**FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

**\*\* FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE \*\***

As part of the assessment of food security and livelihoods needs, the focus group discussion is to collect more qualitative than quantitative information on household food sources, income, expenses, means of existence, adaptation strategies and above all see the impact of the situation on these aspects.

**Please note:** The survey needs to be contextualized to the setting and type of programme. Hence, operations may want to shorten in some areas and add specific questions in others. The survey is NOT multisectoral. All operations are encouraged to engage with other actors to collect multisectoral data. Questions related to protection mainstreaming, risks and community engagement and accountability (CEA) should be considered mandatory.

A maximum of 15 people will be invited to participate taking into account the following aspects:

* Guarantee the participation of people exercising the main livelihoods present in the village.
* Guarantee the participation of people with a different socio-economic level if possible (very poor, poor, average, wealthy)
* Conduct sex-disaggregated focus group discussions and ensure that interviewer and notetaker are women in the women-only groups.
* If it’s within the COVID-19 pandemic period, conduct the FGD in a COVID-19 secure way[[1]](#footnote-2).

## Presentation and introduction (interview/assessment objectives, duration, etc.)

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| Village : | Interviewer : |
| Number of participants: Men \_\_\_\_\_Women \_\_\_\_\_\_ | Date: |
| Consent: Good morning/afternoon, my/our name is/are \_\_\_\_\_. I/we work for the [National Society] Red Cross/Crescent. We are a humanitarian organisation that helps people affected by crisis and disaster. The help we provide is always free and given based on need alone. We are in your community to hear your opinions and views of [add topic of FGD].  The information provided will be used by the Red Cross/Crescent to inform our understanding of livelihoods in your community and to plan our activities. Participation in this discussion is free and there is no obligation for you to respond, you can stop at any point. No personal information will be shared with other organisations and the information provided will be analysed anonymously and used confidentially. It is voluntary for you to participate.  We are not giving any services in exchange for your participation. Your views are valuable and important and will contribute to ensuring our services and the information we share meets your needs. Do you have any questions? The discussion should take no longer than [minutes].  Do you understand the purpose of the discussion, and are you willing to participate?  (make sure that all participants have given their consent) | |

## Interview guide

Questions are always asking how the current situation has changed. It is therefore advisable to define from the start what is the situation we are talking about (what shock)?

We must therefore identify with the focus group the reference period (last year, 3 years ago, etc.) to compare to the reference year and the situation today. (It is advisable to choose the shortest possible reference period to enhance people’s recall).

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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| **Period of reference** (last « normal » year related to your food sources and livelihoods activities)**:** |
| What are the main differences between groups in the community in terms of livelihoods? Please try to explain from perspectives of different poverty levels as well as any social groups (women, youth, elderly, people living with disability, female-headed households, any specific ethnic or religious groups of different status). |
| How can you describe the most vulnerable households in the community? |

### FOOD SOURCES

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| What are the three main foods consumed in this area currently? List in order of importance |
| Have you noticed any changes in the main foods consumed in the year compared to 12 months ago (or the reference year at the same period)? If yes, what is the change? |
| If a difference is observable in the question above, what are the reasons? |
| Currently, how do you get the food you eat? for each option give the proportion  Options   * Own production * Picking, hunting, fishing * Purchased * Borrowed / credit * swapped, exchanged for work, * Donation from friends or relatives * Food aid * Others (specify) |
| Have you noticed any changes on how you get food to eat compared to 12 months ago (or the reference year at the same period)? If yes, how has this changed? What are the reasons?  What are the differences for the most vulnerable households? |
| Are there seasonal shortages of food in the households in a normal year? If yes, what do people do to meet their food needs then? |
| In general, do you think there is enough food available in your area? Was this situation the same 12 months ago (or the reference year at the same period)? |
| If you think there is enough food available now, how long do you think the food stocks can last? |

