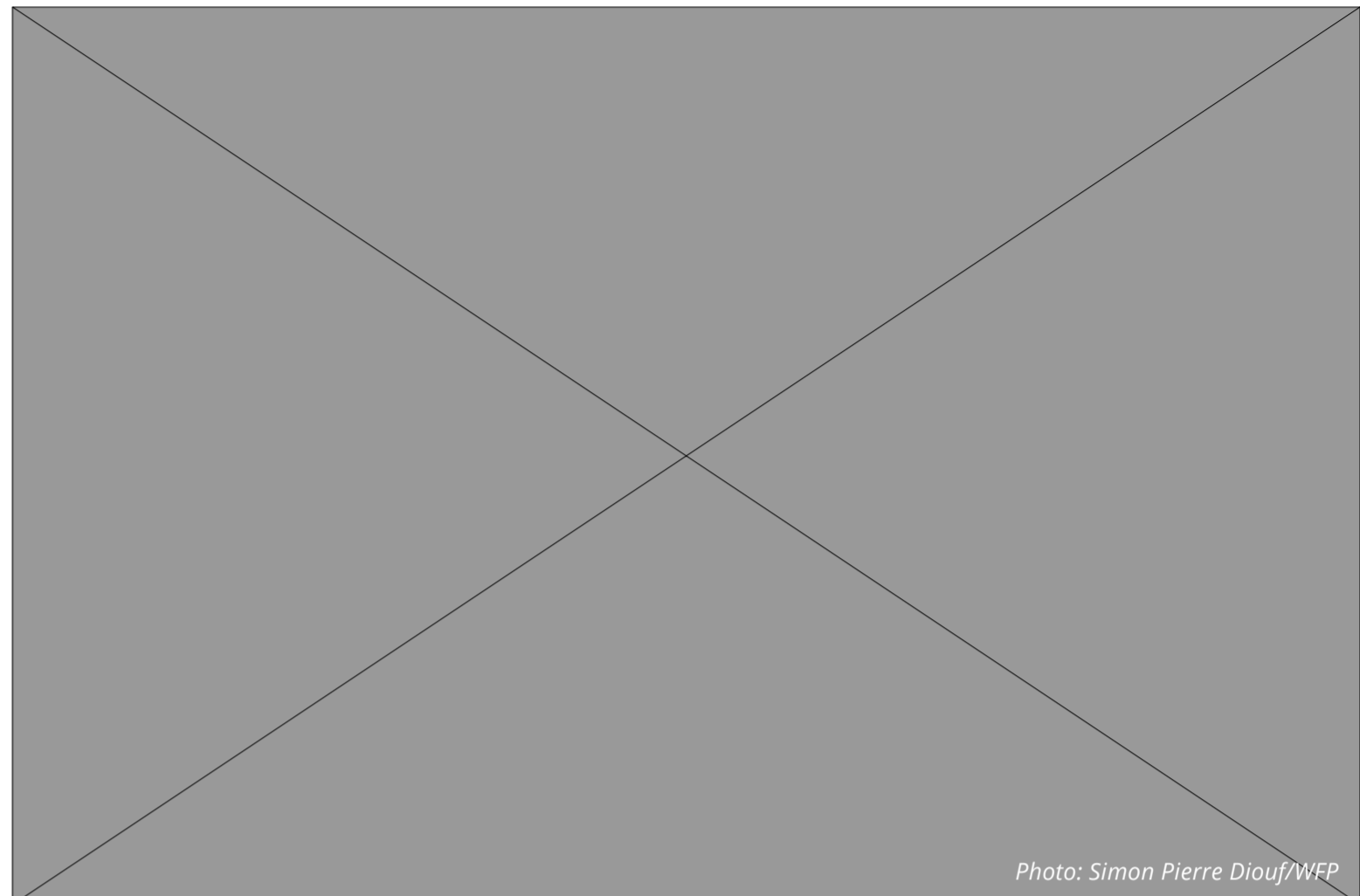


Photo: Simon Pierre Diouf/WFP

Verification: Different methods can be used to verify that the intended recipients are the ones receiving the assistance. These include physical solutions such as household visits or periodic verification exercises, and digital solutions such as biometric registration followed by identification when assistance is redeemed.

1.3 Roles and responsibilities

This section outlines key roles and responsibilities within a country office; however, partnerships with other United Nations agencies, government entities and cooperating partners are essential throughout the various phases and processes. Available capacities and expertise – internal and within partner organizations – therefore needs to be assessed. Effective and efficient targeting exercises rely on the following elements:

1. teams undertaking the various steps (e.g. needs assessments, consultations with affected populations, beneficiary selection) have the right tools and expertise to carry out the task in a timely manner and collaborate across teams;
2. sufficient data and information is available and accessible to the right team members in a timely fashion; and
3. as part of WFP's commitment to AAP, affected populations are involved in every stage of the targeting process, from design to evaluation; this ensures transparency, acceptance and the effectiveness of the targeting approach.¹⁰

¹⁰ WFP's commitment to accountability to affected populations (AAP) centres around facilitating the participation of affected people in WFP programmes by ensuring that programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes and decisions are transparent and well communicated and that they are informed by and reflective of the views of affected people. To operationalize its commitments to AAP, WFP focuses on three key components: information provision, consultations, and complaints and feedback mechanisms (CFMs). For more details, please see [WFP's Strategy for Accountability to Affected Populations](#).

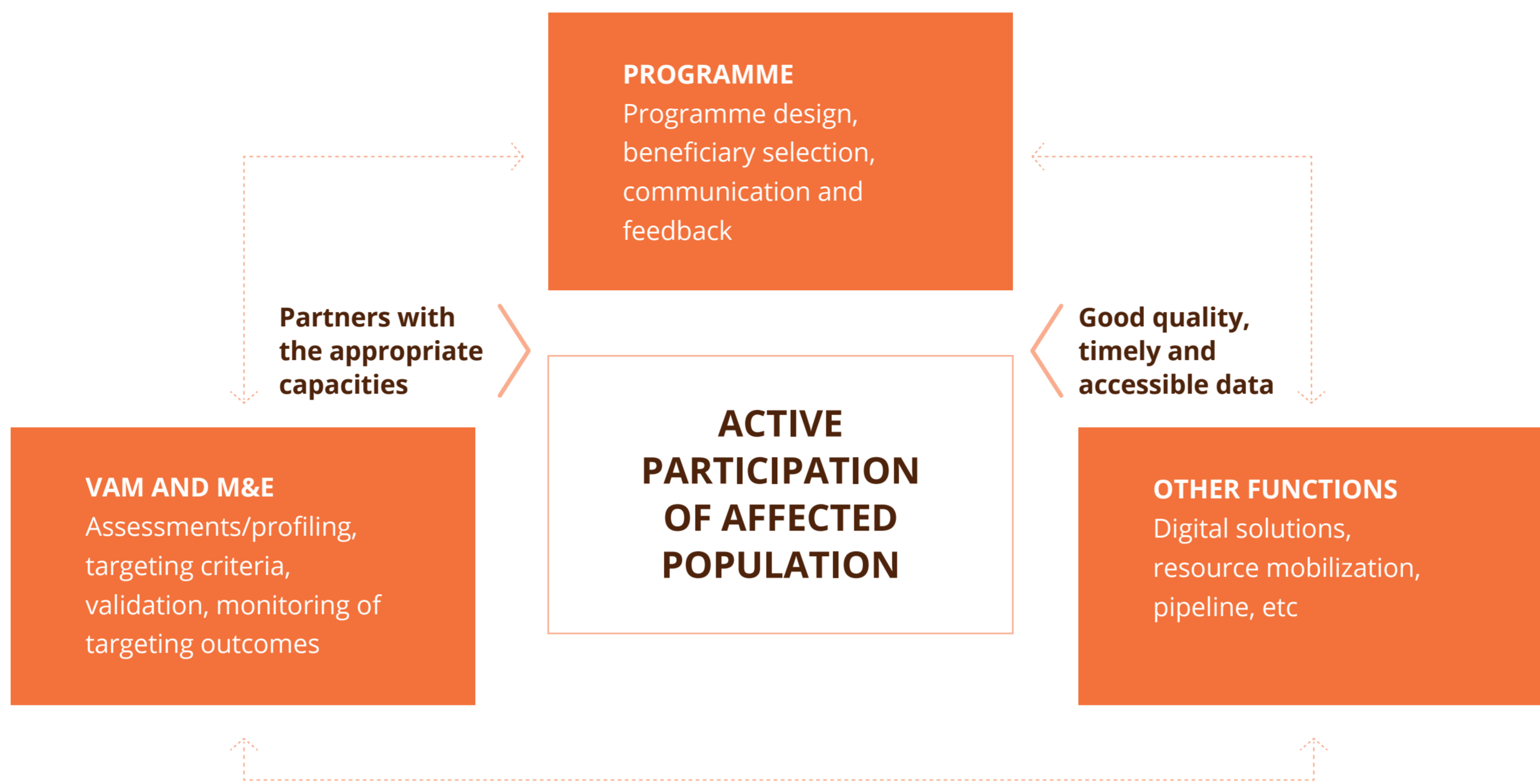


Figure 1. Key stakeholders and elements for successful targeting

For successful targeting and prioritization, it is critical that staff from Programme and VAM work hand in hand and under management oversight, with the support of other critical functions and cross-functional units including Monitoring and Evaluation, Resource Management, Partnerships, Supply Chain, TEC and AAP/Protection.

- VAM is responsible for collecting information on the needs of the affected population. Together with Programme staff, they lead the design of the targeting strategy based on broad consultations and validation of the context-specific pros and cons of various targeting approaches. With the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, VAM supports the monitoring of targeting decisions and processes.
- Programme staff, including staff from CBT depending on the delivery mechanism, are responsible for overseeing the implementation/application of eligibility criteria, establishing systems that facilitate the identification and selection of eligible households and individuals, and ensuring adherence to AAP guidelines.

- Involvement from additional functions will vary depending on the context. For example, Resource Management and Supply Chain play a critical role when a country office is facing a pipeline break or access constraints; TEC is essential when digital solutions for registering people for assistance are needed.

It is recommended to establish a targeting working group when a targeting exercise is initiated; it should be chaired by country office management (for example, the Deputy Country Director). The group should coordinate the targeting or re-targeting exercise, with VAM and/or programme officers acting as the secretariat.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of country office functional roles and responsibilities. These should be adjusted depending on the operational environment and capacities.

Table 1. Targeting roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
<p>Country office management and/or head of programme</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure targeting strategy is aligned with and supports the implementation of the CSP and relevant interagency plans; oversee its implementation. 2. Ensure the coherence of the targeting strategy across different programme activities to help meet the objectives of the CSP or other planning documents, e.g. national emergency/development plans. 3. Ensure sufficient capacities are in place to inform and implement targeting decisions; establish clear roles and responsibilities; oversee coordination between functions (e.g. Communications, Government Partnerships, resource management/budget and programming officers, social protection officers) in addition to those covered below. 4. Establish and lead a cross-functional internal coordination mechanism; ensure external coordination as needed. 5. Ensure adherence to corporate guidelines throughout the process, including needs assessments, beneficiary identity management and the protection / AAP / needs-based approach. 6. Endorse the targeting strategy proposed by the cross-functional team composed of programme/activity managers, VAM and other relevant functions. 7. Ensure timely communication with key stakeholders, including affected populations, host governments and partner organizations. 8. Maintain oversight of targeting performance and required refinements throughout the programme cycle.
<p>Head of VAM/ VAM officer</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lead or co-lead context analysis and needs assessments that will inform targeting. 2. Design a targeting strategy for household assistance, propose a targeting method, establish and validate eligibility criteria in consultation with the Programme staff, relevant interagency forums and the affected population. 3. Provide technical advice related to targeting decisions for other programme activities (also considering overall coherence). 4. Support the design of tools and training for beneficiary data collection (e.g. SCOPE registration) to ensure it matches programme information needs; support related data collection training as required. 5. Process and analyse beneficiary data for retargeting or prioritization purposes. 6. Validate and monitor targeting effectiveness (data driven and based on community consultations) and recommend improvements. 7. Liaise with Protection focal points to ensure AAP elements are mainstreamed throughout the assessment and targeting cycle.
<p>Activity managers</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work closely with VAM officers to design targeting strategies that meet programme objectives and, as relevant, national development plans and social protection schemes that WFP contributes to and/or complements. 2. Lead targeting and prioritization implementation, including the establishment of beneficiary selection mechanisms. 3. Ensure that partners and affected populations are consulted at all stages (design, implementation, evaluation) and that affected populations receive timely communication of targeting and prioritization decisions.

Role	Responsibilities
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Ensure that a robust communication system with affected populations is in place, including a functioning, accessible and responsive complaints and feedback mechanism; ensure that targeting-related feedback is utilized. 5. Establish targeting standard operating procedures (SOPs)/documentation and/or decision tracking mechanisms in consultation with VAM and partners. 6. Ensure monitoring procedures are in place so that decisions are updated and corrected as necessary. 7. Ensure that targeting errors are mitigated, e.g. through an appeals mechanism.
<p>Protection & AAP adviser/focal points (if available in country)**</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct protection analysis to inform assessment, targeting and prioritization processes (e.g. to support the identification of potential protection risks or eligibility criteria). 2. Support the establishment of guidelines for targeting committees on mitigating and preventing abuse of power including sexual exploitation and abuse. 4. Facilitate the development of SOPs/documentation and material for the communication of targeting and prioritization decisions and criteria to affected populations. 4. Advise on the formulation of a targeting communication strategy including the establishment of (or use of an existing) accessible and responsive complaints and feedback mechanism. 5. Ensure that all targeting and prioritization processes comply with WFP's commitment to AAP as much as possible.
<p>Country office beneficiary identity management focal point</p>	<p>Produce clear guidelines for the safe collection and management (storage) of beneficiary information and data transfer.¹¹ For example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure adherence to data protection protocols throughout the target process, including the update and deletion of beneficiary data, in close coordination with activity managers and the protection adviser. 2. Implement agreed essential fields for beneficiary data collection. 3. Support registration exercises as required, including ensuring availability of required equipment and training of staff. 4. Ensure timely access to information and data to the right staff. 5. Support management of beneficiary lists.
<p>M&E officer*</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design and implement outcome monitoring, covering assisted and non-assisted populations (in coordination with the VAM officer). 2. Conduct process monitoring for targeting processes (comparing them against targeting SOPs/documentation where they exist) and report on findings in a timely manner. 3. Communicate targeting and prioritization issues raised through the complaints and feedback mechanism to activity managers and VAM officers in a timely manner.

* In some instances, the VAM officer and the M&E officer may be the same person.

** Country offices without Protection and/or AAP expertise are advised to reach out to their regional bureau or headquarters for support.

¹¹ For more details, contact the WFP Emergencies and Transitions Unit for access to the *draft Beneficiary Identity Management Guidance*.

1.4 Targeting and prioritization steps

There is no set approach to targeting and prioritization: local context and capacity will shape the implementation of any targeting exercise. **Figure 2** and the procedures described in this document provide a framework to guide country offices towards effective targeting decisions that achieve the desired outcome to the greatest extent possible. The sequence of steps can differ according to context; in some cases processes may happen simultaneously.

The targeting process can be broken down into four areas: needs assessment; choice of targeting approach; beneficiary selection; and monitoring. Community and partner engagement should be mainstreamed throughout the process. This subsection will present the four areas, introduce the concept of prioritization and describe the links between targeting and country office needs-based plans.

The procedures described here are relevant for all targeting and prioritization exercises, although the level of importance of each step will vary depending on the context. Protection

and AAP considerations need to be accounted for in all activities throughout the process, including protection-sensitive analysis in the needs assessment phase and the subsequent decision on eligibility criteria. While the steps are described in chronological order, it is possible to conduct some activities simultaneously or in a different order. Moreover, targeting is not a one-off exercise and should be seen as a continuous process with a regular feedback loop for improving and finetuning the targeting system over time.

Since targeting and prioritization is based on a wide variety of inputs throughout the programme cycle, most cost elements - such as needs assessments, monitoring, and staffing costs - are budgeted elsewhere. **To support country offices in identifying and prioritizing cost elements that are critical to high quality targeting and prioritization processes, a budget template has been developed (see Annex 2).** The template aims to bring key cost items and staff allocation related to targeting and prioritization together into one spreadsheet. It does not aim to replace any other budget processes or tools.

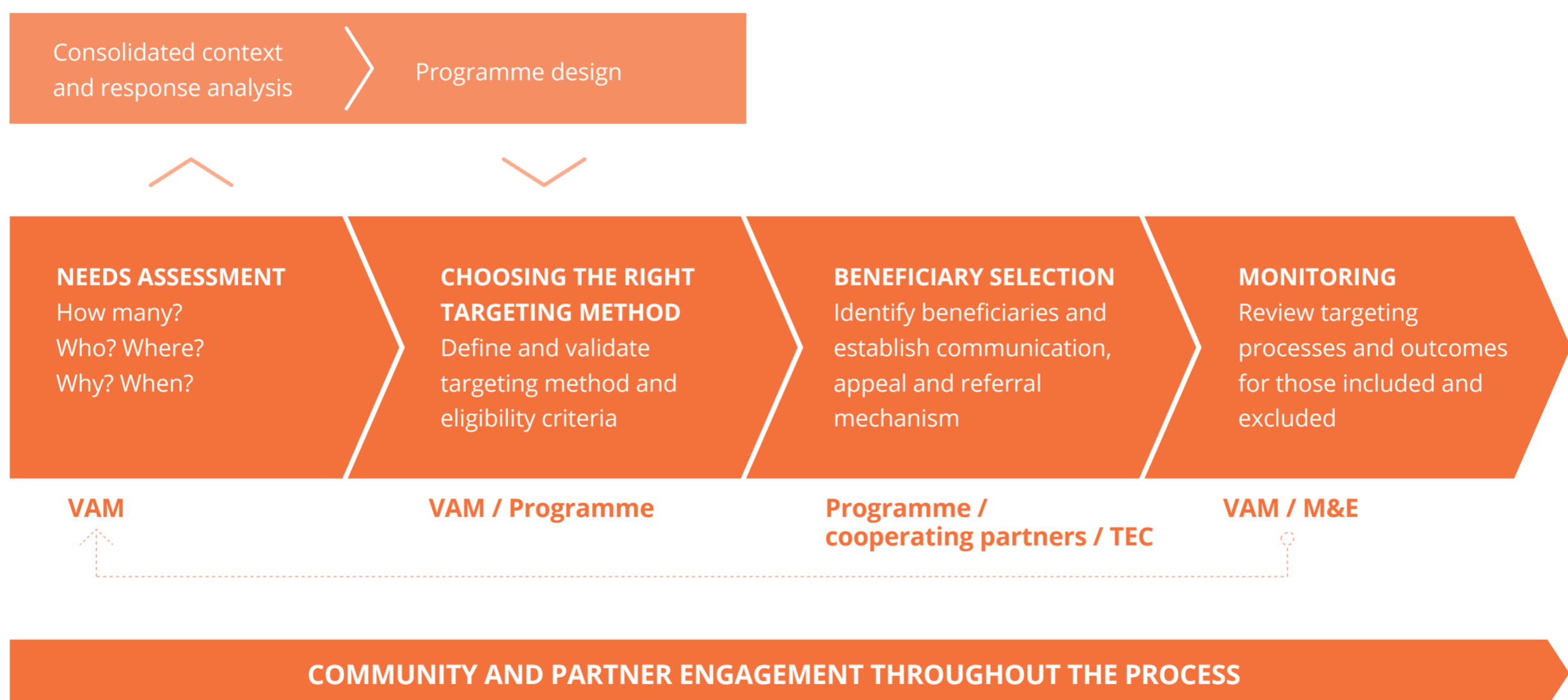


Figure 2. Targeting process overview



Box 1

TARGETING VERSUS PRIORITIZATION

Based on needs assessments and context analyses, WFP programmes are designed to address identified needs, taking partnerships into account. During this step, country offices define the programme objectives and indicate the number of people that they are planning to reach.

This number is typically a subset of the people in need and is informed by a critical review of the operational context, including existing capacities, humanitarian access and activities planned by other stakeholders in order to avoid duplication and ensure complementarity.

For **“changing lives”** or development-orientated operations, funding prospects also have to be considered, which triggers a first step of prioritization. In a **life-saving operation**, the aim should be to reach as many people in need as possible with the right level of assistance (regardless of who is the provider). Because these activities seek to save lives, funding prospects should not be a limiting factor when advocating for resources. Generally, populations in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)/Cadre Harmonisé (CH) Phase 3 or above (or equivalent) are considered to be in urgent need of life-saving humanitarian assistance.

A targeting strategy should aim to capture all the people in need who should be assisted according to the programmatic objectives. However, almost every WFP activity is subject to further **prioritization** during the implementation phase because of obstacles such as funding shortfalls and access and capacity constraints that prevent WFP from meeting all needs.

At the start or during their implementation, programmes may face pipeline breaks or funding shortfalls. This necessitates **further prioritization** to ensure those most in need are safeguarded. The options typically include

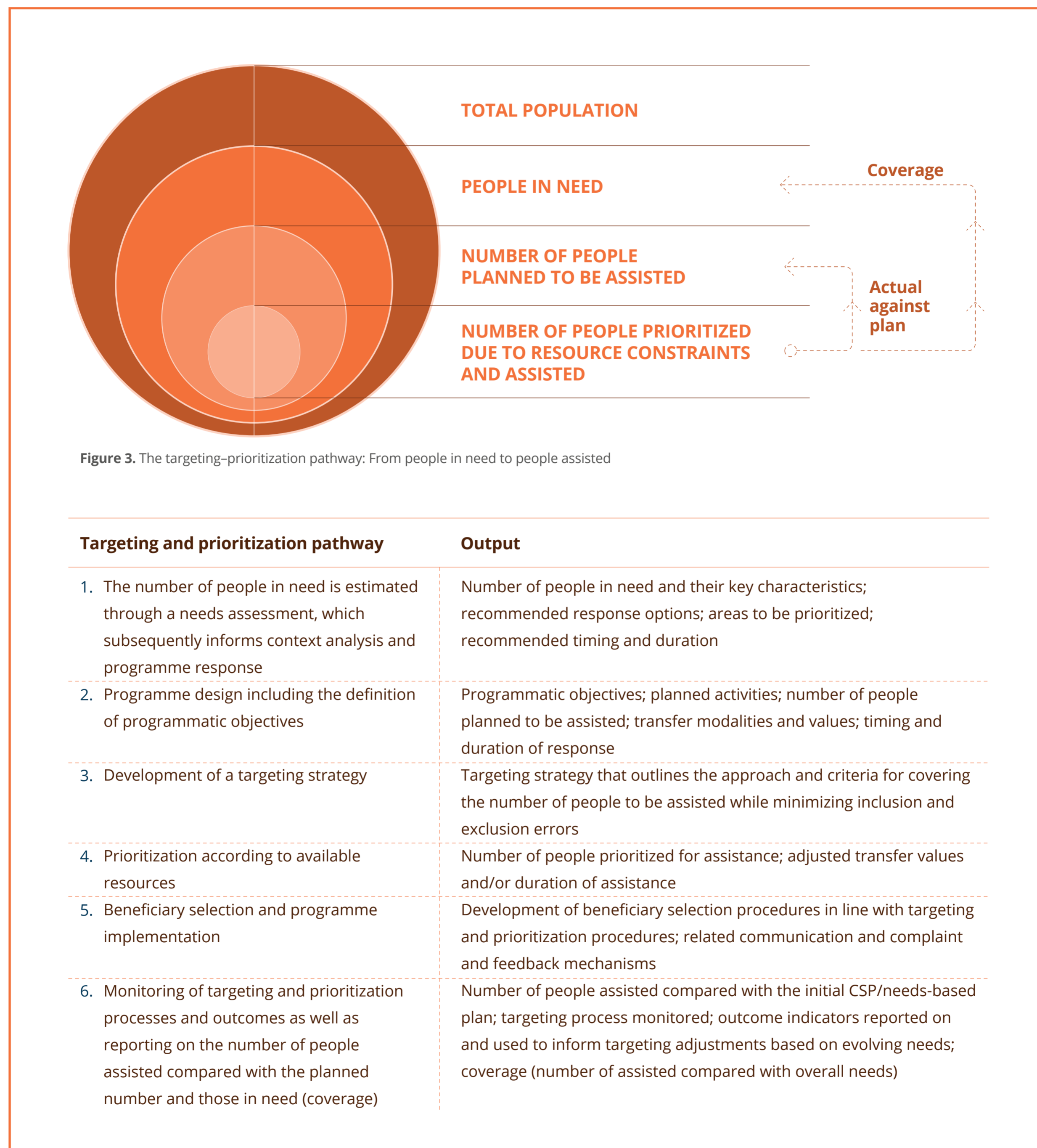
1. reducing the number of people to be assisted;
2. reducing transfer values per household or person covered;
3. reducing the duration of assistance; and
4. switching resources from one activity to another if funds have not been earmarked.

Often a combination of these strategies is applied. Only option 1 has implications for the number of people planned to be assisted; however, all options could have clear negative effects on the achievement of programmatic outcomes and of the CSP as a whole.

When reducing the number of people to be assisted, it is important to continue to prioritize the most vulnerable groups, following the principle that those “furthest behind” should be prioritized based on needs assessments and protection analysis. It is also essential to monitor the outcomes of assisted and non-assisted populations over time. For more details on how to prioritize, see section 5.

The choice of prioritization approach is based on the programmatic objectives: life-saving operations involve different decisions than those related to recovery or development assistance. Implementation plans need to be regularly revised to reflect funding changes and subsequent prioritization decisions.

WFP country offices are accountable for the needs-based plans developed for each CSP. **Figure 3** and the accompanying table explain how numbers are derived from the total population to beneficiary level, and how this links to the targeting and prioritization process.



2 Conducting a needs assessment

If no recent data has been collected and no secondary data is available or if the data is of poor quality or little relevance, it is strongly recommended to carry out a needs assessment before embarking on any needs-based targeting exercise.¹² It can do more harm than good to conduct targeting or prioritization work without sufficient evidence of the current situation and the profiles of vulnerable households.

This includes analysis of **contextual factors** such as the political environment, macroeconomic factors, cultural norms, gender relations, and risks and shocks, which can have protection implications that need to be considered when taking targeting and prioritization decisions.

Needs assessments that involve primary data collection often comprise a household survey conducted for a representative subsample of the affected population combined with

qualitative tools such as community consultations. They seek to identify the number of people in need and understand their characteristics in order to inform response options and targeting decisions. Qualitative information collected during focus group discussions or key informant interviews can help to better understand needs and vulnerabilities from the perspective of the affected populations and can be used to validate eligibility criteria.

Assessment stages include planning, tool design, data collection, analysis and reporting, and the dissemination of results. Needs assessments typically involve all relevant partners on the ground; depending on the context, they may be led by government entities, clusters or single or multiple agencies.

To capture relevant and accurate information during a needs assessment, it is key to deploy well-trained assessment teams that are familiar with local cultural practices, speak local languages and are diverse in terms of gender, age and ethnicity.



Box 2

GOOD PRACTICES FOR SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS INFORMING TARGETING AND PRIORITIZATION

It is important to review existing information in order to decide whether a new needs assessment is required and if one is needed, to identify the information gaps that will define the scope of the assessment such as the populations, geographic and thematic areas to be covered. Needs assessments are time and resource consuming; if high quality information and data can be obtained through other means, additional data collection can focus on knowledge gaps only. Access to high quality and relevant secondary data is usually better in stable, protracted crisis contexts than in rapidly evolving emergencies.

It is important to differentiate between secondary information that informs the needs and context analysis, and datasets that can be used to develop and validate eligibility criteria for inclusion in a programme. The latter typically comprise a representative household survey (conducted for a subsample of the affected population) and requires access to the raw dataset.

The following questions can be used to guide the quality review of secondary information:

- What is the original objective of the publication and/or data collection exercise?
- What is the source of the information? Is it a credible source? Is there a potential bias? Is the data used well referenced?
- Is the information still relevant to the context? Does it reflect the impact of a specific event or season?
- What is the coverage of the data source and to what extent can the data be disaggregated?
- For which populations is the data representative and with what degree of precision?
- Has the data been validated and published?

For more information on literature and secondary data reviews, see chapter 3 in the comprehensive food security and vulnerability assessment (CFSVA) guidelines.¹³

¹² A needs assessment should include a diverse representation of the affected population: women, men, girls and boys of different backgrounds, with and without disabilities, of different ethnicities and representing marginalized populations. Children should be consulted with the support of child protection actors; in the absence of such actors, the child protection sector/cluster should be consulted on the best approach to collect these needs (e.g. children committees or child protection outreach workers). Organizations for people with disabilities should be consulted when engaging with people with disabilities to better understand how they prefer to participate in the targeting process and to consider any barriers or challenges they may face that could affect their equal participation in the process.

¹³ WFP. 2009. CFSVA Manuel Chapter 3: Desk study: literature review and secondary data.

All the steps are described in detail in the guidelines for the following needs assessments:

- **Emergency food security assessment (EFSA)**¹⁴
- **Comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis (CFSVA)**¹⁵
- **Essential needs analysis (ENA)**¹⁶
- **Joint Approach to Nutrition and Food Security Assessment (JANFSA)**¹⁷

Table 2 provides an overview of the key indicators that inform targeting. The outcome indicators reflect the definition of vulnerability used and determine the number of people categorized as being in need. When vulnerability is defined according to food security, WFP usually uses the Consolidated

Approach to Reporting on Indicators for Food Security (CARI)¹⁸ to identify households in need of assistance. As food assistance has an immediate impact on the CARI outcome, this composite indicator is more useful for targeting decisions in contexts where food assistance does not play a major role. This limitation can be overcome, however, as illustrated in Case study 1.

In contexts that require an assessment of food security and its interplay with other essential needs, the essential needs analysis outcome indicators are better suited to defining vulnerability. This could be the case where households are market dependent and have to prioritize between different needs, e.g. in urban contexts, or where a multisectoral response is considered.

Table 2. Key indicators collected during household surveys that can inform targeting decisions and processes

Themes	Core indicators
Outcome indicators used to establish the number of people in need	
Food security indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Food consumption score ■ Reduced coping strategy index (rCSI) ■ Livelihood coping strategies indicator (food component) ■ Household food and non-food expenditure shares
Essential needs indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economic capacity to meet essential needs (ECMEN) using a minimum expenditure basket (MEB) ■ Multidimensional deprivation indicator ■ Livelihood coping strategies indicator (all essential needs)
Explanatory variables that can translate into eligibility criteria (need to be contextualized)	
Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Household size ■ Sex of household head ■ Number, age and sex of household members ■ Education status of household head/members, school attendance of children ■ Displacement status ■ Number of disabled members ■ Severe medical conditions ■ Number of pregnant/lactating women and girls ■ Marital status of household head
Income, basic infrastructure & assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Employment status (formal/informal) of household head/individual members ■ Main income sources ■ Shelter condition and construction materials ■ Access to safe drinking water ■ Access to improved/safe hygiene (toilet) ■ Access to lighting source ■ Type of cooking fuel ■ Ownership of household assets ■ Access to/ownership of land ■ Mobile phone-ownership

¹⁴ EFSA handbook.

¹⁵ CFSVA guidelines.

¹⁶ Available through the Essential Needs Analysis Guidelines website.

¹⁷ Technical Guidance for the Joint Approach to Nutrition and Food Security Assessment (JANFSA)

¹⁸ For more details on the CARI, visit the VAM Resource Centre.



Box 3

WHY ARE ESSENTIAL NEEDS RELEVANT AND HOW DO THEY RELATE TO TARGETING?

Needs are interlinked and in times of hardship, limited resources force households to choose between meeting different essential needs such as food, rent and healthcare. By recognizing this, the essential needs analysis can form the analytical and programmatic basis for a coordinated or multisectoral response that can facilitate the achievement of better short and long-term food security and nutrition outcomes.

Among essential needs, food is central. Often, food is the need on which poor households spend the largest share of their resources. But a household's ability to meet its food and nutrition needs also depends on its ability to meet other essential needs. When households have limited resources, they will constantly have to prioritize between often equally urgent needs. They may have to decide between spending money on healthcare or school fees or on buying different types of food. At the same time, being in poor health or having limited access to clean water negatively impacts a household's ability to be food and nutrition secure. This illustrates the importance of analysing essential needs together and explains why adopting the lens of essential needs can be of great value for understanding food security and informing targeting and prioritization decisions.

When taking an essential needs approach, essential needs analysis is useful for informing targeting and prioritization decisions as it establishes the number of people who are unable to meet their food and other essential needs. The minimum expenditure basket (MEB) enables WFP and its partners to define the transfer value required to meet needs by analysing the gap between the cost of the MEB and households' economic capacity (measured by the ECMEN – economic capacity to meet essential needs). ECMEN is used in combination with other indicators, most often the livelihood coping strategies indicator and the food consumption score, to generate a vulnerability classification which in turn determines the sociodemographic profile of households in need of assistance (see case study 1 below).

One advantage of using ECMEN to develop a vulnerability classification is that **the value of assistance can be discounted**. This means that the vulnerability level of households can be assessed taking into consideration any assistance they are already receiving.

WFP's essential needs analysis package comprises three modules:¹⁹

- Essential needs assessments
- Minimum expenditure baskets
- Supply analysis

¹⁹ WFP. 2020. ENA guidelines.



Case study 1

SOCIOECONOMIC AND FOOD SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REFUGEES IN MALAWI

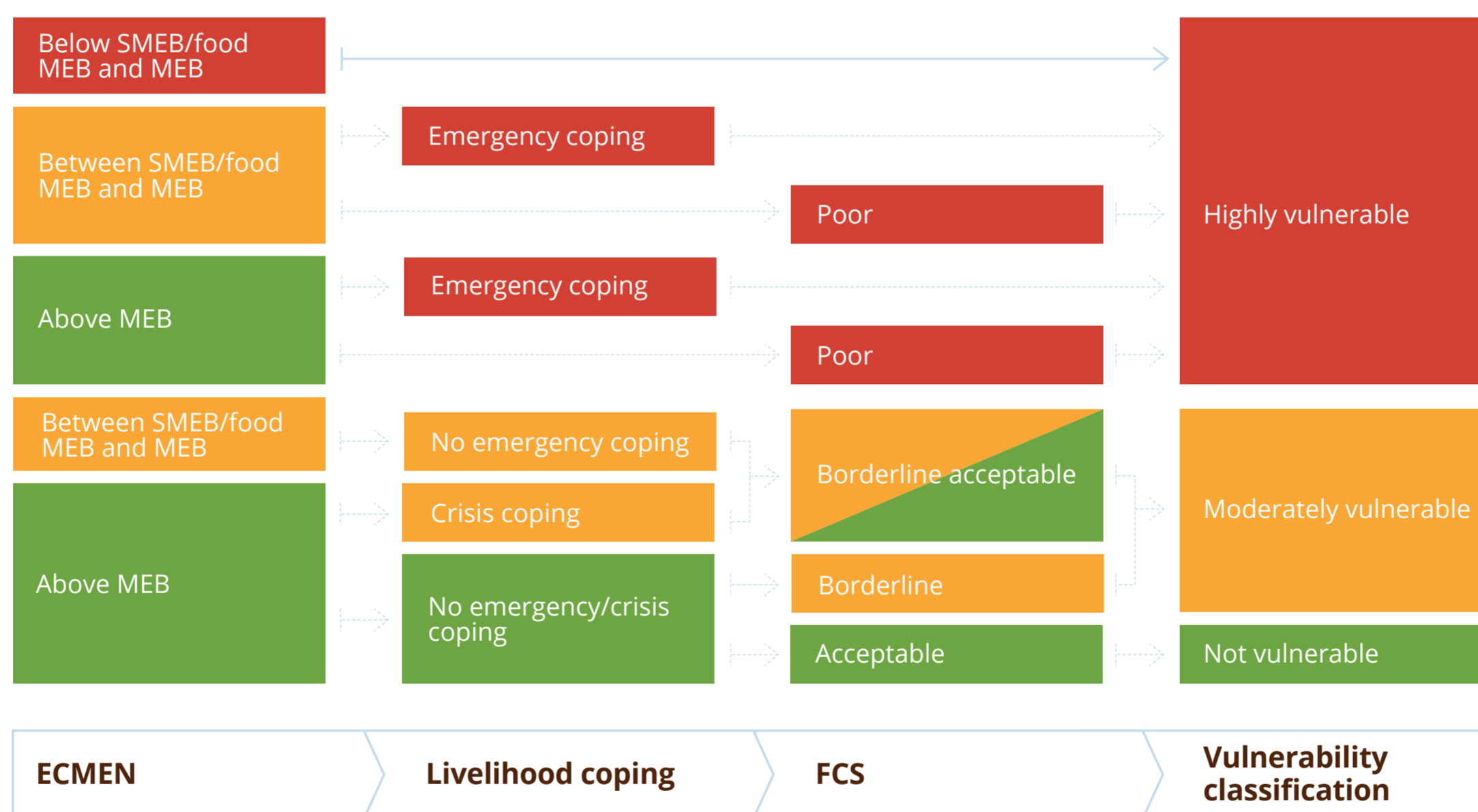
Malawi hosts nearly 40,000 refugees, most of whom reside in Dzaleka refugee camp and originate from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. Following more than two decades of protracted humanitarian support, UNHCR and WFP decided to conduct a targeting exercise in line with their joint targeting principles signed in late 2017.

WFP and UNHCR developed a joint targeting and prioritization strategy using poverty, food security and demographic data from the 2017 UNHCR household socioeconomic and livelihoods assessment.

Using the essential needs methodology, the following indicators were used to classify the households into three vulnerability groups:

1. Economic vulnerability defined as per capita expenditure (discounting the value of assistance) below the national poverty and ultra-poverty line (note that this approach is similar to the ECMEN but since there was no refugee-specific MEB, the national poverty line was used as a proxy).
2. High risk coping mechanisms, defined as any of the following: engagement in child labour, high-risk activities and/or begging.
3. Food consumption based on the WFP food consumption score.

This vulnerability classification indicated that 76 percent of the refugee population was highly vulnerable and in urgent need of continued assistance, 16 percent was moderately vulnerable and 8 percent was less vulnerable.



Following any needs assessment, an important decision has to be made regarding whether a targeting exercise should be undertaken. If only a small proportion of households are classified as not vulnerable, it could be judicious to provide blanket assistance because the costs of identifying ineligible households could be higher than continuing the assistance to them.

Once the needs assessment and the broader context analysis have been completed, response options will be discussed with key stakeholders in order to define programmatic objectives and activities.

Typical outputs of the response analysis programme design stage include the following:

1. A description of the vulnerable population, their needs and characteristics
2. A framing of response options for addressing the needs of the vulnerable population
3. Clear articulation of programme objectives and activities informed by the
 - a. needs and context analysis
 - b. country priorities and organizational strategies
 - c. access considerations
 - d. partner capacities
4. Agreement on the planned number of people to be assisted

These four outputs are prerequisites for the next step, which is choosing the right targeting approach.



Photo: Sayed Asif Mahmud/WFP

3 Choosing the targeting approach and defining and validating criteria

This section outlines the most common targeting methods used and describes their advantages, disadvantages and applicability. It also explains how to develop and validate potential eligibility criteria and how to measure inclusion and exclusion errors at the targeting design stage, which will help with the selection and/or refinement of targeting methods.


3.1 Overview of targeting methods



WFP does not promote a “one-size-fits-all” approach to targeting, but rather acknowledges the need for decisions

to be driven by knowledge of the local context and carried out jointly with key stakeholders. Targeting methods can be separated into broad categories: blanket targeting, where everyone in a given population is assisted; geographic targeting/prioritization, where eligibility for assistance is based on locality; community-based targeting/prioritization, where the community determines eligibility; self-selection, where individuals must come forward to request assistance; and data-driven approaches, where an analyst defines the eligibility criteria based on quantitative analysis. No targeting method is perfect and the final selection will be determined by the context and capacities available.

Table 3 provides an overview of the advantages and disadvantages of common methods.


Table 3: Summary of common targeting methods

Targeting method and description	Pros	Cons	Context where most applicable
 BLANKET TARGETING			
Blanket: All households in a defined area or affected population are eligible for assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows for rapid response to a shock or crisis Reduces the risk of households in need not receiving assistance Can avoid tension caused by targeting decisions perceived as unfair by affected populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Households that are not among the most vulnerable will receive assistance Can contribute to aid dependency and expectations that complicate future targeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the event of a rapid-onset emergency, e.g. a climate shock or displacement following an outbreak of violence, where the need for a timely response outweighs accuracy concerns (should be replaced with other targeting measures as soon as the context allows) When proportion of people not in need of assistance is too small to financially justify an expensive targeting exercise.