### SOURCE INCOME/LIVELIHOOD

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| Normally, at this time of the year, what are the main sources of income for households in this area? |
| Currently, has the income sources changed? If yes, how, and what are the reasons? |
| For the three main livelihoods activities listed above, can you tell us what percentage of households has ceased their livelihood activities, households having difficulty continuing their activities due to drought or continuing their activities undisturbed?   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Source of income** | **Main assets** | **Were they affected by the crisis?**  **(YES/ NO)** | **Will they (the assets) be available in the coming months? (YES/ NO)** | **Situation of the Main Livelihoods Activity (% households)** | |  |  |  |  | Ceased :  Difficulties :  Without disturbance : | |  |  |  | |  |  |  | |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | Ceased :  Difficulties :  Without disturbance : | |  |  |  | |  |  |  | |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  | Ceased :  Difficulties :  Without disturbance : | |  |  |  | |  |  |  | |  |  |  | |
| What are the main difficulties that households face in continuing or restarting their main livelihood activities? (indicate for each main livelihood activity?   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Livelihood | Difficulties in restarting livelihoods activities | |  |  | |  |  | |  |  |  * What are the main difficulties for the most vulnerable households? |
| What are your priorities to continue or restart the livelihood activity?   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Livelihood | Priority needs | |  |  | |  |  | |  |  |  * What are the main priorities for the most vulnerable households? |
| Do you anticipate changes in your livelihoods activities/sources of income in the short term (2-3 months)?   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Livelihood activity/source of income | Changes (2-3 months) | |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |
| Are there any safety or security issues related to the livelihoods activities you engage in now? If yes, what are the issues (by whom, where and when) and how have they been affected by the crisis? |
| Are any children or adolescents taken out of school to work, to engage in household tasks, farming, animal rearing or take care of younger siblings?   * Is this different for girls and boys? In which way? |

### EXPENDITURE

To answer the following questions, ask for the percentages (They can do approximations)

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| Normally, at this time of year, how do households use their income? Ask for the poor / very poor socioeconomic category then for the higher category. |
| Today, how do households use their income? Ask for the low / very low socioeconomic category then for the higher category. Do NOT ask one wealth category to answer on behalf of the other. |

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| **Poor / Very Poor Category** | | **Medium / Wealthy Category** | |
| **Expenses** | **This year**  **Today% (this month)**  **(Question 2)** | **Expenses** | **This year**  **Today% (this month)**  **(Question 2)** |
| Basic food / food |  | Basic food / food |  |
| Condiments |  | Condiments |  |
| Water |  | Water |  |
| Health |  | Health |  |
| School |  | School |  |
| Soap and hygiene products |  | Soap and hygiene products |  |
| Clothes |  | Clothes |  |
| Livestock feed |  | Livestock feed |  |
| Other productive assets |  | Other productive assets |  |
| Others\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  | Others\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |

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| How have the expenditure pattern changed related to the same period of the reference year (or one year ago)? *(reduce food intake, remove child form schools, no money for livelihoods activities, etc.)*  How have they changed for the most vulnerable households? (reduce food intake, remove child form schools, no money for livelihoods activities, etc.) | |  |
| If the situation does not change, do you think that your expenditure pattern can change?  What are your forecasts? Why? (Specify for each area if a change is expected) | | □ YES; □ NO |
| Poor / Very Poor | Medium / Well-to-do | |

### CROPS AND LIVESTOCK

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| What main crops do you normally grow, and have you noticed any change in yield between now and 12 months ago? (Indicate in order of importance) |
| What main livestock do you normally keep, and have you noticed any change in numbers between now and 12 months ago? (Indicate in order of importance) |
| What are the main livestock products normally, and have you noticed any change in production between now and 12 months ago? (Indicate in order of importance) |
| What is the situation of pastures now? How was it last year? |
| What is the expected grazing situation in 2 to 3 months? |
| How have the farmers adapted to protect their livelihoods? |
| What is the priority needs for crops and livestock currently? |

### SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

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| Normally what do households do when they cannot provide for their basic needs?   * What do the most vulnerable households do? |
| Currently, because of the crisis, what do households do if they cannot provide for themselves? What are the different coping strategies that are used by women, men, boys and girls? |
| Do you intend to use other strategies in the next (2-3) months, if yes, which ones?   * What about for the most vulnerable households? |
| Have you received any assistance to cope with the current situation so far (from the government, NGO, Red Cross/Red Crescent etc)?   * If yes, what kind of assistance? |