Targeting method and description	Pros	Cons	Context where most applicable
 GEOGRAPHIC TARGETING			
<p>Geographic: Assistance is provided to areas or settlements hardest hit by a crisis and/or most in need as defined by the agency. This method is often used when funding, humanitarian access or other factors do not allow coverage of all vulnerable households/individuals in a population and can therefore be viewed as a means of high-level prioritization. Often combined with other methods for identifying households/individuals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Relatively easy to implement ■ Easily explicable to targeted population and other stakeholders ■ Useful where access challenges make household data collection difficult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Risks excluding vulnerable people living outside the targeted area ■ High inclusion error within targeted areas if used exclusively ■ May exert a pull factor for people to move 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ When vulnerable households are concentrated in defined geographic areas (e.g. camps, poor urban neighbourhoods)
 COMMUNITY-DRIVEN APPROACHES			
<p>Community-based: Community leaders and/or members representing all different groups in the community are responsible for identifying those eligible for assistance. Beneficiaries are selected based on criteria developed jointly by the community, WFP and implementing partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Can work well in small and cohesive communities ■ Enhances ownership and buy-in of the affected population ■ Easy to communicate the rationale behind the method to affected communities (criteria, entitlements and any registration processes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ More challenging in urban or new refugee populations as the community is not easily identifiable ■ Could be perceived as unfair and partial or reinforcing existing power imbalances and discrimination within the community if not done properly ■ Risks marginalizing stigmatized individuals or groups if not done properly ■ May create difficulties for those who select the eligible/create tensions within communities ■ Hard to implement in insecure/fragile contexts with limited social cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rural contexts, communities with a high level of cohesion

Targeting method and description	Pros	Cons	Context where most applicable
 COMMUNITY-DRIVEN APPROACHES			
<p>Community-based: Community leaders and/or members representing all different groups in the community are responsible for identifying those eligible for assistance. Beneficiaries are selected based on criteria developed jointly by the community, WFP and implementing partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Can work well in small and cohesive communities ■ Enhances ownership and buy-in of the affected population ■ Easy to communicate the rationale behind the method to affected communities (criteria, entitlements and any registration processes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ More challenging in urban or new refugee populations as the community is not easily identifiable ■ Could be perceived as unfair and partial or reinforcing existing power imbalances and discrimination within the community if not done properly ■ Risks marginalizing stigmatized individuals or groups if not done properly ■ May create difficulties for those who select the eligible/create tensions within communities Hard to implement in insecure/fragile contexts with limited social cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rural contexts, communities with a high level of cohesion
<p>Self-targeting/self-exclusion: Households apply for assistance if they consider themselves needy and fall into predefined criteria. Some activities, such as FFA programmes, may have self-targeting elements such as providing a transfer that is lower than the wage for similar jobs in the labour market. Self-exclusion refers to campaigns where better-off households are asked to remove themselves voluntarily. This requires a strong social mobilization component to ensure information is accurate and provided in a timely way to all segments of a population</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Directly involves the people most concerned. They can decide whether to enrol or not ■ Works better when people are opting into assistance, rather than opting out ■ If properly implemented, the rate of exclusion errors is low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Often difficult to achieve equal access to information, including through factors such as the time window for application and appeals, eligibility criteria, entitlements and registration processes ■ People with protection risks and other barriers, e.g. illiteracy and restricted mobility, may find it difficult to access information/registration/work/training sites ■ Data provided is not easily verifiable, high risk of inclusion errors – requires further screening ■ Risk of stigmatization of particularly vulnerable groups if targeting is highly visible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ New assistance programmes with new entries ■ Conditional programmes such as FFA

Targeting method and description	Pros	Cons	Context where most applicable
 DATA-DRIVEN APPROACHES			
<p>Proxy-means testing: Proxy means testing (PMT) uses proxy indicators to predict certain vulnerabilities, e.g. low income or poor food consumption. Typically, a score is generated using statistical models. It requires a representative survey with information on expenditure (the proxy for income), food security indicators and a variety of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics as well as a registration database containing relevant variables</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Relatively cost-efficient for large-scale operations (only a sample of households needs to be visited if there is a complete and accurate registry) ■ Reduced respondent bias as based on observable characteristics ■ Works best where populations are fairly stable and where there is a strong correlation between the dependent variable (e.g. food consumption) and the proxy variables (e.g. household size) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Associated with high exclusion errors as there is no perfect correlation between proxy variables and the vulnerability the model intends to predict ■ Requires expert for econometric modelling ■ Statistical model difficult to communicate to beneficiaries ■ Difficult for humanitarian practitioners to understand ■ Difficult to communicate the rationale behind this targeting approach to affected communities ■ Requires regular updating in dynamic environments ■ May lead to exclusion of some categories who have protection vulnerabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In a rural and urban context ■ Larger refugee / IDP populations where household visits and community-based targeting are not feasible but a complete registration database exists ■ Often used by the World Bank and many governments for the targeting of social welfare programmes
<p>Demographic categorical targeting (individual-based): Individual-based targeting according to easily observable categories such as gender, age, disability or employment status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A straightforward way to include the most vulnerable individuals in a population, such as young children, the elderly or the disabled ■ Often used for national social safety net targeting ■ Easy to communicate the rationale to the community (criteria, entitlements and any registration processes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economically vulnerable households without vulnerable members will be wrongly excluded ■ Requires comprehensive and reliable information, which is not always collected during registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Works in rural and urban programmes, small and large groups, camp and non-camp settings ■ Special programmes targeting vulnerable groups (e.g. nutrition or education programmes)

Targeting method and description	Pros	Cons	Context where most applicable
 DATA-DRIVEN APPROACHES			
<p>Demographic categorical targeting (household/case level-based): Household-based targeting according to easily observable categories such as sex of household head, sex of the principal applicant, dependency ratios or household size</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Suitable when there are strong correlations between the outcome indicator and the (combination of) eligibility criteria ■ Easy to communicate the rationale behind this targeting approach to the community (criteria, entitlements and any registration processes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Unclear how to weight different indicators ■ Leads to high inclusion and exclusion errors ■ Requires comprehensive and reliable information, which is not always collected during registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Works in rural and urban programmes, small and large groups, camp and non-camp settings
<p>Scorecard: Based on multisector vulnerability score. Indicators and weights are defined jointly by stakeholders. Usually requires household visits to the entire population. Criteria require validation to check for relevance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Buy-in from partners who participated in the scoring exercise ■ Useful for including socioeconomic criteria ■ Does not require econometrics specialists, just experienced field staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Requires the collection of data from each household, which can be expensive and time-consuming ■ Selection of criteria and weights not fully transparent ■ Contingent on the relevance of indicators and coverage and consistency of household data collection ■ Difficult to validate More difficult to communicate rationale behind this targeting approach (criteria, entitlements, registration processes if relevant) to the community than CBT but easier than PMT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Small populations where all households can be visited ■ When multisector vulnerability data is available

As a general rule, combining different methods using a multi-method approach yields the best results as potential risks can be mitigated. For example, a common approach is to use geographic targeting/prioritization followed by either community-based or sociodemographic targeting. Here are some aspects to be taken into account for some of the most commonly used targeting approaches.

Considerations for geographic targeting

Geographic targeting is usually used in areas and contexts where vulnerable populations are concentrated in a location or area, such as refugee/IDP camps or poor urban neighbourhoods. It can also be used for emergency operations, such as in an area struck by a sudden or slow onset disaster, where a lifesaving response is required.

It is also common to use information on the geographic distribution of populations identified as vulnerable for

prioritization when resources are insufficient to assist the whole targeted population. Areas with the highest proportion of vulnerable households/individuals are prioritized, for example based on IPC classification (see Box 4).

While easy to implement and explain to affected populations, there is a risk of high inclusion (for example when blanket assistance is provided in an area) and exclusion errors (when areas are not prioritized even though a part of the population has been identified as vulnerable). To mitigate inclusion targeting errors, the geographic approach is usually complemented, for example by categorical targeting based on sociodemographic characteristics of vulnerability derived from recent assessments. To mitigate exclusion errors in non-prioritized areas, it is important to monitor the situation of assisted and non-assisted populations closely and advocate for additional partners and/or resources to assist the population in need.



Photo: Cesar Lopez/WFP



Box 4

IPC AS A TOOL FOR INFORMING TARGETING AND PRIORITIZATION

In over 30 countries worldwide, an IPC exercise is regularly conducted. The IPC is a multi-partner initiative that aims to determine the severity and magnitude of acute and chronic food insecurity and acute malnutrition in a country. It uses multiple data sources and a standardized reference table and employs a consensus-building approach involving food security and nutrition experts.

In a life-saving operation, the aim has to be to reach as many people in need as possible with the right level of assistance (regardless of who is the provider). Generally, populations in IPC/CH Phase 3 or above (or equivalent) are considered to be in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

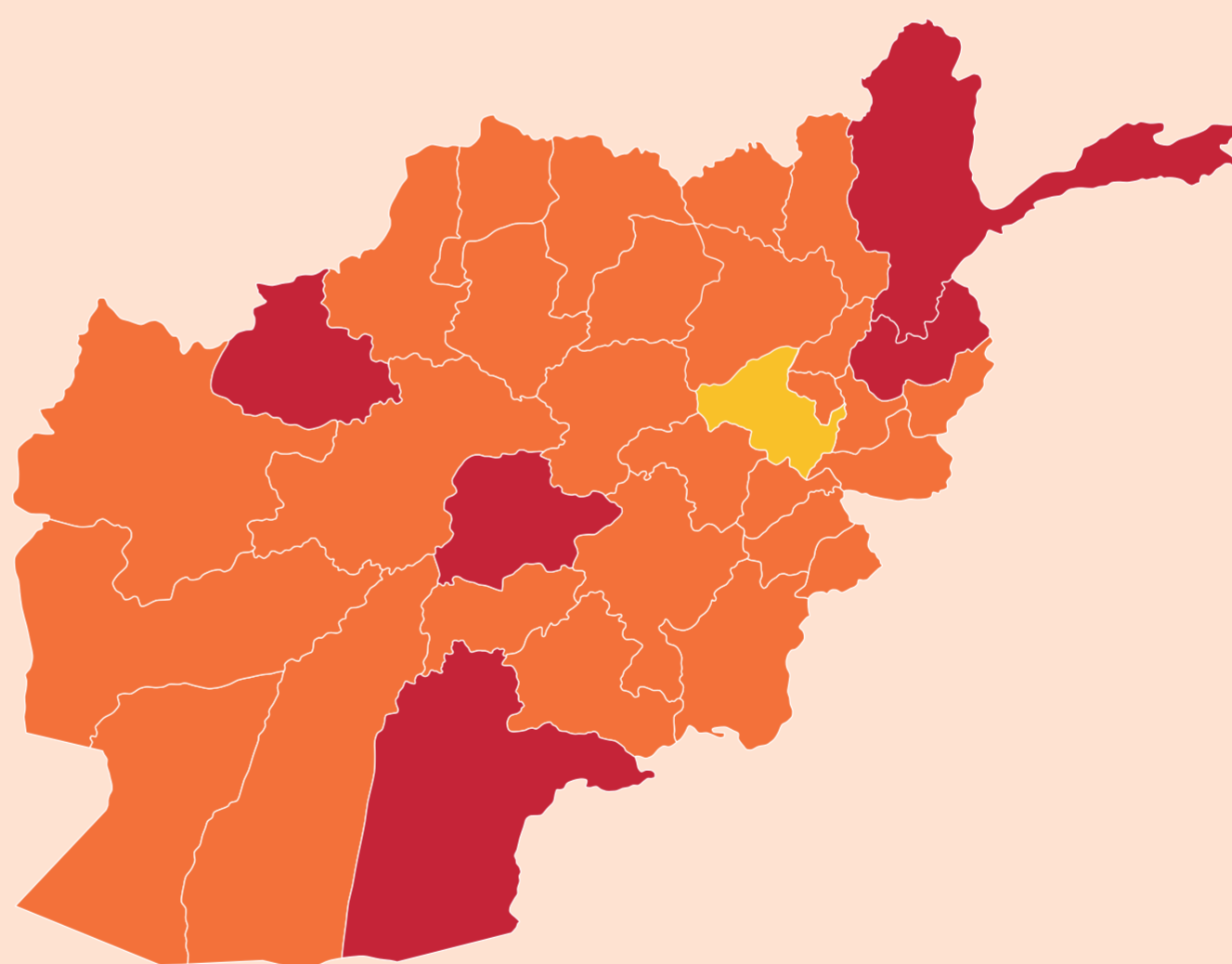
Pre-existing levels of food assistance also need to be considered. IPC figures reflect food security and nutrition outcomes with the effects of humanitarian assistance; therefore, real needs may be underreported if IPC phases are taken in isolation. This is particularly the case for refugee, IDP and other disaster or conflict-affected populations who are largely dependent on assistance.

The IPC provides current figures as well as projections for the near future and can serve as an important tool for advocacy as well as short-term geographic prioritization. Used in isolation, however, any geographical targeting approach may lead to significant exclusion errors. For example, in the case of Afghanistan (see map below with IPC classifications per province), projections for November 2018–January 2019 included five provinces in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency). However, the analysis also estimated that 2.3 million people in IPC Phase 4 were living in areas classified as IPC Phase 2 or 3.

Afghanistan
November 2018–February 2019

IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification
(mapped Phase represents highest severity affecting at least 20% of the population)

- 1 – Minimal
- 2 – Stressed
- 3 – Crisis
- 4 – Emergency
- 5 – Famine
- Areas with inadequate evidence
- Areas not included in the analysis



Information on the geographic distribution of vulnerabilities, if regularly collected such as through the IPC or WFP needs assessments, can feed into broader trend analyses and

programmes that address chronic and recurring seasonal food insecurity. This is what **integrated context analysis** aims to do.



Box 5

INTEGRATED CONTEXT ANALYSIS: INFORMING GEOGRAPHIC PRIORITIZATION AND PLANNING FOR CONTINUITY

Integrated context analysis (ICA) uses historical trend analyses of geographic information system (GIS) data to categorize geographic areas according to patterns in the frequency and convergence of food insecurity and exposure to natural shocks. The ICA can overlay additional data on factors such as land degradation, nutrition, seasonality, livelihoods and food insecure population estimates to highlight other important patterns. These patterns in turn can suggest specific programmatic strategies and provide an evidence-based rationale for medium to long-term planning for resilience building and emergency preparedness programming.

As part of the Three-Pronged Approach (3PA),²⁰ the ICA can also help prioritize seasonal livelihood programming (SLP) consultations, which inform the community-based participatory planning (CBPP) process.

CSPs²¹ in all contexts can use ICAs for country-level analysis and to provide insights into geographic prioritization for WFP direct interventions and/or highlight areas where WFP capacity strengthening support to national systems and services may be needed in the future.

Considerations for data-driven targeting

When there is accessible registration data with sufficient information on the affected population, data-driven approaches can be used to target and prioritize households. Such registries are often readily available in refugee contexts where UNHCR is mandated to gather demographic information about refugee households for the purposes of ensuring protection and providing assistance; there is a data-sharing agreement between the two agencies that enables WFP to access this data upon request. Social registries may also be available when working with national government counterparts.

In other cases, if WFP and partners have conducted a needs assessment and are intending to provide assistance, a registry can be developed to facilitate targeting, prioritization and assistance provision. As described in this section, eligibility criteria are developed based on the results of the needs assessment and community consultations. Once determined, those criteria are communicated to the affected populations, and households that consider themselves eligible and in

need of assistance are able to register or can be referred by third parties, for example cooperating partners. Once the registration information has been verified, the targeting model can be applied to the registry to generate a list of beneficiaries.

The three most commonly applied data-driven approaches are proxy means testing (PMT), categorical targeting and scorecards.

PMT is commonly used by governments for the provision of social assistance. Based on assessment data from a representative sample of a population, a statistical model is developed that predicts a proxy for vulnerability for each household, e.g. their food security classification. When applied to the population registry, the model generates a score for each household/individual; a beneficiary list can then be easily generated by including and excluding households/individuals whose score falls above or below a set threshold, which also takes into consideration prioritization elements (budget, size and frequency of transfers).

²⁰ Three-Pronged Approach (3PA) on WFP GO (accessible via the WFP intranet only).

²¹ ICA has supported country-level analysis and informed geographic targeting and prioritization plans for CSPs including for Bolivia (2018–2022), Burundi (2018–2020), Chad (2019–2023), El Salvador (2017–2021), Guatemala (2018–2022), Honduras (2018–2021), Kyrgyzstan (2018–2022), Lesotho (2019–2024), Liberia (2019–2023), Mauritania (2019–2022), Pakistan (2018–2022), Senegal (2019–2023), Tajikistan (2019–2024) and Zimbabwe (2017–2021). For more information, see the [Integrated Context Analysis fact sheet](#) and the [Three-Pronged Approach fact sheet](#).

The advantages of the **PMT approach** are that no census is required if registration data is available, accurate and relevant, and that thresholds can easily be adjusted without any additional data collection and analysis, e.g. when further prioritization decisions have to be made. However, advanced statistical modelling expertise is required, much more than for the scorecard and categorical targeting approaches. PMT also generates a score based on a statistical model that is difficult to explain to affected populations, partners and donors. No clear and easily understandable explanation can be provided as to why some people receive assistance and others do not. Similar issues may be faced when using a **scorecard approach**, as weighted variables and thresholds may be difficult to explain to communities. This underlines the importance of a thorough communication strategy including a robust complaints and feedback mechanism through which issues related to inclusion and exclusion are picked up and addressed at both household and structural levels.

Categorical targeting can be based on clear demographic indicators that are easily understandable; however, this approach can create unintentional impacts such as families registering in larger or smaller units depending on how the criteria are formulated.

No data-driven method is perfect. Design-related targeting errors may be as high or even higher than with other targeting approaches and require strong support mechanisms that identify wrongfully excluded vulnerable households through other means. It is also vital to monitor targeting outcomes through the assessment and/or a pre-assistance baseline followed by regular post-distribution monitoring of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

Considerations for community-based targeting

Community-based targeting is probably the most commonly applied method at WFP, and is a joint exercise between WFP, cooperating partners and the communities. It is extremely useful in the absence of comprehensive information about a population at the household/individual level as provided by a population registry, for example. This approach also has the advantage that it involves working directly with the affected population, given that they are the most knowledgeable about the vulnerability of their community members, while also empowering existing decision making processes and structures. On the flipside, the approach requires coherent and inclusive governance structures and trust among community members. If that does not exist, and the process is not properly guided, there is a high risk of favouritism and even fraud. In certain circumstances, especially in fragile settings, community-based targeting could even exacerbate frictions and be used to marginalize groups.

Community-based targeting and prioritization can involve the affected population to varying degrees. For example, if there is a robust understanding of who is vulnerable within a population, WFP may develop eligibility criteria that are validated in collaboration with partners and the communities. If there is no such understanding, on-site partners and communities may be responsible for developing the criteria themselves.

In both these scenarios, the affected population is responsible for the actual selection process, which often results in greater acceptance of the targeting decisions. Strong safeguards and monitoring systems need to be implemented to mitigate risks, as described in section 4 on beneficiary selection.

3.2 Eligibility criteria for inclusion in a programme

Criteria for inclusion in a programme should be based on characteristics of the vulnerable population that are observable and can be assessed without bias. These characteristics should ideally be derived from needs assessments, in combination with community consultations

and discussions with partners knowledgeable about the local context. If possible, protection advisers should be consulted to analyse potential protection risks associated with the eligibility criteria and identify possible mitigation measures to ensure that the most vulnerable and food insecure groups are not left behind.

Characteristics of good eligibility criteria

In general, eligibility criteria should be:

- **Evidence-based** – informed by vulnerability analysis;
- **Sensitive** – they correctly include the people most in need and exclude those in less need of assistance;
- **Specific** – formulated clearly and unambiguously;
- **Feasible** given the time, resources and capacities available;
- **Acceptable** to the beneficiaries and their communities; and
- **Verifiable**, so that targeting decisions can be checked and challenged by monitoring staff or community members

Potential partners and other organizations may be more established in the communities than WFP and therefore better able to provide essential information and participate in developing eligibility criteria, distribution systems and two-way communication approaches that are acceptable to

the community and potential beneficiaries. Establishing or tapping into multi-stakeholder coordination bodies can help define eligibility criteria that better represent the overall needs of communities and their most vulnerable members.



Box 6

WHY OUTCOME INDICATORS SHOULD NOT BE USED AS DIRECT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Socioeconomic and food security outcome indicators are used to assess vulnerability and food insecurity and to understand the number of people in need and their key characteristics, which will inform and validate eligibility criteria. However, these indicators (e.g. food consumption score or those related to coping strategies, income and expenditure) should not be used as the actual eligibility criteria for three reasons:

- These indicators are used in assessments and surveys on a sample population for a given point in time and are rarely available and up to date for a full population;
- Even when available, outcome indicators are too dynamic – they fluctuate over time (due to seasonality or household-specific events) as well as with the provision of assistance, which makes verification of beneficiary selection impossible; and
- They are critical to monitoring and validating the outcomes of targeting decisions. If used as direct eligibility criteria, they could not be used for this important function. Especially if eligibility criteria are communicated to affected populations (in line with good AAP practice), this would likely make households more inclined to underreport on these indicators.

How to translate findings from needs assessments into eligibility criteria

In addition to providing the basis for response analysis and programme design, including the targeting and prioritization of geographic areas of intervention, needs assessments inform the development of eligibility criteria for beneficiary selection. This is the case regardless of the targeting method used.

For **data-driven approaches** the eligibility criteria are developed by an analyst using assessment data, followed by consultations with communities to validate and, if needed, complement the criteria to form a set that responds to observed vulnerabilities (as revealed through the needs assessment) and perceived vulnerabilities (as revealed through consultations with the affected population). Once developed the criteria are applied to a population registry to generate the beneficiary list.

When taking a **community-based targeting** approach, the sequence of steps may vary as the findings from needs assessments can be used to validate and complement proposed criteria developed by the community before implementation, or to develop criteria before community consultations to guide the discussions and subsequent work by the selection committees to generate the beneficiary list. The best process for a community-based targeting approach will depend on contextual factors including the access of WFP and partners to affected populations, oversight of the targeting process and the quality of the needs assessment data.

Regardless of the targeting approach, findings from needs assessments are translated into eligibility criteria through an analytical process that identifies the right combination of criteria, which must:

- Be correlated with the main outcome indicator that the WFP activity is trying to address;
- For example if the programmatic objective is to increase household income, there should be a correlation between the eligibility criteria and low household food and non-food expenditure observed in the needs assessment. If the aim is to broaden food security, the criteria could be a combination of food consumption, coping strategies and income and expenditure variables such as CARI (see section 2);
- Be feasible and appropriate for implementation; and
- Have cut-off points for inclusion and exclusion that result in the lowest possible targeting design errors (see section 3.3).

To achieve this, the following steps should be implemented:

1. **Review the programmatic objectives of the activity** to ensure that the targeting approach is based on the intended outcomes of WFP assistance. If the activity aims to improve food security in terms of reduced poor and borderline food consumption scores, then the characteristics of households/individuals with poor or borderline scores should be used to inform the eligibility criteria;
2. **Run cross-tabulations to identify statistically significant relationships** between potential eligibility criteria and outcome indicators of interest (see Box 6 on why food consumption score, household expenditure and other outcome indicators should not be used directly as eligibility criteria);
3. **If warranted, further analyse the continuous variables that are correlated with food insecurity** in order to identify potential cut-off points. For example, if there is a clear difference in food security among households with fewer than five members compared to those with five or more members, this could be used as an eligibility criterion. The same logic applies to dependency ratios, the number of children, elderly household members, etc.



Photo: Damilola Onafuwa/WFP

4. **Ensure that the results of consultations with communities and other stakeholders have been taken into consideration;** this could mean adding criteria that were not captured through the needs assessment, for example related to specific protection concerns in the community;
5. **When a final set of potential criteria have been identified, a binary “eligibility variable” can be generated and applied to the needs assessment dataset** to determine which households within that sample that would be included and which excluded, in order to estimate and analyse:
 - a. the proportion of included vs. excluded households
 - b. the proportion of food insecure households that would be excluded (design exclusion errors)
 - c. the proportion of food secure households that would be included (design inclusion errors)
 - d. potential ways to mitigate these design inclusion and exclusion errors; this is done by analysing the characteristics of wrongfully included/excluded households to understand how they could be captured/excluded.

Step 5 is part of the broader analysis to validate the targeting approach and criteria, which is explained in more detail in section 3.3. Note that the estimation of errors is only valid where WFP aims to achieve outcomes at the household or individual level through direct assistance (Tier 1 beneficiaries). This is not the case when outcomes are achieved through e.g. the generation of community assets (Tier 2 beneficiaries).

As shown in **Table 4**, the targeting variable will be computed differently and therefore tweaked in different ways depending on the targeting approach and how the eligibility criteria will be used in practice, whether in a PMT model, through a weighted scorecard or categorically (the latter is most commonly used for the community-based approach as well).

The table shows what inclusion and exclusion criteria could look like for a given targeting method (noting that a combination of multiple indicators is often used).

Table 4. Examples of inclusion and exclusion criteria

Targeting method	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Geographic	<p>Example 1) Households living in districts A, B and C, which were affected by a shock, are all eligible for assistance</p> <p>Example 2) All households in districts in IPC Phase 3 or above are eligible for assistance</p>	<p>Example 1) Households in districts other than A, B and C, which were less affected or unaffected by the shock, are not eligible for assistance</p> <p>Example 2) Households in districts in IPC Phases 1 or 2 are not eligible for assistance</p>
Categorical	<p>Households that meet at least one of the following criteria are eligible for assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Female household head - Presence of at least two children aged under 5 	<p>Households that do not meet at least one of the following criteria are not eligible for assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Female household head - Presence of at least two children aged under 5
PMT	Households with a predicted per capita expenditure score below the MEB are eligible for assistance	Households with a predicted per capita expenditure score above the MEB are not eligible for assistance

The usefulness and appropriateness of eligibility criteria can be reviewed by asking the following questions.

1. Do the suggested criteria relate to things that can be observed or collected? Will it be possible to verify that the correct beneficiaries have been selected?
2. For life-saving operations, how many vulnerable households may be incorrectly excluded because of the criteria?
3. How many non-vulnerable households may be incorrectly included because of the criteria?
4. Can these criteria be communicated clearly to the community and other stakeholders?
5. Do these criteria seem fair to the community? Will they be accepted by the community?
6. Will these criteria remain valid for a long period of time?
7. Can the application of these criteria be monitored?

3.3 Validating the targeting method and criteria

Targeting is never perfect and every method involves certain levels of inclusion and exclusion error. The aim of the validation exercise is to assess the targeting methods or combination of methods to identify the most accurate and appropriate solution and pinpoint strategies to mitigate potential targeting errors. It is best to conduct this exercise before beneficiary selection to ensure that the chosen method(s) are effective in selecting the households that

best meet the criteria. The validation of eligibility criteria should include quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative component reveals potential design targeting errors. The qualitative component captures how the affected population view the criteria.

This exercise should be repeated as part of regular programme monitoring because vulnerability profiles can change over time (annually, in a very dynamic setting; every two to three years in a more stable environment).

The main objectives of validating the targeting methods are as follows:

There is no universal approach to determining which method or combination of methods to use for beneficiary targeting. As every operating environment is different, a context-specific approach is required to ensure that decision making is appropriate and sound.

Remember that the overall objectives of targeting are to:

1. Ensure that those most in need receive the assistance they require and that as many of the people in need as possible are reached given resource constraints (minimize exclusion errors);
2. Minimize the unintentional distribution of assistance to non-vulnerable people (minimize inclusion errors);
3. Accurately determine who should receive assistance; and

Estimate targeting design errors	Estimate the expected inclusion and exclusion errors associated with the chosen targeting method and criteria (see also step 5 in the development of eligibility criteria above, and section 6 on monitoring targeting processes and outcomes)
Compare effectiveness	Compare the effectiveness of different targeting methods/criteria in order to minimize targeting design errors
Assess sensitivity and appropriateness	Ensure that the chosen method does not cause harm in the specific context: Will decisions be accepted by the community? How will social cohesion be affected? Are decisions conflict-sensitive? Will targeting and prioritization decisions have negative impacts such as encouraging population movement or encouraging households to have more children?
Mitigate risks	Shape mitigation strategies such as eligibility criteria, re-inclusion criteria or referral strategies for other programmes, and the design of complaints and feedback mechanisms

4. Maintain transparency and integrity throughout the process to secure community trust in and local acceptance of the approach taken.

These objectives are guiding principles for evaluating the options available. The following practical implementation questions should also be asked:

- Is the approach understood and acceptable to the affected population? Can they be consulted throughout the process?
- Is there sufficient capacity (internal/external) to implement the targeting strategy?
- Can the targeting strategy be implemented within a reasonable timeframe and with available resources?
- How will households/individuals be selected? Will a questionnaire/registration process need to be implemented at a central location or through household visits?
- What are the risks of design and implementation inclusion and exclusion errors? What mitigation measures will address exclusion errors (in life-saving operations)?
- And finally, is the targeting cost-efficient or is the proportion of households who should be targeted so large that the cost and potential errors related to identifying non-vulnerable household makes targeting inappropriate?

Broadly speaking, validation approaches will differ for community-based and data-driven targeting due to the various challenges that each method presents.

The successful implementation of community-based targeting requires a cohesive social structure and trust among community members. There is a risk is that certain vulnerable groups in the population may be intentionally or unintentionally excluded by community leaders. This could include women; people living with disabilities; people living with HIV; survivors of gender-based violence; and different ethnic, language or religious groups. Therefore, community-based targeting is not recommended when there is tension or conflict between ethnic, religious or social groups within the community.

The following questions can guide consultations with affected populations and help to understand whether the environment is conducive to community-based targeting. They can also inform mitigation measures to reduce potential bias:

- What is the community composition? What are the main protection risks faced by different groups within the community?
- Is decision making within the community participatory and inclusive of gender and minority groups?
- Are there decision structures in the community that could act as the selection committee? Are they generally trusted and how could they be strengthened? If they do not yet exist, what would be the best way of establishing them?
- Is there known bias or conflict within the community that may lead to the exclusion of certain vulnerable groups? Is it possible to provide additional supervision/guidance?
- Will community-based targeting increase community ownership of the targeting process or will it put certain groups at risk (including the decision makers, who may be accused of being biased)?

Data-driven approaches could be a solution for dealing with community biases. However, they pose a different set of challenges due to discrepancies between actual and perceived vulnerabilities, as well as the capacity of the targeting method and eligibility criteria to detect those vulnerabilities. Communication and consultations with affected populations is key to garnering support, raising awareness of the targeting process and informing community members of how to complain about and report any problems with the targeting and prioritization decisions once implemented.

Estimating targeting design and implementation errors

For all **targeting approaches** it is important to estimate the targeting errors, which occur in the design and beneficiary selection phases. This subsection provides definitions and examples of both types of error. For details of how to measure targeting errors, refer section 3.2 (estimating design errors when choosing the targeting method and developing eligibility criteria) and section 6 on monitoring targeting processes and outcomes (following up on actual design and implementation errors).



Box 7

DEFINITIONS OF TARGETING DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION ERRORS

Targeting errors at the design stage

Design exclusion error: This is the proportion of the population who are in need of assistance but are not included in the targeted group. This type of error implies that the criteria for identifying those in need is not sensitive enough to capture individuals who should receive benefits.

Design inclusion error: This is the proportion of programme beneficiaries who do not need assistance but who are identified as in need based on the targeting method chosen. This type of error implies that the criteria for identifying vulnerable households is not specific enough to exclude those who are not in need.

Targeting design errors are quantitatively estimated in the design phase (see step-by-step description of how to develop eligibility criteria in section 3.2) and the monitoring phase (see section 6).

NOTE: Design exclusion errors are of particular concern in life-saving operations. By definition they will increase when **prioritization** decisions have to be made because of funding or other constraints, which leads to the selection of a subset of needy people to be assisted (unless geographic coverage is adjusted). In any case, the objective is always to minimize the exclusion and inclusion errors for the most efficient and effective use of resources.

Targeting errors at the implementation stage

Implementation exclusion error: This is the proportion of the affected population who meet the defined criteria for targeting and prioritization but do not receive benefits. This type of error implies that during programme implementation, individuals/households were incorrectly excluded.

Implementation inclusion error: The proportion of programme beneficiaries who do not meet the criteria for targeting and prioritization but receive benefits, implying that individuals were incorrectly enrolled in the programme.

Targeting implementation errors can only be measured quantitatively in the monitoring phase (when actual beneficiary selection can be compared against eligibility criteria) but they can be mitigated by carefully planning and conducting the targeting exercise alongside cooperating partners and the communities and by setting up a robust monitoring system.

Table 5. Examples of design and implementation errors

Type of error	Design error	Implementation error
Inclusion error	WFP provides assistance to all households living in a flood-affected village → Households in the village who have not been directly affected by the flood also receive assistance	WFP delivers targeted in-kind household-level food assistance through a partner in a hard-to-reach area; WFP nor the partner have sufficient oversight of the distribution through monitoring staff on site → Households split up into several units and receive multiple rations
Exclusion error	Large households with small or school aged children will receive assistance → This strategy may exclude small vulnerable households e.g. consisting of elderly members only	WFP delivers a preventive nutrition programme for mothers with children aged 0–23 months but communication with the affected population on the time and location of assistance provision has been insufficient → eligible beneficiaries do not show up at assistance site



Case study 2

CHOICE OF TARGETING METHOD, CRITERIA AND ESTIMATION OF DESIGN ERRORS IN MALAWI

Based on vulnerability analysis and classification, WFP and UNHCR considered adopting a categorical targeting approach using demographic data from proGres (the UNHCR registration database).

First, the most critical criteria associated with vulnerability were identified during the needs assessment and ranked. Then, design errors were calculated in a cumulative way, adding more and more criteria. The table below shows that as more criteria were applied, the design exclusion error reduced and the inclusion error slightly increased. With all seven criteria, the targeting mechanism was estimated to be able to capture 83.1 percent of highly vulnerable households with cumulative design inclusion and exclusion errors of 16.9 percent.

Rank	Targeting criteria	% of highly vulnerable individuals meeting criteria	# of highly vulnerable individuals meeting criteria	Cumulative # of highly vulnerable individuals meeting criteria	Cumulative coverage of highly vulnerable	Cumulative Inclusion error count	Cumulative Exclusion error count	Cumulative Exclusion error (among highly vulnerable)
1	Households with children 5-17yrs	85.4%	19,347	19,347	69.3%	5,359	14.6%	30.7%
2	Female headed households	85.7%	1,421	20,768	74.4%	5,636	15.3%	25.6%
3	Households with 5 or more members	88.3%	413	21,181	75.9%	5,600	15.2%	24.1%
4	Households headed by a widow or separated	81.8%	183	21,364	76.5%	5,729	15.6%	23.5%
5	Households with at least 1.5 dependency ratio	87.0%	642	22,006	78.8%	5,697	15.5%	21.2%
6	Households with at least 1 person living with disabilities	94.7%	138	22,144	79.3%	5,667	15.4%	20.7%
7	Households with at least 1 chronically ill or under serious medical condition	80.4%	1,054	23,198	83.1%	6,219	16.9%	16.9%
	Total		23,198	23,198	83.1%	6,219	16.9%	16.9%

This means that using these criteria would exclude around 17 percent of the actually highly vulnerable, while 17 percent of those eligible are not vulnerable. As a general rule, the higher the design inclusion error, the lower the design exclusion error and vice versa. The best combination depends on the programme context and objectives. For life-saving operations, there is less tolerance for exclusion errors and additional measures are warranted to reduce the (e.g. through referral mechanisms).

4 Beneficiary selection: implementation of targeting and prioritization decisions

The operationalization of targeting and prioritization decisions is a collaborative effort led by the activity manager. Internally it necessitates coordination across several units, principally VAM, AAP and TEC; depending on the activity and the country context, CBT, Supply Chain and others may also play key roles. Externally, strong coordination and collaboration is required with affected communities, cooperating partners, local authorities, the humanitarian community including United Nations agencies and potentially a range of other special interest groups. In line with AAP commitments, targeting exercises will be conducted alongside affected communities and engage with them at all stages.

4.1 Preparing for a successful beneficiary selection process

Working through existing and/or newly developed coordination mechanisms for a beneficiary selection exercise, WFP, its cooperating partners and other stakeholders – such as other United Nations agencies and government counterparts – need to prepare for the implementation of the targeting and prioritization decisions. Key aspects include defining roles and responsibilities (see section 1.3), analysing and mitigating risks and developing a strategy and mechanisms for communication with affected populations.

Identify and contract the right cooperating partner and outline the roles and responsibilities for the beneficiary selection process, e.g. in relation to communication strategies, meetings with stakeholders, provision of help desk support, the appeals process, adherence to beneficiary data management processes, the selection of beneficiaries and monitoring. Importantly, the roles and responsibilities of cooperating partners should be clearly documented in field-level agreements. The roles and responsibilities should also be agreed and documented with other stakeholders including local authorities and other humanitarian and development agencies.

Commence a risk analysis, including real and perceived risks and considering internal and external aspects of the beneficiary selection exercise. Focus on areas such as government actions, security concerns, crowd management and data management. The analysis should identify the probability of a particular risk happening; consider the impact of such an occurrence; and identify actions to reduce the likelihood of the risk happening and/or mitigate its impact. The risk analysis may be reviewed throughout the targeting process.

Develop a communication strategy and channels for beneficiary selection specifically for the preparation and implementation phases, as well as long-term. The strategy should outline the means of two-way communication in the various phases of the targeting process for each stakeholder category. Consider who needs to be consulted, who needs to be informed and who should be able to provide feedback.

There are multiple channels (one-way and two-way) for communicating how and why beneficiaries were selected depending on the context, all of which have different implications on time, cost, communication coverage and human resources. The choice of communication channels should be based on community preferences – this is information that ideally should be collected during needs assessments. Possible channels include:

- **Community meetings;**
- **Information boards**, physical or online through social media forums;
- Information on the **complaints and feedback mechanism**, which is widely publicized and provided to all households visited during assessment surveys and at other opportunities;
- Demand-driven **community gatherings**, where individuals can visit programme offices or an acting service provider to register queries and complaints; and
- Physical **help desks** in strategic locations, the opening hours of which are clearly communicated to affected populations in the area.

All channels should be sensitized to receive and act upon allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse during the targeting process.

Communication materials should be developed in collaboration with external communication experts such as the country office public information function (if available) and be guided by the end user audience for each product. Information should be provided in a language appropriate for the audience and could include the aim and objective of the assistance, the targeting model, proposed eligibility criteria, assistance modality, assistance levels (entitlement), timeframe of assistance, appeals process and ceiling on numbers to be assisted. Partners (e.g. cooperating partners, government and interagency forums) should be consulted to gather quality feedback on issues requiring clarity and foster a shared understanding of the process. The following materials may be considered:

For staff:

- Talking points for WFP/cooperating partner staff to ensure consistency in the message.
- FAQs for WFP staff and for hotline and help desk staff.
- Training for hotline and help desk staff may also be helpful on referral pathways for cases that require attention/actions beyond their purview.

For affected populations:

- At a minimum, produce basic informative material on targeting and appeals processes (why, when, where, how, who is eligible, for how long and the entitlement); the level of detail will be dependent on the country context.

For the government:

- Consider sending letters to inform them of the WFP plans. Be specific about the reason for targeting, why it is being done now, what is going to happen (the process), where and when it is going to happen and the appeals process.



Establishing a complaints and feedback mechanism and an appeals process

Targeting is not perfect – some who should receive assistance will inevitably be excluded and some who should not receive assistance will be included. Providing a mechanism for the community to give feedback and file complaints is the first step towards tackling this; the second is to design and implement a system for handling the responses.

A complaints and feedback mechanism (CFM) must include set procedures for recording, referring, actioning, tracking and providing feedback to the complainant. It can reveal programme design issues including the targeting approach; highlight protection risks; and promote community participation and trust. There should be a process to ensure that any complaint or feedback registered through the CFM that relates to issues of inclusion or exclusion in a programme is raised to the targeting team. Ideally the CFM process is documented in the form of standard operating procedures. The process should be explained to individuals who raise an issue, who should also be told when they can expect to receive a response, which is provided to close the loop on each issue recorded. Aggregated, anonymized data on issues raised should be analysed regularly by the unit responsible for the CFM and findings shared with the Programme team and VAM to inform adjustments.

To facilitate the beneficiary selection appeals system, it is good practice to strengthen the CFM around the time

of a beneficiary selection exercise in order to meet the temporary increase in demand for information and to handle complaints. It may also be useful to set up physical help desks in strategic and accessible locations if these are not already in place. The appeals process aims to detect and address unanticipated design errors as well as implementation errors. Individuals or households who consider themselves wrongfully excluded will have a clearly communicated timeframe to voice their complaints, after which all reported cases are reviewed and analysed at the individual and aggregated levels. For example, when implementing data-driven targeting approaches, it is common that eligible individuals/households are excluded as a result of inaccurate information in the underlying registry – the timeframe should therefore allow excluded individuals/households the opportunity to update their registration data before the eligibility criteria are re-run and the updated result is communicated to the complainant. If an unexpectedly large number of wrongful exclusions is observed, the eligibility criteria and implementation process should be carefully reviewed.

In addition to the obligations outlined in the document *Minimum standards for implementing a complaints and feedback mechanism*,²² the following considerations should be taken into account:

- Based on the needs of the community, a multi-platform communication solution may be the most effective way to ensure access to the CFM; seek ways to identify and mitigate access constraints e.g. by offering a toll-free hotline, locating phones in women and child-friendly spaces and setting up help desks in remote areas;
- Connect with accountability coordination forums such as the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) taskforce, AAP working groups and cluster/inter-cluster groups;
- Consider setting up common or collective mechanisms to avoid parallel systems, or link to existing common or collective mechanisms;
- Collaborate with partners in feedback referral and response processes, where appropriate; and
- Build trust with the community by systematically reporting back action taken in response to their feedback.

4.2 Identification and selection process

This section describes the practical implementation of the various approaches to identifying and selecting beneficiaries (community-based, self-selection or data-driven).

Community-based targeting

Community-based targeting selects beneficiaries through a committee of community members who are representative of the population including marginalized groups, women, people from different age groups and persons with disabilities. This approach works well when communities are cohesive and stable. However, even in this context, there are risks that need to be monitored. The most prevalent and severe risk is that certain minority subgroups may be excluded due to the opinion of the majority. This could include ethnic or religious minorities or IDPs or refugees who have settled in the community.

While community-based targeting is not suitable in all contexts, the process often results in community ownership of an intervention and targeting decisions that are easily communicated and accepted by the affected population. Once the purpose and principles of good governance of the targeting exercise has been explained to the community, the following steps should be taken to mitigate the limitations and potential problems of a community-based targeting scheme:

1. Reiterate the criticality of the targeting exercise and the goal of reaching the most vulnerable;
2. Form a representative selection committee comprising men and women that also represents minority groups and viewpoints. Communicate clearly that the results of the exercise can be rejected by WFP if marginalized groups are not appropriately represented;
3. Agree on eligibility criteria that are informed by needs assessment and local knowledge – WFP and its partners can either propose criteria to the community if there is a sufficient evidence base, or work together to generate a set of criteria that are validated afterwards (see section 3.2 on how to develop and validate eligibility criteria);
4. Promote participation by giving potential beneficiaries the opportunity to agree on the criteria, not only community leaders;

²¹ Minimum standards for implementing a complaints and feedback mechanism.