### CASH AND VOUCHER ASSISTANCE

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| What are the most common ways you receive or get access to cash/money in your household?  Probes, for example on:   * NGO distribution through Bank transfers * NGO distribution through Remittance agent * NGO distribution through Direct cash * NGO distribution through mobile money * Cash from relatives or friends * Others (specify) |
| Have you received a cash or voucher distribution before? If yes, how?  Probes:   * NGO distribution / direct cash * Mobile money * Paper cash voucher * Electronic cash voucher * Remittance agent * Bank transfers * Cash from participating in cash for work project * Other (specify) |
| Was the means used to receive the assistance a safe way for you/your household to receive cash/voucher? Yes/No, give reasons for each |
| If you were to receive cash or vouchers from us what is your preference for receiving that assistance? Please specify why you have that preference.  (List the choices from the highest) |
| Would you have any concerns related to a financial service provider/external actor being responsible for the distribution of cash? If yes, explain why. |
| How frequently would you like to receive cash or vouchers? (note that if a transfer is given more often, the amount will be less each time) |
| In your opinion, who in the households should receive the cash or voucher assistance? And why do you have that preference? |
| Who decides how to spend cash / resources within households?  How are food items and non-food items accessed and controlled by women, men, boys and girls in the domestic sphere? Do opposite-sex spouses or partners both typically have the same voice in decision-making?  *Probe: Do decisions on expenditures vary by the type of expenditure (ex. food versus housing materials, or education)?* |
| Can there sometimes be tension or conflict in the household about how to spend money (earned or given by family/friends/NGO)? If yes, please explain some of the reasons for these tensions. |
| How can humanitarian assistance impact relationships (cause tension or jealousy) in the community between those receiving support and those who do not receive support? |
| What can the organisation do (or not do) to help eliminate the tensions and reduce the risks of creating HH and community tensions?  *Examples: Conduct trainings on GBV, prevention and response? Consult HHs who should be targeted as the recipient? Awareness with households on decision-making?* |
| **MARKETS** |
| Which markets do you usually go to to purchase your food and livelihoods inputs (specify if these are different for food, basic needs and livelihoods) |
| Are the items you most need usually available in the markets? If not, please specify which items are not available, food, livelihoods inputs, basic needs |
| Is it safe to travel to and from the local marketplace with cash and goods on your person? If it’s unsafe, please specify why, when and where. |

### HEALTH AND NUTRITION

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| Have you observed a change in the state of health and nutrition of your children? If yes, what is the change and from when? |
| Where do you normally access primary health services? How far is it? How the situation changed due to the crisis? Does everyone have access to health services? |
| How are the households coping in accessing health services? |
| How do you project/foresee the situation in 2-3 months? |

### WATER AVAILABILITY

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| In a normal situation, what are the primary water sources for human and livestock? How has the situation changed and what are the reasons? |
| Normally, what are the main challenges you face in accessing water for drinking and livestock? How has this situation changed in the current crisis? |
| Do you use water for irrigation normally? What is the source? How has this changed? |
| How do you project the water situation in 2-3 moths? |
| What are the coping strategies employed by the households to access water? |

### CEA AND PROTECTION MAINSTREAMING

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| Have you previously been consulted by an NGO on your needs and how the NGOs can best help your community? If yes, which one(s) spoke to you and approximately when was this? |
| Do you usually feel involved in the way that humanitarian assistance is delivered in this community?  What is the best way to ensure that everyone can be involved in decision making (e.g. regular community meetings, by setting up a community committee, engaging with existing committees, or through FGDs like these)?  Are any groups of people likely to be excluded from participating? |
| What is the best way to communicate about the program including distributions and disbursements?  Are there any specific groups who might struggle to access information this way? If so, what is the best way for us to communicate with these people? |
| What is the best way for you to be able to communicate your feedback, concerns, or complaints with us? |

1. The participants should be seated 2m apart, they should wear face masks, the organizer should ensure there is hand sanitizer/soap available to use before and after, that the FGD, should be held either outside or in a well-ventilated room, and that the size of the FGD must be in line with government requirements on the number of people allowed to gather.

   See also IFRC’s portal on Covid-19 for more information and guidance: <https://covid.ifrc.org/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)