5. Use descriptive and specific criteria so that individuals and households who qualify can be easily identified;
6. Ensure that households matching the criteria are identified and proposed for inclusion. Each proposal is discussed by the committee, and upon agreement, a list of proposed beneficiaries is compiled;
7. Register beneficiaries or import data;
8. Ensure WFP and/or cooperating partners randomly visit selected communities and households to validate the beneficiary lists and monitor registration processes;
9. Promote the use of an accessible and responsive CFM that has been designed in consultation with the community; and
10. Adjust targeting decisions and processes on the basis of feedback from the M&E system.

For in-depth information on implementing a community-based targeting approach, see the *Community-Based Targeting Guide* published by WFP Kenya.²³

Self-targeting or self-selection

Self-selection, as the name implies, places the responsibility of registration for a programme on the individual or household. In theory, this means that people can register if they identify themselves as vulnerable, meet pre-defined and communicated eligibility criteria and take the necessary actions to apply. These actions may include completing a form to be included in a registry that will be used to identify households for unconditional assistance through a data-driven approach (such as for the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme in Turkey²⁴) or for participation in an FFA programme.

Often, self-selection is combined with other approaches including geographic and categorical targeting. For example, an FFA programme may only be available in certain villages within a district, and only households without livestock may qualify. To incentivize the intended beneficiaries only, the wage rates of the programme may be kept low, making it an unattractive option for those with other, higher-paying employment opportunities.

Eligibility criteria may also be needed in order to prioritize applicants if resources are insufficient to assist all of them. The approach could be combined with demographic targeting or PMT to introduce an additional filter that identifies the households most in need.

Self-selection as a targeting approach requires a carefully designed communication strategy that ensures the timely and accessible sharing of information about the opportunity to all segments of the population. When conditional assistance is provided, such as FFA, special consideration must be given to households without able-bodied members who cannot participate in the programme. A common solution is to allocate a proportion of the budgeted assistance to these households, unless they are covered by another programme or a national safety net.

For more details on these approaches, refer to the *Community-Based Targeting Guide* and the chapters on self-targeting in the *Targeting for Nutrition Improvement* guidance published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Implementing data-driven approaches

If the registration data available through a beneficiary identity management system (e.g. SCOPE by WFP or the UNHCR ProGres system for refugee registration) is of good quality and includes relevant variables, data-driven beneficiary selection is a straightforward task. A syntax with “if” sentences will classify households or individuals as eligible or non-eligible, most commonly using a combination of criteria, the PMT formula to predict and categorize a certain outcome, or the weighted variables of a scorecard. Data-driven approaches become more problematic in the absence of appropriate registration databases. In this case, eligibility criteria can be communicated to the affected population (or at least the variables feeding into the model, in the case of a PMT or a scorecard) then a registration exercise can be organized for households who consider themselves eligible and in need of assistance. Ideally this generates a manageable number of applicant households and generate a registry to which the targeting formula can be applied.

²³ WFP. 2015. *Community-based targeting guide*.

²⁴ WFP and World Bank. 2019. *Vulnerability and Protection of Refugees in Turkey: Findings from the Rollout of the Largest Humanitarian Cash Assistance Program in the World*.

Beneficiary identity management and linkages to targeting and prioritization

Targeting is a continuous process for ensuring that the right people are receiving the right assistance at the right time. Targeted assistance is sometimes introduced when recipient households are already registered in beneficiary identity management systems. This data can be useful for implementing targeting and prioritization decisions – especially when using data-driven targeting methods such as categorical or PMT targeting. Beneficiary registration may also be conducted while or shortly after households are screened for assistance based on agreed eligibility criteria, for example, during household visits by cooperating partners.

According to draft WFP beneficiary identity management guidelines (October 2019 version – as yet unpublished), beneficiary data collection is understood as the act of recording any kind of personal data of individuals, identified as intended beneficiaries through a screening process, in an information management platform. Accurate beneficiary data collection is key to generating and maintaining beneficiary lists and delivering assistance. Beneficiary data collection can be done through direct registration, data import or a mix of both.

- Direct registration is the act of collecting and recording pre-defined beneficiary data into an information management platform.
- Data import refers to the act of obtaining pre-defined beneficiary data from internal or external sources and entering it into an information management platform. Typical sources of beneficiary data include lists maintained by WFP cooperating partners, UNHCR, IOM, governments and NGOs.

In the case of data import, the usefulness of the data for targeting will depend on the scope of the data provided by partners. Key factors to consider are completeness (who is listed and who is not?); relevance of the data to the identified eligibility criteria; quality of the data (including regularity of updates); and accessibility/data sharing (in line with WFP guidance). As much as possible WFP should try to negotiate to receive all data that can facilitate targeting and prioritization decisions.

It is critical that WFP is able to assess the coverage and quality of any available registry before it is used for targeting and prioritization purposes. If registries are outdated, inaccurate or exclude vulnerable households/individuals, using them will risk exacerbating these flaws and could do more harm than good. In cases where the registries cannot be assessed or where quality does not meet standards, other options should be considered such as updating or replacing the registry or choosing a targeting approach that does not rely on a population registry, such as community-based targeting.

Utilizing beneficiary data for targeting and prioritization

When beneficiary information is collected and recorded during enrolment and registration exercises (for example in SCOPE), data will be collected that can facilitate the subsequent implementation of targeting and prioritization decisions. As the purpose of the initial registration is to collect data on intended beneficiaries, registration data will mostly be relevant for prioritization exercises or when needs-based targeting approaches are introduced at a later stage. In the event of funding shortfalls, pipeline breaks or a shift from blanket to targeted assistance, registration data can be helpful in identifying households according to the eligibility criteria (which maybe tweaked in the case of prioritization, see section 5). It can also help safeguard vulnerable groups from assistance cuts.



Photo: Alessandro Abbonizio/WFP



Box 8

TARGETING TAKES PLACE PRIOR TO REGISTRATION

NOTE: as far as possible, WFP should avoid collecting personal data from households and individuals who it does not plan to assist. The registration exercise does not replace a needs assessment. As described in section 2, needs assessments are based on a representative subsample of the population; they inform programme design, targeting decisions and the development of eligibility criteria. Based on these criteria, the eligible households that WFP intends to assist are registered into the beneficiary identity management system. Registration of the full population should therefore only be conducted if WFP plans to provide blanket assistance.

Whenever WFP is in a position to influence a registration process that will produce data relevant to an intended response, the organization should ensure or advocate for the collection of variables and indicators that are often correlated with food insecurity and socioeconomic vulnerability. Covering both individual (e.g. sex and age) and household-level data (e.g. household size, dependency ratio) will facilitate better targeting and prioritization decisions.

Table 6 presents a generic collection of variables and indicators that are relevant for any registration process, including for a government-owned social registry. Some contexts may allow for individual or household-level registration using the more comprehensive “standard”

registration questionnaire. This can be used when registration is planned in advance and where the collection of detailed information during registration will reduce the need for additional/complementary registration exercises and/or household visits later.

If a detailed data collection exercise would unjustifiably slow down programme implementation, e.g. in a sudden emergency or when the very high number of households to be registered would make more detailed information collection impossible, the “rapid” set of fields can be used. Where a timely response is critical, registration is likely to happen at the household level and focus on minimum requirements such as household size, household composition in terms of the sex and age of its members, and the sex of the household head.

Table 6 summarizes these data collection packages and the scenarios in which they are applicable. It also outlines how each package can inform a targeting or prioritization exercise, including the variables/indicators useful for targeting and prioritization that would be available or that could be generated by combining one or more of the variables (e.g. the dependency ratio – an indicator that is generated by dividing the number of dependents by the number of able-bodied people of working age living in the household). It also provides a general sense of the human resources required for each package.



Photo: Damilola Onafuwa/WFP

Table 6: Proposed variables for data collection at registration

Level of registration	Household		Individual
	Standard	Rapid	Standard
Potential scenario	<p>Programme is shifting from immediate blanket assistance to a targeted approach.</p> <p>Additional information to allow for targeting and prioritization is required.</p>	<p>Rapid onset emergency where a timely response is critical.</p> <p>Speed is of high importance but some level of targeting and prioritization is expected to take place.</p>	<p>Priority is given to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the population of interest at the individual level, which could allow for the implementation of targeted nutrition activities, for example.</p>
Benefit for targeting / prioritization	<p>Enhances targeting and prioritization accuracy compared to the rapid option.</p> <p>Helps to mitigate exclusion and inclusion errors if properly implemented.</p>	<p>Will allow for as many households as possible to be registered in a short timeframe and provide minimum requirements for targeting and prioritization decisions.</p>	<p>Will enable the construction of a list of household members and the computation of a set of indicators useful for targeting and prioritization at the household and the individual level.</p>
Resources required	<p>Regular registration setup with additional training required for some of the data points (e.g. if data on disability is collected).</p> <p>VAM analysis capacity required to generate the syntax for automatic generation of variables/indicators and analysis of registration data.</p>	<p>Standard deployment team for SCOPE or other digital solutions but must be able to handle a largescale registration exercise</p> <p>VAM analysis capacity required to generate the syntax for automatic generation of variables/indicators and analysis of registration data.</p>	<p>Expanded registration to document each individual in the household. Additional training required for some of the data points (e.g. if data on disability is collected).</p> <p>VAM analysis capacity required to generate the syntax for automatic generation of variables/indicators and analysis of registration data.</p>
Type of data collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sex of household (HH) head ■ Household size ■ Household list with number of members by age category: 0–23 months; Under 5; 5–14; Working age (15–64); Elderly (65+) ■ Dependency ratio ■ Household is headed by single female ■ Household has pregnant/ lactating women or girls ■ Household has children out of school ■ Highest education level in the household ■ Household head marital status ■ Presence of disabled members in household ■ Household with/without income generating members ■ Household main income source ■ Household main food source 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sex, age and marital status of household head ■ Household size ■ Table with numbers of members by age category: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 0–23 months - Under 5 - 5–14 - Working age (15–64) - Elderly (65+) (this will be used to estimate the dependency ratio) ■ Presence of pregnant/ lactating women or girls 	<p>For each individual member:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sex ■ Age ■ Marital status ■ Number of children under 18 (to identify single parents) ■ For women, pregnant or lactating? ■ Disability status ■ Education status ■ Income generation status <p>These indicators will be used to compute household-level indicators (household size, dependency ratio, etc.)</p>

4.3 Targeting and prioritization in urban areas

WFP's operational footprint in urban areas has expanded significantly over the past decade starting with the response to the 2008–09 global food, fuel and financial crisis and major displacement and refugee crises around the world, with the majority of displaced populations residing in urban areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this trend – 95 percent of COVID-19 cases globally have been in urban areas and urban populations are at particular risk of the socioeconomic implications of the health crisis. As a consequence, vulnerable urban populations such as slum dwellers and those depending on the informal sector are facing increasing difficulties in meeting their food and other essential needs, resulting in a higher demand for assistance in urban contexts.

The targeting and prioritization process outlined in this guidance is mostly valid in urban contexts, yet there are specific opportunities and challenges associated with targeting in these settings.

Needs assessments in urban areas present many unique considerations and challenges. The most common challenges include measuring the size, location, characteristics and movement of urban populations. While most countries have an official geographic classification of urban and rural areas, these are not always up to date and some countries may not have them at all. At the same time, official census data is often inaccurate or unavailable. Even in cases where census data is considered appropriate, it may not correspond to the geographic strata identified for the assessment. This is a particular concern for informal settings/slums, where populations are highly mobile and often not fully accounted for.

However, urban areas offer an opportunity to use new innovative tools and solutions. High-resolution satellite imagery can be especially useful for defining urban or suburban areas such as slums. It can also be used for estimating population sizes, using the gridded population sampling method. Moreover, given the high number of mobile phone and internet users, urban areas offer a great

opportunity for the use of remote assessment technologies including phone and web surveys.

Once needs have been assessed in the urban context, there are several challenges to translating findings into feasible programming options and targeting decisions:

- **Needs usually outweigh available resources** by far, meaning blanket assistance or self-targeting solutions are not feasible.
- **Geographic targeting** may be possible but more challenging due to unclear boundaries and highly mixed and mobile populations. Also, as distances are short, geographic targeting can create unintentional pull factors.
- **Population registries** are seldom available; where they do exist and can facilitate the implementation of data-driven targeting approaches such as categorical targeting, they are likely to be limited in coverage and quality due to high population mobility; and
- **Community-based targeting** is often not feasible as communities are not well defined and community identity can be very fluid. Many of the key requirements for community-based targeting are often not met in urban settings (see section 4.2).

Below are a number of recommendations on how to address or overcome some of these challenges:

- **Identify key stakeholders and map out existing programmes, charities, service provision**, etc. that could serve as entry points for facilitating the targeting and prioritization of assistance or where assistance could be provided as a top up to existing programmes.
- **Use national social registries** where available and invest in shock-responsive social protection by supporting governments in adapting, expanding and continuing the implementation of existing safety nets (see also section 4.4).
- As the concept of households is highly fluid in urban settings, focus on **individual-level targeting mechanisms** such as programmes that address the needs of school aged children, pregnant and lactating women, malnourished children or other groups with special needs.

- Explore a combined vulnerability and self-targeting approach. In order to identify households or individuals for assistance, WFP can develop and communicate eligibility criteria based on assessed needs and the estimated number of eligible people those criteria will produce. Following a comprehensive communication campaign, households/individuals who consider themselves eligible are invited for registration and verification. If the number of registered and eligible people ends up being higher than the available resources can cover, data gathered during registration can be used to prioritize the most vulnerable.
- Blanket assistance within a limited geographic area – if certain geographic areas of limited size and population are clearly left behind, and vulnerability levels are consistently high within those areas, WFP could choose to provide blanket assistance with the largest possible ration size given available funding. However, a careful risk analysis is required for this approach, including consideration of assistance as a potential pull factor.

4.4 Considerations when working with and through the social protection sector

WFP is increasingly partnering with national governments and the social protection sector for direct assistance, service provision and technical assistance. Examples include when WFP provides assistance in the form of a top-up to government safety net payments in the wake of a disaster, or provide technical assistance to the setup of a payment system for a national social protection scheme. During the COVID-19 pandemic, country offices around the world received many more requests for support from governments, often related to system support for cash-based transfers in urban settings.

Multiple aspects of targeting and prioritization have to be considered when working with or through the national social protection sector. This section will provide general guidance and considerations for harmonizing the targeting approaches of WFP programmes and national social protection schemes. It will also cover assurance aspects related to targeting and prioritization when WFP assistance is channelled through government systems.

Harmonization of the targeting approaches used by WFP and government programmes

In many countries, WFP is changing its role from a direct implementor to an enabler that supports national governments in fighting hunger and poverty. Aligning targeting and prioritization approaches with national systems brings several benefits:

- Enhanced ownership and acceptance by government from the outset
- Greater delivery efficiency and effectiveness, also by avoiding duplication
- Long-term sustainability

Before deciding how to position WFP programmes in relation to national social protection schemes, the following aspects should be considered:

- Meeting needs and priorities — Are the objectives and priorities of activities implemented by WFP and the national social protection sector the same or similar? If not, are there vulnerable groups excluded from the national system that WFP should focus on?
- Coverage and errors – What coverage will the selected approach – aligned or complementary – result in? Can inclusion and exclusion errors be measured and minimized?
- National or programme registry — is there a national registry of vulnerable households/people that can facilitate targeting and prioritization? Is it complete, regularly updated and accessible to WFP?
- Sustainability — Does the collaboration and division of responsibilities strengthen government capacities and ownership, or does it weaken it? What exit/transition strategies are in place for when WFP assistance scales down?

Analysing these four aspects will inform the decision as to whether and how to align with government systems. There are different options with varying degrees of alignment ranging from general coordination, full integration and a facilitating capacity strengthening role.

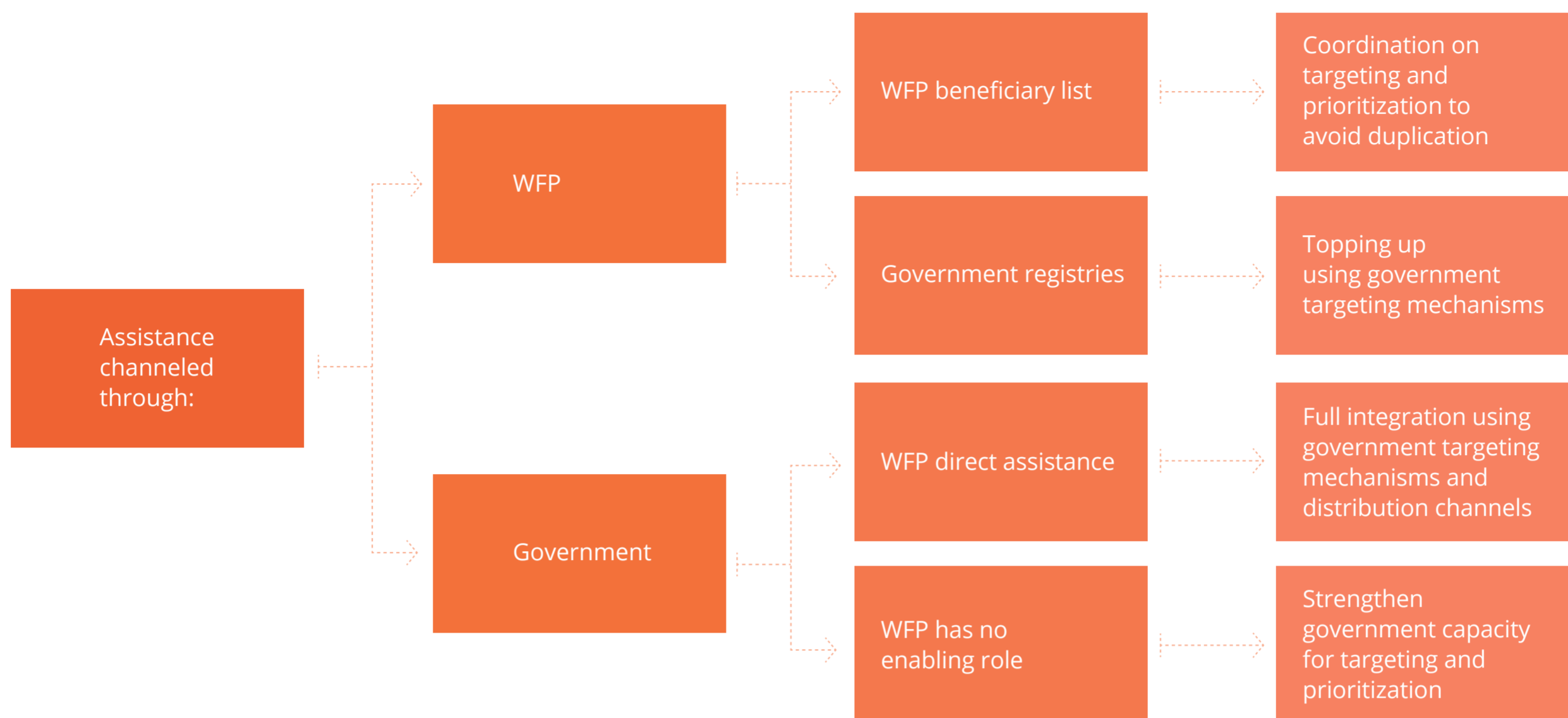


Figure 4. Targeting and prioritization for different scenarios of collaboration between WFP and governments

Assurance considerations when channelling assistance through government systems

In contexts where WFP channels funds through government systems for assistance, such as top-ups to existing government transfers in shock-affected areas or as part of a multi-stakeholder consortium to strengthen national social protection systems, a certain level of assurance is required.²⁵ For targeting and prioritization, this includes ensuring three main aspects:

- WFP has an independent understanding of the needs of the population of interest;
- WFP has visibility over the government approach to assessing needs and targeting and prioritization; and
- An independent monitoring system is in place.

Governments normally have their own established method for determining which segments of society are most in need of social assistance. The degree to which governments will provide transparency or welcome WFP’s technical support in identifying people in need of assistance may vary. If WFP has visibility over key technical aspects of government needs assessments – such as those conducted through regular household income and expenditure surveys – including sampling and questionnaire design, data collection and analysis, WFP will be able to assess the government’s approach

to determining needs, how it links with targeting and the approach used to identify and assist those in most need.

Governments often also use lifecycle approaches that target certain population groups with specific needs according to their stage in life through blanket assistance (e.g. support for parents with children, for the elderly or for widows). In these cases, it is important to establish that WFP and government programme objectives and targeting systems are sufficiently aligned.

The following questions can guide such an analysis:

- **How have needs been assessed?**
- **How many people are planned to be reached?** How many are left behind?
- **Which targeting method is applied** and why?
- **How and when were the eligibility criteria and processes developed?** Are they still relevant?
- **How are criteria applied** to identify eligible households/ individuals? If there is one or more social registry or government programme, what is the estimated coverage and accuracy? What is the coherence between existing programmes, and how interoperable are the registries? Is there any relevant external analysis? If there is no reliable analysis, WFP should explore the possibility of conducting one.

²⁵ For more details on assurances when working through national systems, please refer to the [Interim Guidance and Assurance Standards for Cash-Based Transfer \(CBT\) through Governments and Social Protection Systems](#) [document accessible through WFP intranet only].

- **How is prioritization done** and is it implemented coherently? Is it driven by resources, coordination with other government services or actors, donors, mandate or other government priorities?
- **How are outreach and enrolment conducted** and measured and what are the potential gaps in reaching eligible households, including communication and information gaps?
- **Are there any barriers that prevent eligible households** from accessing assistance, e.g. documentation, communication barriers, physical access or social barriers?
- **How have affected populations been consulted** on the targeting approach and criteria?
- **Are conflict-sensitivity and social tension risks** or opportunities to build social cohesion taken into consideration in the targeting strategy?
- Where possible, a **quantitative analysis of potential inclusion and exclusion errors** in the design and implementation phases should be conducted by WFP or jointly with governments, or existing analyses reviewed.
- **Who else is supporting the government** (e.g. IFIs) and which entity (e.g. different line ministries)? Are objectives and support aligned?

When assistance is provided through government systems, it is important to **establish a monitoring system** that – similar to the needs assessment phase – allows WFP to develop an independent understanding of outcomes for assisted and non-assisted populations and targeting and prioritization processes (see section 6 for guidance on how to establish such systems). This can either be achieved through joint efforts where WFP has oversight and influence over data gathering, analysis and subsequent actions, or through a parallel WFP-led system.

It is important to keep in mind that WFP's capacity to engage with government counterparts on targeting and prioritization varies and that not all country offices may be in a position to offer technical assistance. For example, supporting or critically assessing the government's targeting approaches may require advanced statistical analysis skills, as social

assistance programmes often use PMT models to target assistance. It also requires an advanced understanding of social protection systems and how they work. While country offices may recruit additional capacity or reach out to regional bureaux and headquarters for support, other in-country partners such as national bureaux of statistics and academic institutions at the country or regional level may be able to provide appropriate support. In other contexts, development banks may be providing technical assistance on targeting as part of broader support for strengthening social protection systems and could constitute a potential partner for WFP.

Beneficiary targeting and the prioritization of resources, particularly when working with governments, is often dynamic and context-specific. The key obligation for WFP is to understand who is being assisted and why, if there are any measures that can be taken to improve the process, if WFP is the right entity to provide this support – and to position its own response and technical assistance offer accordingly.



Photo: Sayed Asif Mahmud/WFP

5 Prioritization – when not all needs can be met

As presented in Figure 3, the targeting approach for a given activity should aim to capture all the people in need that WFP would assist if it had the resources, in line with programmatic objectives. This number should be similar to or the same as the number of people planned to be assisted in the needs-based plan (bearing in mind contextual developments such as changes in the population size in the time elapsed between the development of the needs-based plan and the design of the targeting approach). However, almost every WFP activity is subject to prioritization in the implementation phase, as funding shortfalls and potentially access and capacity constraints prevent WFP from meeting all needs.

It should be noted that all forms of prioritization will negatively impact achievement of WFP’s programmatic objectives. While recognizing the dependency between WFP’s three strategic focus areas – crisis response, resilience building and root causes – as the means to achieve hunger solutions, the organization also recognizes its core humanitarian obligation first, to save lives. In a context of resource scarcity, prioritization must put first WFP’s mandate to save lives, prioritizing the delivery of assistance to populations through crisis response and resilience building focus areas which safeguard delivery of humanitarian assistance and protect livelihoods.

In the case of funding shortfalls, there are three main options for pushing the cost of assistance below a budgetary ceiling:

- Reducing the number of beneficiaries;
- Reducing the size of the assistance provided; and
- Reducing the duration of assistance.

In practice, a combination of strategies is often implemented and sometimes a tiered approach is applied whereby beneficiaries are categorized to identify the most vulnerable within the targeted population, who receive a higher value of assistance, while those considered in need but slightly better off receive a lower assistance value.²⁶

Programmatic objectives – whether they remain the same or shift as a result of the shortfall and WFP’s obligation towards saving lives and livelihoods – should guide the prioritization decisions. For example, when providing life-saving assistance in a rapid-onset emergency it is probably more important to cover as many people as possible with a reduced level of assistance, whereas in a context with transitional objectives, such as food assistance for training activities, it is most likely the number of beneficiaries that should be reduced for the activity to have an impact.

The context and community dynamics will also play an important role – if households who remain assisted are expected to share their entitlements with excluded households, the investment made in identifying and selecting the most vulnerable could end up being a waste of time and resources.

Where flexible funding mechanisms apply, e.g. in sudden emergencies, resources are typically moved from “live-changing” to “life-saving” assistance to allow for a rapid intervention – especially when lives are at stake. Unfortunately, resources are often earmarked and donor approval is required to do this.

Prioritization largely follows the same steps as a targeting exercise – in some cases prioritization is required from the outset of assistance provision, and eligibility criteria will be developed that match the budgetary ceiling while minimizing inclusion and exclusion errors to the extent possible. In other cases prioritization is implemented at a later stage as an extension of the targeting approach; this is achieved by re-assessing eligibility criteria and tweaking them to identify the most vulnerable households within the targeted population, while minimizing exclusion errors.

Despite the similar technical approaches to targeting and prioritization, it is important to **clearly distinguish between the two when communicating with the people affected, partners and donors.** Increased exclusion errors will be inevitable and objectives may not be met if resources have to be prioritized. This can result in significant unmet needs,

²⁶ For more information on how to determine transfer values for CBT operations, please refer to WFP. 2020. [Setting the transfer value for CBT interventions: Transfer value interim guidance.](#)

which could have an impact on the welfare and protection situation of a population. Communication with vulnerable households excluded from assistance will be particularly important, as well as continued monitoring of their outcomes. Rapidly deteriorating food security outcomes may warrant

further analysis of the prioritization decisions and can serve as basis for advocacy with donors, partners and other stakeholders in order to increase WFP resource levels and scale up actions by other organizations.

Table 7. Adjusting eligibility criteria to prioritize the most vulnerable

Targeting method	Original eligibility criteria	Adjustment for prioritization
Categorical, based on social demographics	All households headed by women included in assistance	To reduce the caseload to the most vulnerable among the vulnerable, only households headed by women with at least one child under 14 will be assisted
Proxy means testing (PMT)	PMT model applied to predict household expenditure: inclusion if predicted per capita expenditure is below USD 20 per month	To reduce the caseload to the most vulnerable among the vulnerable, the same model applies but the cut-off shifts from USD 20 to USD 15

6 Monitoring targeting processes and outcomes

Targeting and prioritization is at the core of every WFP activity and if not well executed, programmatic objectives are not likely to be achieved. A strong programme monitoring system should therefore include components that specifically monitor targeting and prioritization processes and outcomes. This includes monitoring the efficiency of the beneficiary selection and protection-related concerns; and the effectiveness of targeting methods and criteria. Since the monitoring of targeting processes and outcomes is so closely linked to broader programme monitoring, ongoing or slightly tweaked monitoring data collection followed by analysis with a targeting lens is often sufficient to generate comprehensive and actionable information.

6.1 Monitoring of beneficiary selection processes

Targeting and prioritization aspects should be included in regular process monitoring such as field visit/spot check questionnaires and checklists. Regular aggregation and analysis of anonymized information from the complaints and feedback mechanism (CFM) is another important channel for understanding how well the targeting and prioritization processes work and how they are perceived by the affected population.

Process monitoring checklists and verification visits

Aspects to monitor and report on through process monitoring channels, e.g. internal briefings or presentations to the targeting working group if one is established, will depend on the activity and targeting approach. A few generic guiding questions are listed below:

- Are the agreed procedures for implementing targeting and prioritization decisions being followed by WFP staff and/or cooperating partners?
- Are beneficiaries meeting the observable eligibility criteria? If not, are there justifiable reasons?
- Are there groups that are meeting the criteria but are excluded from assistance?
- Are there any vulnerable groups that are currently not captured through the eligibility criteria?

- Do beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries know about and have access to communication channels through which targeting-related information can be provided or received, e.g. physical help desks and suggestion boxes?
- Are beneficiaries aware of entitlements and the eligibility criteria?

Monitoring of the identification, screening/registration and verification processes may allow for the detection of systemic errors as they occur in the implementation phase. If feasible, it is good practice to conduct random re-visits to a proportion of beneficiaries or applicants. The verification process should be undertaken directly by WFP or a third party (not the implementing cooperating partner) to avoid bias. If re-screening results in a mismatch, i.e. the original screening marked a household as included but the re-screening marks the same household as excluded – a deeper evaluation of the failed match must be carried out. The mismatch may be due to an error committed by an individual or changes to the composition in the specific household. But it could also reveal a more systemic issue such as a broad misinterpretation of the eligibility criteria. Troubleshooting potential issues and implementing any necessary changes is required to minimize targeting errors.

Complaints and feedback mechanisms

As outlined in section 4.1, a functioning and safe CFM is essential for receiving and addressing feedback on individual grievances. For targeting, this could be the case of a household who consider themselves eligible according to communicated criteria but who are excluded from assistance because their registered information is outdated. Country offices will need to identify an approach for addressing these individual cases.

CFM records are also an important input to analyse at an aggregated and anonymized level. Targeting and prioritization is often among the more frequent topics and initial analysis should determine the frequency, categories and types of complaints. Based on this, further qualitative data collection such as through focus group discussions with assisted and non-assisted populations could be conducted,

digging deeper into the issues. If structural issues such as systematic breaches in the beneficiary identification and selection processes are detected, they must be addressed immediately together with the cooperating partners and other stakeholders involved. If fraud is discovered related to targeting processes, this should be escalated to the country office management team (channelled through the targeting working group, if established).

6.2 Monitoring targeting effectiveness

To assess the effectiveness of targeting decisions, it is important to monitor the outcomes of assisted and non-assisted populations, as well as design and implementation errors.

Monitoring the outcomes of assisted and non-assisted populations

Regular outcome monitoring (such as through post-distribution monitoring – PDM) typically covers beneficiary households only. To make the exercise useful from a targeting perspective, it is important to cover non-beneficiary households as well and to stratify households according to different transfer modalities and values. The analysis of outcome indicators will allow country offices to make appropriate adjustments or call for a more in-depth targeting review.

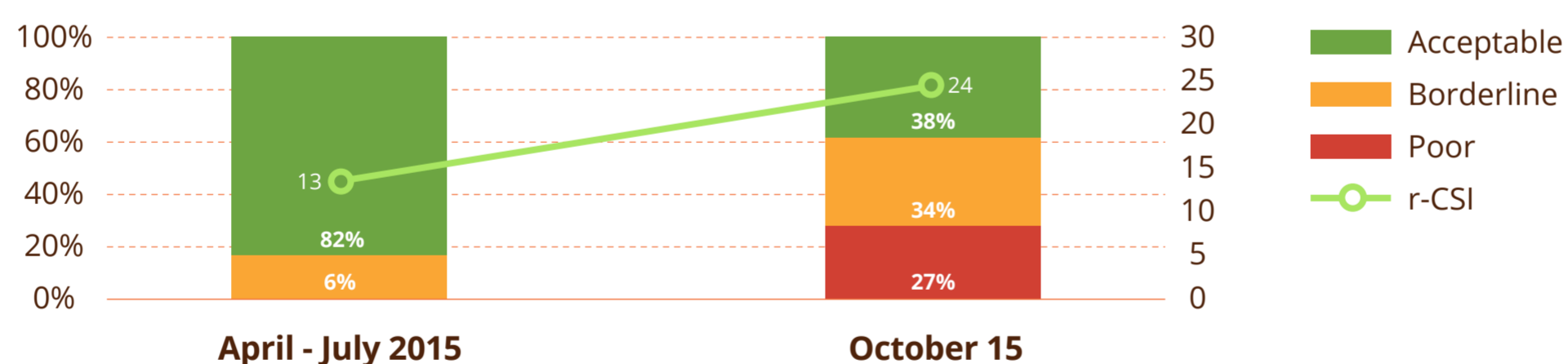


Case study 3

PRE-POST STUDIES TO ASSESS THE IMPACTS OF ASSISTANCE CUTS FOLLOWING THE 2015 FUNDING CRISIS IN JORDAN AND LEBANON

In response to significant resource shortfalls in refugee operations in Jordan and Lebanon, WFP launched a rapid pre-post study to assess the food security impact of changes in assistance levels. In Jordan, the study was conducted with the same households before and after they were excluded from assistance. In Lebanon, the same households were interviewed during the cuts, and then again when assistance returned to previous levels. Unlike regular food security outcome monitoring (FSOM) exercises, this method is not representative for the entire beneficiary population but it gives an important indication of the impact of the changes in assistance levels due to temporary funding shortfalls.

Comparison of same households before and during assistance cuts



In Jordan, 299,000 people from vulnerable households had their assistance cut. The study revealed that proportion with borderline or poor food consumption scores increased by 43 percentage points, while 75 percent of households engaged in more frequent and severe coping strategies compared to the baseline. Alarming, 34 percent of families withdrew their children from school, and 29 percent sent children to work compared with 5 percent before the cuts. Around 13 percent of families were forced to send at least one household member to beg in order to meet their basic food needs compared with 4 percent before assistance was reduced. More than 80 percent of families had to borrow money to pay for their basic food needs compared with 55 percent previously, a worrying trend as this strategy increased their level of indebtedness.

The report proved to be a useful tool for advocacy. Assistance to these vulnerable groups resumed, but it was several months before previous outcome levels were achieved again.

For country offices embarking on a prioritization exercise, it is particularly important to monitor outcome indicators before and after assistance levels or target groups are adjusted. Ideally the system will allow for the implementation of a rapid study in which the same households are assessed at critical points in time, for example before and after the reduction of

assistance (i.e. when half rations are introduced or beneficiary numbers are reduced), in order to respond quickly to any worsening of the situation. The data collected will also assist in building an evidence base for the continued advocacy for the funds needed to ensure assistance is provided to everyone in need.



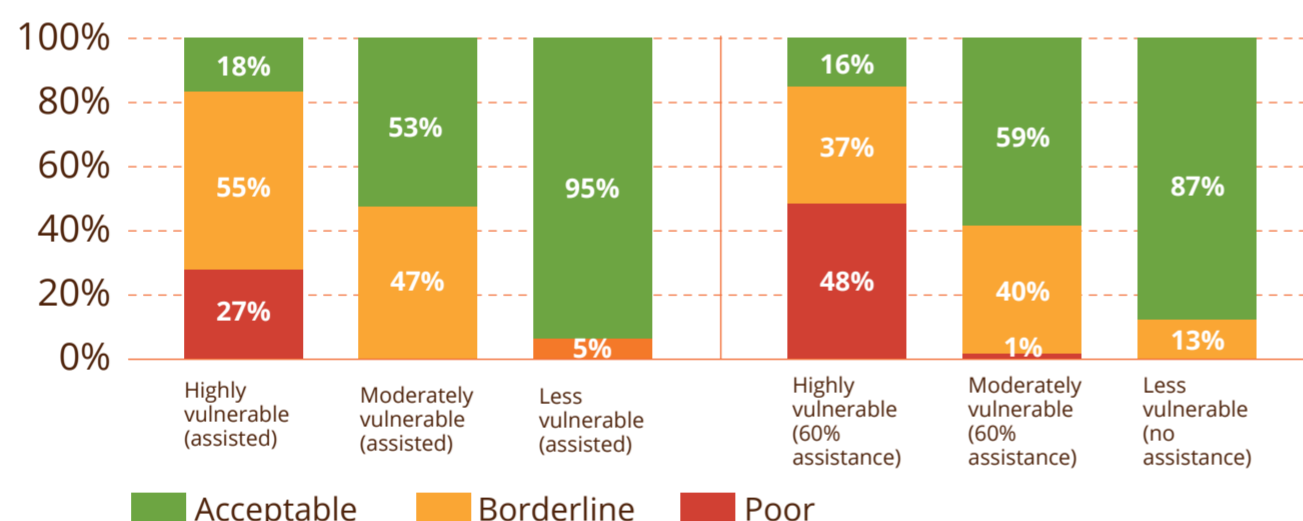
Case study 4

SHOWCASING THE IMPACT OF PRIORITIZATION ON SUDANESE REFUGEES IN CHAD

Chad hosts 450,000 refugees from Sudan, the Central African Republic and Nigeria. Sudanese refugees have been in Chad for decades, first arriving when violence erupted in Darfur in 2003. Since then nearly 340,000 Sudanese refugees have been living in camps in the east of the country and remain highly dependent on food assistance.

Funding for emergency and refugee operations in Chad has been steadily decreasing in recent years, forcing WFP to terminate assistance for a number of targeted households or cut rations by up to 50 percent in 2019. The lack of exit strategies and limited long-term development work to enhance resilience through livelihoods support has led to widespread donor fatigue, particularly for longstanding refugee operations.

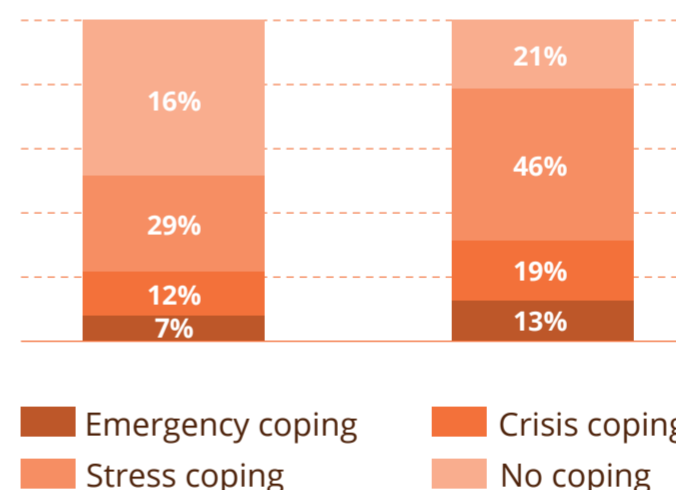
Food consumption score of Sudanese refugees pre and post-ration reduction



Pre-reduction (May 2017)

Post-reduction (June 2019)

Livelihood coping strategies of Sudanese refugees no longer receiving assistance: pre and post-ration reduction



Pre-reduction (May 2017)

Post-reduction (June 2019)

Due to a strong monitoring system, the country office managed to capture and communicate the negative effect on food security indicators of beneficiaries now excluded from assistance.

Regular review of targeting method and criteria by measuring targeting errors

Targeting errors at the design and implementation phases were introduced in section 3 with the discussion of how to select and validate the targeting approach and eligibility criteria. Measuring inclusion and exclusion errors is also key to monitoring the effectiveness of targeting; such reviews should be conducted regularly in addition to routine process and outcome monitoring.

Targeting errors can be reviewed using data collected for a comprehensive PDM exercise or regular needs assessments such as an annual EFSA or CFSVA. The review should be conducted at least annually in highly dynamic contexts (e.g. with large numbers of newly displaced people, where situations are stabilizing or where there is a change in the vulnerability context). In more stable contexts, targeting reviews should be conducted before the start of the next project cycle to allow for continuous improvements to meet the needs of the affected populations.

Targeting errors are particularly relevant for activities that seek to improve household-level outcomes through direct assistance (Tier 1 beneficiaries). They are less important in a FFA activity where the intended outcome is generated by the asset, which benefits an entire community (e.g. an embankment that protects against floods and for which the most vulnerable may not be targeted as direct beneficiaries, i.e. recruited for the asset creation).

The data required to review targeting errors includes:

- Beneficiary status (assisted and at which level (if applicable); or non-assisted)
- Outcome indicators reflecting the programmatic objectives (the basis on which the eligibility criteria were developed)
- Eligibility criteria

It is important to differentiate between targeting design and implementation errors. Design errors relate to the actual vulnerability status, while implementation errors relate to the eligibility status related to agreed criteria. Design exclusion errors are of particular concern in life-saving operations.

Design errors

measure the extent to which the targeting method is including households for assistance that – as per the vulnerability classification – are not vulnerable, and to what extent actually vulnerable households are being missed. High error levels indicate a problem in the definition of the targeting approach and/or the eligibility criteria. Food insecurity, poverty and vulnerability are not easily measurable concepts and regardless of data quality, they will only provide proxy measurements for vulnerability that may be more multi-faceted. By definition, design error will increase with prioritization as it will no longer be possible to assist all needy people, in which case strong support structures such as referral and appeal mechanisms become even more important.

Implementation errors assess the extent to which households that do not meet eligibility criteria receive assistance, and vice versa. It is measured by assessing the proportion of assisted households that do not meet the eligibility criteria and the proportion of non-assisted households that should have been included based on their reported information, using the PDM/needs assessment sample of the population. It is important to note that reporting biases may occur in cases where eligibility criteria have been communicated.

Implementation errors should be minimized if the activity is well planned and implemented accordingly, if targeting is managed properly and if the data feeding into it is of reasonable quality. Some margin of error will still occur as

Table 8. Measuring targeting design errors

Eligibility status	Design errors - vulnerability status (actual)	
	Vulnerable	Not vulnerable
Eligible	Correctly included	Design inclusion error
Not eligible	Design exclusion error	Correctly excluded

Table 9. Measuring targeting implementation errors

Assistance status	Implementation errors - eligibility status	
	Eligible	Not eligible
Assisted	Correctly included	Implementation inclusion error
Non-assisted	Implementation exclusion error	Correctly excluded

households may provide incorrect data or the data may not be updated when lifecycle changes occur such as births, deaths, marriages or the splitting of households. High levels of error may indicate a problem with the actual enrolment and provision of assistance and should be urgently followed up on.

See Annex 3 for examples on how to calculate inclusion and exclusion errors in the design and implementation phase.

Periodic targeting reviews

In addition to regular monitoring, including the measuring of targeting errors, periodic targeting reviews should be conducted to assess whether a re-targeting exercise is required. Three main factors inform the decision on whether a review is needed or not; the quality of current targeting processes, contextual changes and changes to WFP’s response. It is therefore recommended, at a minimum, to assess the need for targeting review in the same timeframe as the development of the next generation CSP, and to ensure alignment between the processes.

Together with updated needs assessment data and information from monitoring systems, the following questions can help determine the best way forward:

- Are the eligibility criteria for targeted assistance based on up-to-date evidence?
- Was the targeting method validated before implementation?
- Is the targeting method the most relevant for the current context and WFPs current and forthcoming response, and is it feasible to implement?
- Is registration data available and up to date?

- Were relevant stakeholders consulted during the design stage?
- How does the targeting method align with existing/evolving national social safety net systems and activities by other actors?
- Are there appropriate multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms to guide targeting processes and are they functional?
- Was the community of the affected population consulted during the selection of the method, beyond its most influential segments?
- Were protection risks considered when deciding on the targeting approach/criteria?
- Is a communication strategy in place and were decisions to target/prioritize communicated in an appropriate and timely manner?
- Are the eligibility criteria clearly understood by the affected populations?
- Is the administrative capacity of agencies and partners sufficient for implementing the current targeting method?
- Are effective CFMs in place and do they capture suggestions/complaints related to targeting?
- Were effective appeal mechanisms in place at the time of the last targeting exercise?
- Are data protection policies and guidance being followed when personal data is gathered, shared and used to identify beneficiaries and distribute assistance

Information to answer these questions should be available through existing process and outcome monitoring systems and data, which can be complemented with qualitative data from key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

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Annex 1. Targeting documentation template

The below template has been developed to support country offices in the planning and documentation of targeting and prioritization decisions and processes, including the design, description of targeting methods and monitoring procedures, in response to assessed needs and agreed programme objectives. The aim is to facilitate:

- **a common understanding** across country office functions on the purpose of targeting; roles and responsibilities; and complementarities across CSP activities;
- **knowledge management** by tracking targeting and prioritization decisions over time, and bridging knowledge gaps related to staff turnover – this is therefore a living document that requires regular updates and it should be part of handover/on-boarding packages for relevant staff;
- **accountability towards internal and external stakeholders**, including affected populations, partners and donors.

The proposed outline has been developed based on the content of the *Targeting and Prioritization Operational Guidance Note* and can also serve as a country office checklist.

Template for documentation of targeting and prioritization decisions over time

Section	Proposed content
1 Introduction to targeting & prioritization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide a brief overview of the rationale, four phases of targeting and key definitions (see section 1 in the guidance note).
2 Country office overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Overview of country context and CSP strategic outcomes, activities and how they complement each other ■ Briefly describe the partnership context (government, FIs, other UN agencies etc.) and joint programmes (if applicable)
3 Targeting by strategic outcome and/or activity, including role of key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This is the core section of the document, which should outline the following key information, broken down by strategic outcome or activity as considered most relevant to the country office: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Summary of assessed needs and WFP’s programmatic response (including a brief overview of primary and secondary data available, the number of people in need, the number planned to be assisted, the modality, duration and size of transfers etc.). ■ Current and/or intended targeting method, rationale behind the choice, eligibility criteria and validation process. ■ Step-by-step description of how targeting and prioritization decisions are implemented (how beneficiaries are selected). ■ Description of the roles and responsibilities of cooperating partners and other relevant external stakeholders. ■ Description of how beneficiary lists are managed by cooperating partners and WFP (if applicable). ■ Description of inclusive communication strategies and mechanisms, including CFM. ■ Continuous updates to reflect changes in targeting and prioritization decisions, e.g. due to pipeline breaks

Section	Proposed content
4 Roles and responsibilities of WFP staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Outline the responsibilities of key country office functions as relevant to context and depending on available capacities. The core functions will likely include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Deputy Country Director and/or Head of Programme ■ Strategic outcome/activity managers ■ VAM officer ■ M&E officer ■ Field office heads and activity managers ■ SCOPE/beneficiary identity management focal point ■ Cross-cutting functions, including Gender, Protection and AAP focal points, ■ Communications etc.
5 Targeting and prioritization governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The broad decision-making hierarchy and authorities should be described in this section. The country office may choose to form a targeting working group, chaired by senior management and involving all key functions, meeting on a regular basis to discuss targeting and prioritization-related topics, and through which key decisions are made. If such a group is set up, their terms of reference could be annexed.
6 Targeting-related risks and mitigation measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assess and describe potential risks associated with implementing targeting and prioritization decisions, including protection risks for the affected populations; and ■ Document mitigation measures
7 Annexes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The following documents should be provided as annexes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Targeting budget (see Annex 2) ■ Targeting task force/working group TOR (if applicable) ■ Information packages and guidelines for CPs related to implementation of targeting and prioritization ■ Quality assurance/monitoring checklists for field office staff

Annex 2. Targeting and prioritization budget template

Targeting and prioritization is a cross-functional and continuous process, based on a wide variety of inputs throughout the programme cycle. Most cost elements - such as needs assessments, monitoring, and staffing costs – are budgeted elsewhere. To support country offices in identifying and prioritizing cost elements that are critical to high quality targeting and prioritization processes, an annual budget template has been developed. The template aims to bring key cost items and staff allocation related to targeting and prioritization together into one spreadsheet. It does not aim to replace any other budget processes or tools.

The template is based on the content of the Operational Guidance Note on Targeting and Prioritization, and the four phases of the targeting process. Cost items and staff included in the template are placeholders - they will vary with factors such as the targeting method, the division of work between WFP and CPs, the scope of the exercise etc. and should be adjusted to fit the context. To simplify the tool, staff costs are indicated by phase, not by cost item. The below example assumes a community-based targeting method, conducted for a total of 50 communities and for two different WFP activities.

The template Excel file is available through the [VAM Resource Centre](#).

Annual Budget Template - Targeting and Prioritization

Targeting and prioritization is a cross-functional and continuous process, and costs are to high extent based on inputs from costs elements budgeted elsewhere. This template does not replace any other budgeting tools or processes, but has the overall **objective to support COs in identifying cost items that are essential to high quality targeting** and prioritization processes, and to gather them in one spreadsheet. The tool is based on the content of the Interim Operational Guidance Note on Targeting and Prioritization (December, 2020), and the four phases of the targeting process. **Cost items and staff included in the template are placeholders - they will vary with factors such as the targeting method, the division of work between WFP and CPs, the scope of the exercise etc. and should be adjusted to fit the context.** The placeholder figures assumes a community-based targeting method, conducted for a total of 50 communities and for two different WFP activities. To simplify the tool, staff costs are indicated by phase, not by cost item.

Phase	Cost item	Cost per item	Qty	Sub-total cost item	Remarks	Staff*	Staff ** cost	Time ** allocation	Sub-total staff	TOTAL
Needs assessment	WFP/joint needs assessment	\$250,000	1	\$250,000	Please refer to the separate template available for budgeting of needs assessments, including for example costs of enumerators, transportation etc. (and avoid duplication of staff costs): https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000108037/download/ Ensure alignment with the RAM Planning and Budgeting Tool"	VAM Officer P3	\$200,000	13%	\$25,000	\$317,250
						VAM Officer NOA	\$75,000	25%	\$18,750	
	WFP contribution to IPC analysis	\$10,000	1	\$10,000	WFP may host/co-host/co-fund IPC analysis directly informing targeting and prioritization decisions	VAM Associate G6	\$45,000	25%	\$11,250	
						Comms/PI G6	\$45,000	5%	\$2,250	
Targeting method and eligibility criteria	Community consultations (through CP)	\$1,000	50	\$50,000	This phase relies heavily on WFP-internal analytical and programmatic work, including the development and testing of a targeting method and eligibility criteria, community consultations (most likely through contracted CPs with WFP oversight), as well as stakeholder consultations and workshops with partner, government, interagency etc. counterparts.	VAM Officer P3	\$200,000	13%	\$25,000	\$168,250
							VAM Officer NOA	\$75,000	13%	
	Stakeholder consultations/workshops	\$5,000	3	\$15,000		Activity Manager 1 P3	\$200,000	13%	\$25,000	
						Activity Manager 2 NOA	\$75,000	13%	\$9,375	
						Comms/PI G6	\$45,000	10%	\$4,500	
						4 x field office staff G4	\$120,000	25%	\$30,000	
Beneficiary selection	Outreach/communication			\$79,000	This phase includes the preparatory steps for beneficiary selection - such as conducting a risk analysis, and establishing a communication plan - as well as the actual implementation of targeting and prioritization decisions. The targeting method applied will largely determine the steps required in the selection process and therefore the cost drivers (see specific cost drivers by targeting method in the separate tab) - the placeholder figure for the selection process assumes a community-based targeting method with 50 selection committees formed, with 10 verification visits per community. If a comprehensive registration exercise is planned, e.g. using SCOPE, these costs should be considered.	Activity Manager 1 NOA	\$75,000	16%	\$12,000	\$435,800
	Community meetings	\$1,000	50	\$50,000		Activity Manager 2 NOA	\$75,000	16%	\$12,000	
	Help desks	\$5,000	5	\$25,000		Comms/PI G6	\$45,000	8%	\$3,600	
	Mass text messages	\$50	50	\$2,500		4 x field (monitoring) staff G4	\$120,000	20%	\$24,000	
	Social media outreach	\$1,500	1	\$1,500		VAM Officer P3	\$200,000	4%	\$8,000	
	Identification, screening (possibly linked to a registration exercise)	\$5,000	50	\$250,000		VAM Officer NOA	\$75,000	4%	\$3,000	
	HH verification visits	\$30	500	\$15,000		Bene Identity Mgmt focal NOA	\$75,000	16%	\$12,000	
Appeals mechanism	\$10,000	1	\$10,000	TEC/ICT Associate G6	\$45,000	16%	\$7,200			
Monitoring of targeting processes and outcomes	Process monitoring, e.g. site visits, CFM analysis	\$10,000	12	\$120,000	The monitoring phase consists of regular process monitoring (site visits, focus group discussions, analysis of CFM data etc.), and periodic outcome monitoring (1-4 times per year depending on size and character of the activity) with assisted and non-assisted populations which allows not only analysis of the household-level outcomes, but also of the effectiveness of the targeting method. If warranted, an in-depth targeting review (e.g. by independent CST) should be considered. Ensure alignment with the RAM Planning and Budgeting Tool"	M&E Officer NOA	\$75,000	13%	\$9,375	\$425,625
	Outcome Monitoring, e.g. FSOM	\$80,000	2	\$160,000		M&E Associate G6	\$45,000	25%	\$11,250	
	Targeting review	\$50,000	1	\$50,000		VAM Officer NOA	\$75,000	5%	\$3,750	
						CFM Manager G6	\$45,000	25%	\$11,250	
						8 x field (monitoring) staff G4	\$240,000	25%	\$60,000	
Cross-cutting	Complaints and feedback mechanism			\$65,000	A robust CFM include various means of two-way communication that are required throughout the programme cycle, cutting across the targeting process phases. The regular CFM may be boosted during a targeting exercise in line with the expected increase in demand for information, exclusion complaints etc., - additional expenses that are covered in the beneficiary selection phase.	4 x hotline operators G4	\$120,000	100%	\$120,000	\$185,000
	Community help desks	\$5,000	5	\$25,000						
	Hotline	\$30,000	1	\$30,000						
	Mass communication channels	\$10,000	1	\$10,000						
TOTAL COST				Sub-total cost items: \$1,074,000				Sub-total staff: \$457,925	TOTAL COST \$1,531,925	

* To simplify the tool, staff costs are summarised by phase, not by cost item.

** Staff allocation = duration of phase as % of one year * % of allocated time during phase - e.g. VAM Officer P3 spends 50% of his/her time on the needs assessment, for a duration of 3 months (25% of one year): 50%*25% = 12.5% allocation

Budget considerations for community-based and data-driven targeting methods

Regardless of the method used, targeting and prioritization processes are often very similar in three out of the four phases; needs assessments, the choice of method and development of targeting criteria, and the monitoring phase. The phase that significantly differs is the beneficiary selection.

This addition to the targeting and prioritization budget template aims to highlight the key cost drivers with community-based and data-driven targeting methods respectively and is merely a budgeting tool. It does not aim to recommend one method over another - the decision should be based on which one is the contextually most appropriate and accurate, rather than cost considerations.

It should also be noted that this addition is focused on the beneficiary selection phase. Therefore, it does not cover blanket and geographic targeting methods that do not aim to identify households or individuals for assistance.

Budget considerations for community-based targeting

As described in the Interim Operational Guidance Note on Targeting and Prioritization, community-based targeting is often a viable option when a comprehensive and up to date population registry is missing. While it does not require a registry, it is labour intensive. Key cost drivers to keep in mind when budgeting for beneficiary selection with a community-based method, include:

- The recruitment of one or more **strong cooperating partners**, present in the areas where are targeting and/or prioritization is planned, including their recruitment of staff, hiring of drivers and cars, IT equipment, sensitisation and training sessions etc.
- Formation and oversight of **beneficiary selection committees** that are representative of the full population, including marginalised group, women, as well as the young and old. The idea of community-based targeting is inclusive participation for better outcomes, not to outsource targeting and prioritization decisions. Strong oversight mechanisms including WFP and/or partner staff on site are required.
- Based on the work of the beneficiary selection committees, **household verification visits** are required to ensure that households were selected in accordance with criteria, and through a fair and transparent process – the cost of which will be determined by the size of the exercise (up to 10 percent of households could be re-visited). Household visits should also be organised with households that were not selected for assistance or deprioritized. If systematic errors are detected, a more comprehensive review will be required.
- Once identified, households that WFP intends to assist will be **registered into a beneficiary identity management tool**, e.g. SCOPE. Factors including the size and geographic scope of the programme, humanitarian access, IT equipment needs, amount of data to be collected etc. will drive the cost of the registration exercise.
- Registry maintenance and **periodic validation exercises** will be required to ensure that the right households/individuals are receiving assistance.

Budget considerations for data-driven approaches

Data-driven methods bring inherent issues for which safeguards – that drive costs – needs to be considered when planning and budgeting a targeting exercise:

- Data-driven targeting approaches require a **comprehensive and up to date registry** of the population of interest. It needs to include, for each household or individual, the variables required to determine eligibility on basis of the criteria developed through the needs assessment and community consultations (criteria will be formulated differently depending on whether a categorical targeting method, a PMT or a scorecard is applied, but all require the underlying variables to be available).
- In reality such registries are rarely available, and for **existing registries, WFP needs to undertake a review**, and depending on the outcome, complement or seek alternatives to available registries (for example accessible through partners such as the host government or UNHCR)
- When not available or meeting needs, **WFP can aim to create a registry** by communicating eligibility criteria (which is further complicated when a complex statistical model is applied, as in the case of a PMT), register households/individuals who consider themselves eligible and in need of assistance. Following some level of verification of reported registry data – further increasing the cost – the eligibility criteria is applied to generate the beneficiary list.
- Potential technical and accuracy issues related to data-driven methods, combined with the ‘desktop’ nature of the approach, calls for **significant investments in communication and consultations with affected populations** – both to build trust in the process and to detect potential inclusion and exclusion errors related to specific vulnerabilities that WFP and partners are not able to capture quantitatively.
- Strong two-way communication channels are always required throughout the programme cycle, but are even more important when physical touch points are missing (e.g. data-driven targeting followed by assistance provision through unrestricted cash-based transfers). Funds should be allocated to ensure an **appropriate level of physical presence** through help desks etc.
- As the accuracy of the targeting method depends on up to date registry data, COs will need to decide **how often data is to be verified/updated**, and how often to re-run/update the eligibility criteria/formula – weighing together a range of factors including cost-efficiency of the updates, predictability for beneficiaries vs. accuracy etc.

Annex 2 cont.

Budget considerations for community-based and data-driven targeting methods

Tab 2 of the targeting budget template Excel file highlights key cost drivers with each of the two broad categories methods for beneficiary selection – community-based and data-driven.

In terms of cost drivers, the needs assessment, development of method and criteria, and monitoring phases of the targeting process do not vary much depending on the targeting method. That is not the case for the beneficiary selection phase however; how beneficiaries are identified, screened and included for assistance is reflective of the targeting method, and generate different cost drivers.

Tab 2 of the template aims to highlight some of these, and will support the budgeting process, mainly as it relates to the beneficiary selection phase.

Annex 3. How to calculate targeting design and implementation errors

While there are no general rules about what constitute acceptable design inclusion and exclusion errors – both should be minimized as much as possible – priority should be given to reducing exclusion errors. Inclusion errors are generally more acceptable in an emergency response when the provision of life-saving interventions is prioritized over targeting accuracy.

Figure 5 illustrates the concept of measuring errors which, if done consistently, will provide important information about the targeting effectiveness of activities.

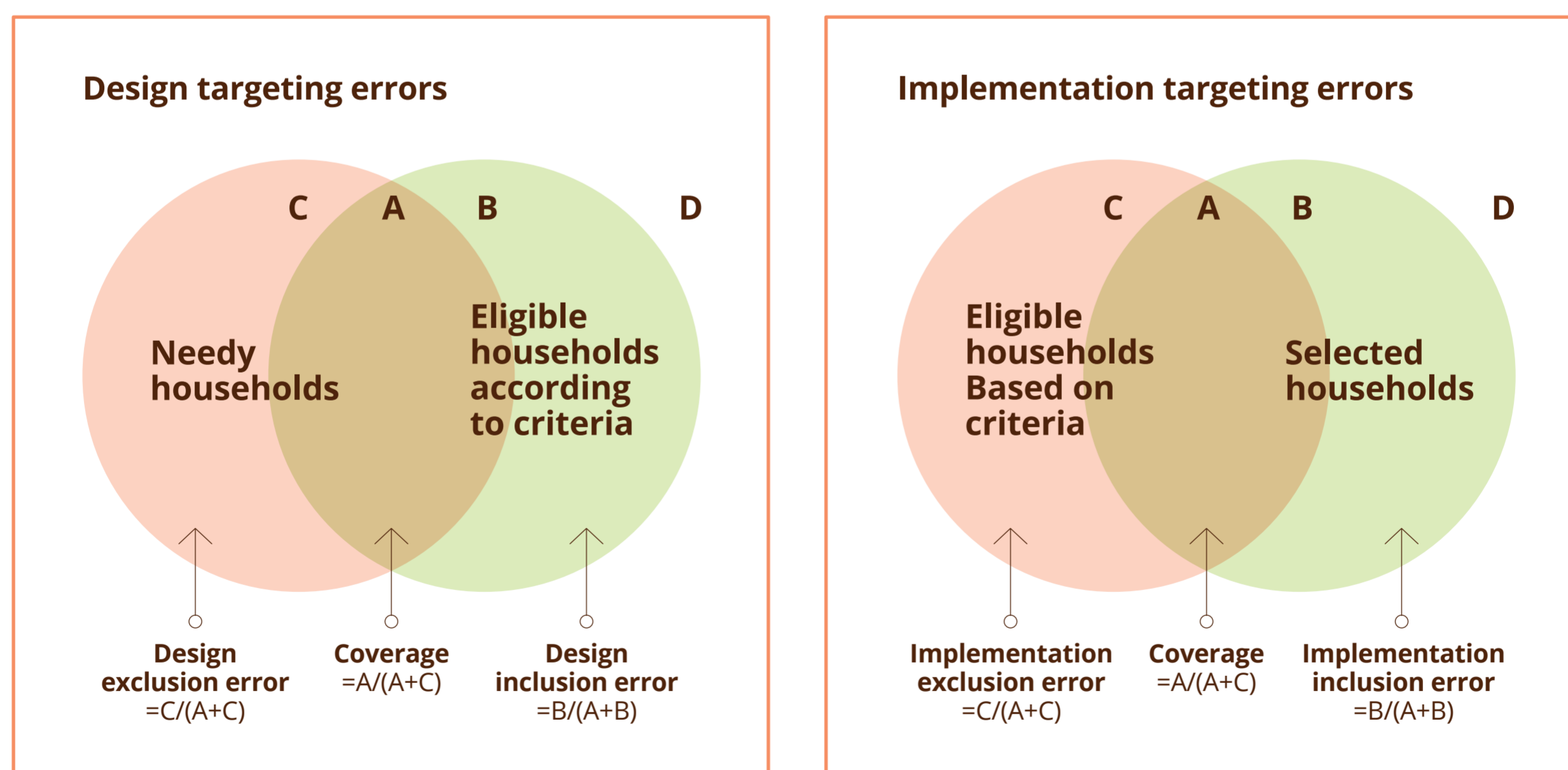


Figure 5. Calculating targeting design and implementation errors



Box 9

HOW TO CALCULATE DESIGN TARGETING ERRORS

In this example, a village of 100 households has been selected for assistance but only those who are considered vulnerable will receive support. An earlier assessment indicates that 50 percent of households are vulnerable. Based on the agreed eligibility criteria, the cooperating partner has determined that 40 households are eligible for assistance.

The total number of households who are “**correctly included**” in the programme based on their food security status is 30 and the number of households “**correctly excluded**” is 40. Of the 50 who are vulnerable, only 30 (**A**) have been correctly identified based on the eligibility criteria, while 20 (**C**) are exclusion errors (incorrectly identified as not vulnerable). In addition, 10 (**B**) have been classified as vulnerable based on the criteria but are actually not vulnerable. This constitutes the design **inclusion error**.

Table 10. Example of a completed two by two table for calculating the design error

CP identified status	Actual vulnerability status		Total
	Vulnerable	Not vulnerable	
Beneficiary	30(A)	10 (B)	40
Non beneficiary	20 (A)	40	60
Total	50	50	100

Inclusion and exclusion errors are typically reported as percentages. In this example, the design exclusion error would be $20/(20+30)*100=40\%$. The design inclusion error would be $10/(30+10)*100=25\%$.



Box 10

HOW TO CALCULATE IMPLEMENTATION TARGETING ERRORS

The targeting implementation errors can also be calculated; this time, eligibility and the actual receipt of assistance are considered. In this example, 40 households **(A)** are eligible and are receiving assistance, while 10 **(C)** are eligible but are not receiving assistance. In addition, 5 **(B)** are not eligible but are receiving assistance.

Table 11. Example of a completed two by two table for calculating the implementation error

CP identified status	Eligibility status according to criteria		Total
	Eligible	Not eligible	
Receiving assistance	40(A)	5 (B)	45
Not-receiving assistance	10 (C)	45	55
Total	50	50	100

In this example, the implementation exclusion error is equal to $10/(40+10)*100=20\%$ and the implementation inclusion error is $5/(40+5)*100=11\%$.

High implementation errors could indicate poor implementation of the targeting strategy – perhaps the criteria are not clear or the most vulnerable households face barriers in accessing the assistance. Targeting processes should be reviewed carefully in conjunction with all relevant stakeholders.

Annex 4. Guidance on cases where all or parts of the targeting process is outsourced to partners

The successful implementation of WFP activities relies on strong partnerships; with affected communities, cooperating partners (CPs), local authorities, donors and other stakeholders. Targeting and prioritization is no exception. Throughout the four phases of the targeting process which include needs assessments, targeting design, beneficiary selection, and monitoring of targeting processes and outcomes most WFP operations will depend on partners to obtain actionable information and implement activities at scale.

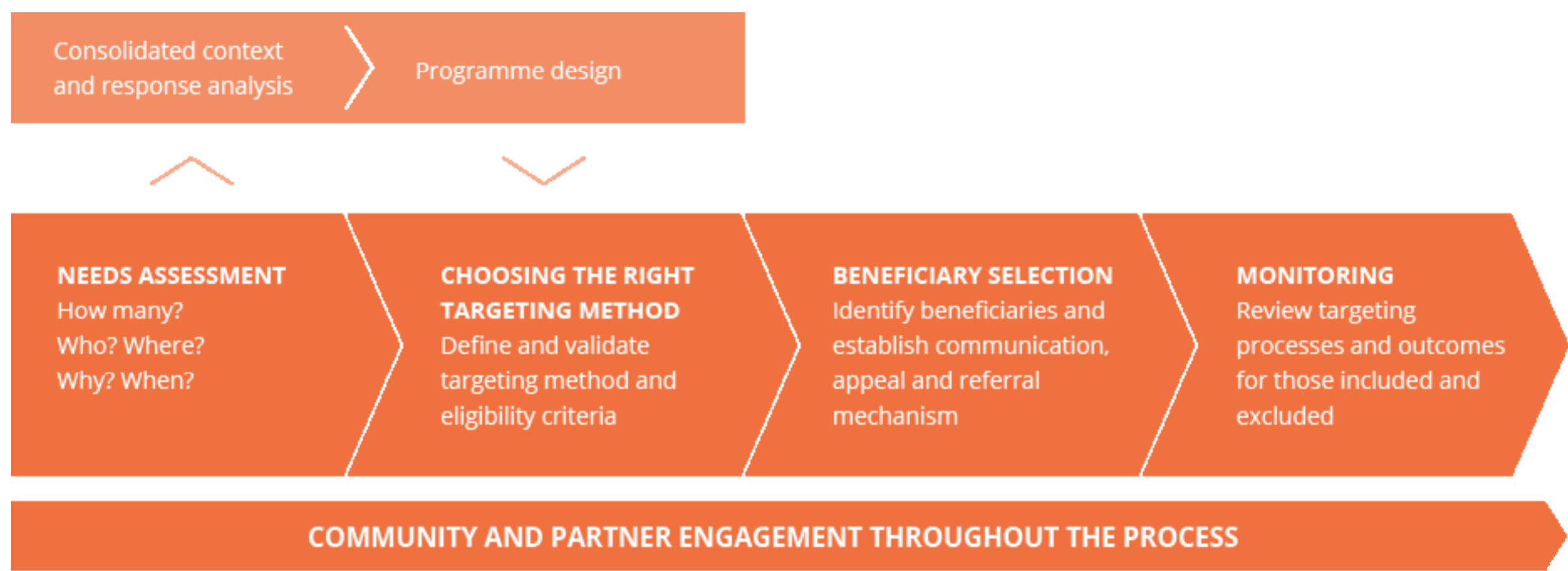


Figure 6. The WFP Targeting process as outlined in the Targeting and Prioritization Operational Guidance Note

This annex to the Targeting and Prioritization Operational Guidance Note aims to support regional and country offices in ensuring that minimum standards and checks are established for when all or parts of the targeting process is conducted by partners. The type of partnership and the role of external entities will vary greatly depending on the operational environment, country office capacities, and the availability and capacities of partners. This guidance is focused on the two main operational scenarios; (1) WFP-led activities where parts or all of the targeting process is led by CPs, and (2) activities implemented by governments or other institutional partners that WFP supports.²⁷

4.1 The role of cooperating partners in implementing WFP activities

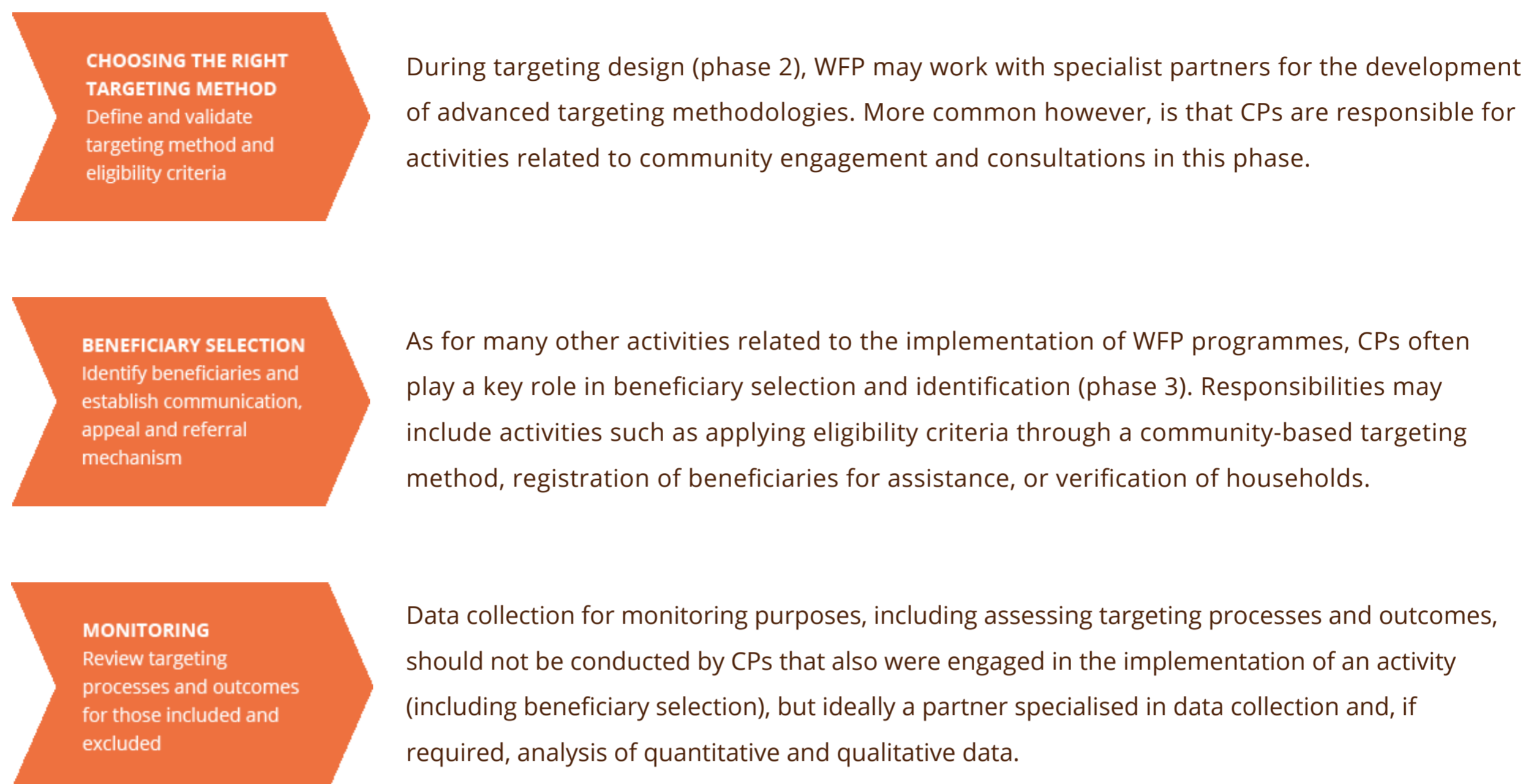
The most common scenario for which this addition to the Targeting and Prioritization Operational Guidance Note is applicable, is when CPs are involved in the targeting process for WFP-led activities.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT
How many?
Who? Where?
Why? When?

While partners often play a pivotal role during needs assessments (phase one), including the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data of affected communities and the context on the basis of which important programmatic decisions are made, there is a wealth of guidance and quality assurance protocols already available for the collection and use of primary as well as secondary data that shall be helpful to oversee the work of partners in this regard.²⁸

²⁷ Note: this guidance is focused on targeting-specific activities and sub-activities and does not go into minimum standards and checks for each individual step of the targeting process. The guidance should therefore be read alongside quality assurance protocols for e.g. needs assessments or contracting and management of cooperating partners.

²⁸ See for example the [Comprehensive Food Security & Vulnerability Analysis \(CFSVA\) Guidelines](#) and other guidance and tools available via the [VAM Resource Centre](#).



As illustrated above the role of CPs varies across the targeting process and is, in addition to other operational aspects of programme implementation, therefore likely to require the involvement of multiple different partners throughout the different phases. WFP must have a field-level agreement (FLA) or contract signed before engaging a CP in the implementation of its activities, including targeting-related deliverables.

These guidelines for CPs involvement in targeting will support country offices and partners in establishing accountabilities and internal controls throughout the process, and to ensure that targeting-related deliverables are clearly communicated, documented, budgeted and monitored in the process of selecting, contracting and managing CPs. The below set of standards and checks follows the NGO partnership management cycle as outlined in the [NGO Partnership Guidance](#):



Figure 7. The NGO Partnership Management Cycle

Step 1: Scoping and Selection

During this phase WFP determines the elements needed for our calls for proposals based on needs planning, thereafter the due diligence process and ultimately CP selection. Dedicated staff under the oversight of the country director – in most cases the Field Level Agreement (FLA) Manager or equivalent function, the Programme/Activity Manager and a representative from VAM – will ensure that:

- the intended targeting process of the planned activity to the extent possible is embedded within the call for proposal;
- the role and responsibilities of the CP in that process, vis-à-vis the country office and other partners and stakeholders, is clearly outlined and proposal templates contextualised as needed to capture this information from partners during submission;
- CPs interested in submitting an application are provided the opportunity to request further clarifications (technical and operational) from staff familiar with the intended targeting process;
- knowledgeable representatives from the programme/activity as well as VAM are included on the project proposal review committee, for which targeting is adequately reflected in scoring sheets/checklists with clear criteria; and that
- Use of the capacity assessment tool to estimate capacity gaps and risk level in terms of the CPs ability to deliver on targeting-related responsibilities are documented (and taking into account the performance evaluation in cases where an existing partner is considered for an extension), to be addressed in the following phases should the CP be selected.

Step 2: FLA negotiation phase

During the FLA negotiation phase, it is important that the designated staff with insight to the targeting process of the activity in question remain involved in the process, to ensure that:

- targeting-related roles and responsibilities, staffing and reporting requirements of the CP are documented and included in the FLA;
- proposed changes and amendments related to CP targeting activities originating from the technical review of the proposal, are agreed during the negotiation process and documented in the plan of operations within the final FLA;
- potential capacity gaps related to the CPs targeting responsibilities that were documented during the selection phase are discussed with the partner, and a plan to address capacity constraints is developed, agreed, documented, and budgeted for and presented at the CPC;
- consultations with the CP are organized to assess and mitigate potential targeting-related risks; and
- Any determined issues in past performance evaluations related to their ability to properly deliver on targeting-related activities are documented with improvement planning and embedded within the plan of operations.

Step 3: Implementation

Implementation of activities by the CP as agreed in the FLA will take place in close collaboration and coordination with WFP country- and field offices. The standards and checks related to targeting activities are closely linked with the monitoring phase of the targeting process (see figure 1) – these should to the extent possible be regularly monitored by WFP field monitoring staff, or third-party monitors. Depending on contextual factors, such as access constraints, multiple monitoring data sources should be explored, including but not limited to:

- Community- feedback and response mechanisms (CFMs), including hotlines, help desks, letter boxes etc. from which incoming information shall be documented and analyzed from a targeting point of view (e.g. trend analyses of feedback related to wrongful inclusion or exclusion) ;
- On-site monitoring, using checklists developed in consultation with the above-mentioned designated country office staff, to ensure that to the activity critical targeting aspects are captured;
- Quantitative beneficiary and non-beneficiary data, which allows country offices to assess and monitor over time inclusion and exclusion errors;

- Qualitative beneficiary and non-beneficiary data, allowing for a better understanding of protection- and other risks, and further probing of findings from quantitative data sources; and
- Remote monitoring, through phone calls, text messages or other means, with assisted and non-assisted populations.

Regular meetings as agreed upon in the FLA should include sharing of findings and feedback with the CP on basis of targeting-related monitoring. Country offices should invite NGO monitoring and evaluation counterparts and other staff as relevant for consultations and, if required, trainings at the beginning of the as part of the activity on-boarding/inception phase to support the CPs monitoring of its own targeting-related activities.

Step 4: Performance evaluation or spot-checking

Finally, the performance evaluation or spot-checking exercises shall:

- take into account activities specified in the FLA Plan of Operation, i.e. the roles, responsibilities and deliverables of the CP as it relates to targeting. Deliverables and responsibilities shall be assessed against a pre-determined checklist with clearly defined parameters;
- involve key technical WFP staff responsible for targeting – ideally the same designated staff involved at the beginning of the cycle. They shall support the FLA Manager, or equivalent function responsible for the performance evaluation, in the development of a ranking system to evaluate the CP;
- be utilized not only to have findings inform the evaluation of the partner and the forthcoming FLA cycle, but also potential improvements of the targeting process as a whole, for the specific activity as well as other CSP activities as relevant; and
- include the opportunity of the CP to upon demand receive feedback from technical and operational staff on their performance of targeting-related activities, at the end of the FLA cycle.

4.2 WFP support to activities implemented by institutional partners

The most common scenario for Support to institutional partners including government entities, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) or a combination of the two in the development and delivery of – mainly cash-based – social assistance, is an increasingly important area of work for WFP. Although considered WFP activities and beneficiaries, WFP often does not have full operational oversight or control. The degree to which governments will provide transparency or welcome WFP's technical support in identifying persons that are in need of assistance may vary with for example the local capacities and role of WFP and other partners in the implementation of the activity, the maturity of the relationship between WFP and the institutional partner, and a variety of other factors.

Beneficiary targeting and prioritisation of resources, particularly when working with governments and other institutional partners, is often dynamic and context-specific, and so are risks and required mitigation measures. The key obligation for WFP is to have a general understanding of who is being assisted, and why (i.e. approximate eligibility criteria and rationale for using those criteria), and if there are any measures that can be taken to improve the targeting process.

When engaging in a formal partnership, WFP offices should at a minimum, consider the following three targeting-related areas, to enable informed decisions on how and to what extent WFP can and should contribute to institutional partners' programme of work:

1. Ensure understanding of needs in the given context

WFP should ensure that the partner intervention which it supports is evidence-based, meets needs that are of relevance to WFP, and that gender and protection considerations have been taken into account in its design. If the results of any existing needs assessments are insufficient to identify the needs of the population, WFP has the opportunity to generate evidence through:

- WFP-led assessments in line with corporate guidance;

- Joint assessment with the partner, where WFP has visibility on key technical aspects (sampling, questionnaire design, data collection, analysis etc.) so as to ensure that analysis and results are sufficiently informative and reliable. Access to data for additional analysis and validation of results is desired.

The two options both present a good opportunity for WFP to engage in technical assistance and capacity strengthening activities, possibly as an entry point to further collaboration, with the partner in question.

2. Ensure understanding of key elements of targeting, prioritization and beneficiary selection

WFP should at a minimum develop an understanding of the partner's approach, criteria and processes for identifying and reaching vulnerable populations, at a policy-level if not at a day-to-day implementation level. This can include generating an understanding of the partner's:

- underlying assumptions, objectives and coordination with other activities;
- decision making processes and governance structure;
- availability and quality of relevant population registries;
- processes for implementation, including means for communication, appeals, community feedback and response mechanisms etc.; and
- practices for monitoring, adjustments and re-targeting.

It is important to take into account that targeting and prioritisation are often dynamic and complex processes that are based on resources, mandates, objectives (including political), coordination with other services and actors, and capacities. However, achieving the maximum possible level of visibility and transparency on these processes is important for WFP to justify its engagement and ensure accountability to stakeholders, not least the affected populations.

3. Ensure that the context and the programme activity is regularly monitored

Similar to the assessment phase, which helps guide decisions on what role WFP can and should take on in relation to the institutional partner, the evolving context and situation needs to be monitored over time – another area where WFP has expertise to offer in the form of technical assistance and capacity strengthening. Important targeting-related factors to consider and that allows WFP to re-assess its engagement in light of the findings, include:

- Assessing the situation for assisted as well as non-assisted populations to enable validation of targeting decisions; and
- Ensuring that robust mechanisms for complaints and feedback exists, are accessible and that incoming information is analysed, including from a targeting lens.

WFP should at a minimum try to answer the following key targeting-related questions as part of the process of engaging with institutional partners for the joint delivery of assistance:

- Which targeting method is applied and why (blanket, data-driven, community-based, etc.)?
- How were targeting criteria and processes defined and communicated to the affected population? Are criteria still relevant?
- To what extent are community consultations carried out, with involvement of all the segments of the populations, including possibly marginalized groups?
- How are eligibility criteria applied to identify eligible households/individuals? In case there is one or more social registries utilized, what is the estimated coverage and accuracy? Are there any relevant external analyses available or possible to conduct? What is the coherence between existing programmes, and interoperability of registries?
- If there are other partners involved, what is their role in relation to the targeting process?
- How is prioritization carried out if resources are insufficient to meet all needs of the targeted population?

- How are outreach and enrolment conducted and what are potential gaps in reaching eligible households, including communication and information gaps?
- Are there any barriers for eligible households to access assistance, for example documentation, physical access, social barriers?

Where possible, a quantitative analysis of potential inclusion and exclusion errors in the design and implementation phases should be conducted, or existing analyses reviewed. This requires access to i) the eligibility criteria and thresholds for inclusion/exclusion, and ii) needs assessment data including relevant variables.

For more information on how to assess the accuracy of assess partners' targeting methodologies, please refer to section 3.3 'Validating the targeting method and criteria'.

List of abbreviations

3PA	Three-Pronged Approach
AAP	accountability to affected populations
CARI	consolidated approach to reporting indicators of food security
CBT	Cash-Based Transfers Unit
CFM	complaints and feedback mechanism
CFSVA	comprehensive food security and vulnerability assessment
CH	Cadre Harmonisé
CSP	country strategic plan
ECMEN	economic capacity to meet essential needs
EFSA	emergency food security assessment
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFA	food assistance for assets
FSOM	food security outcome monitoring
ICA	integrated context analysis
IDPs	internally displaced persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPC	Integrated phase classification
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation Unit
MEB	minimum expenditure basket
NGO	non-governmental organization
PDM	post-distribution monitoring
PMT	proxy means testing
PSEA	protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
RAM	Research, Monitoring and Assessments Division
RAMAN	Needs Assessment and Targeting Unit
rCSI	reduced coping strategies index
SOP	standard operating procedure
SMEB	survival minimum expenditure basket
TEC	Technology Division
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAM	Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Unit
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

