
FSAC Vulnerability and Targeting Guidance Note

1. Objectives

A cluster vulnerability and targeting working group¹ was formulated to “explore and propose ways of enhancing the existing Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC) vulnerability-based targeting, informed by direct food security indicators, while mitigating risks of inclusion and exclusion errors to the fullest extent possible”.

2. Background

“Targeting 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.”²

Enhanced and accurate targeting aims to identify geographic areas and populations most in need and maximize coverage of assistance while minimizing the risk of inclusion³ and exclusion errors⁴. In most operations, available resources are limited and short of the identified needs, hence prioritization of assistance becomes critically essential. The prioritization criteria must ensure that the people most in need within the targeted population are prioritized for assistance.

¹ The FSAC Vulnerability and Targeting Working Group was composed of CARE, DG ECHO, FCDO, FMF, FSAC, NMO, NRC, OXFAM, USAID/BHA, WFP, YFCA, ZOA

² Targeting and prioritization Operational Guidance Note, WFP, January 2021

³ Inclusion error - Inclusion in the programme of those who do not meet the eligibility criteria

⁴ Exclusion error - Exclusion from the programme of those who meet the eligibility criteria

Targeting and prioritization amongst the vulnerable targeted populations in Yemen is required due to the complex operational environment further compounded by access and partners' capacity constraints, and the need to ensure available resources go first to those who need it the most, and those who need it most urgently. While all targeting methods involve margins of error, *the most suitable targeting system is the one that balances between accuracy and what is feasible for implementation*⁵. A successful targeting system will *ensure that assistance reaches people who need it when and where they need it, in appropriate form, in appropriate quantities and through effective modalities*. Thus, the applied targeting approach must be tailored to the local context and has to be jointly driven by FSAC members, authorities, partners and other key stakeholders.

The current targeting process (geographical and community based) employed by FSAC partners along with the evolving and fluid situation in the country, and the challenges in conducting direct household assessments and targeting on the basis of direct food security indicators, collectively present risks of exclusion errors. Furthermore, evidence-based targeting, monitoring of the response (at various stages of the food security response) and prioritization options are at the moment limited.

Moving forward, and in order to reach all high priority groups at greatest need, FSAC partners need to reshape the current targeting approach to become context-sensitive, and at the same time ensure that prioritization criteria are clearly identified, based on both empirical evidence and contextual knowledge. With this, new approaches to targeting will need to be structured and staggered in different phases based on the peculiarities of different parts of the country, not missing opportunities where they exist.

The proposed ways of strengthening the existing mechanism should take into consideration the difficult operational environment, existing impediments, time, capacities, and financial resources required to undertake such an exercise.

⁵ Ibid

3. Types of Targeting Approaches

The targeting process can be broken down into four key phases, 1) needs assessment; 2) choice of targeting approach; 3) beneficiary selection; and 4) monitoring. Community and partner engagement should be mainstreamed throughout the process.⁶ This section briefly presents the various targeting approaches.

- **Blanket targeting**

All households/population in a defined area are eligible for assistance. This approach allows for rapid response and reduces exclusion error. It is usually adopted during the rapid-onset of emergency and when the affected population is relatively small in size.

- **Geographic targeting**

All people living in a specific area receive assistance defined by administrative boundaries (e.g. districts) or analytical units such as agricultural or climatic regions, or livelihood zones. It is mainly guided by large-scale food security assessments or IPC analysis results. Geographic targeting is most suitable in contexts where the affected population/most vulnerable population is concentrated in specific geographic locations. Geographic targeting is however seldom done in isolation and usually combined with other targeting mechanisms to ensure that vulnerable populations in other various locations are not excluded. The prevalent geographic targeting methodology in Yemen is based on levels of food insecurity based on the IPC results. The results are informed by a comprehensive, country-wide food security and livelihood assessment that is designed to support drawing evidence for all districts in Yemen.

- **Community-based targeting**

Community based targeting (e.g. through community committees) allows the community to decide based on certain criteria which households/individuals should be included in the vulnerability list. Community knowledge of a household's situation is in principle a reliable source of information. Moreover, communities are involved in shaping the targeting criteria, which makes it more sensitive to local differences in the definition of "vulnerability". Communities are not only aware of the criteria and how they are applied, they actually

⁶ Ibid

determine and own these processes themselves. Even if individual community members do not always agree with the targeting results, they at least have a clear understanding of how the results were arrived at, and they can make use of the complaints and feedback mechanisms available to them.

Community based targeting empowers communities to translate targeting criteria into their own local realities, and to follow a process that meshes with their own decision making processes. They understand why certain households have been selected, and others have not, because they take responsibility for this selection. This promotes community ownership over the programme, and ensures that targeting results are socially acceptable and widely understood

Community based targeting comes with the tangible risk that marginalized groups or households within a community can be excluded e.g. socially marginalized communities, IDPs that have only recently settled in a village and are not particularly welcome by the host community. There are also risks of including some households that are not particularly vulnerable. Local leaders may want to benefit or bring their favorites into the programme.

Recognizing the inclusion and exclusion errors risks that come with this method, mitigating these risks will include: (i) a strong complaint and feedback mechanism where community members can raise issues about the targeting, and (ii) careful review of the composition and decision making - of the community based committees - can make this method quite effective at ensuring the right people are targeted, and this with limited costs and quite easy to implement.

- **Household targeting; (proxy-means targeting / demographic categorical targeting)**

All households⁷ fulfilling certain vulnerability criteria receive assistance based on profiles of groups whose lives and livelihoods are at risk, such as IDP households or female-headed households.

An alternative approach to community targeting is to use comprehensive and representative survey data to build statistical models to generate a list of proxy indicators that are highly associated with high levels of vulnerability. Targeting households based on Proxy Means Testing

⁷ A group of individuals, usually related, who form a social/ economic unit within which income, assets, food supplies, etc. are shared

(PMT) works best only in populations where the proxy indicators are strongly correlated to household food insecurity. In practice, the application of PMT in isolation from other approaches is associated with high exclusion errors, it also requires regular updating.

Another data driven approach employs a set of demographic categorical criteria for selection; for example, gender, disability, age, households with malnourished children, pregnant and lactating women etc. The risk borne by this method is that it excludes vulnerable households that do not display any of the defined demographic criteria, an example is a male-headed household with high dependency ratio, extreme poverty, and none of the members are disabled, have MAM/SAM or even chronic disease.

- **Mixed targeting approach**

In practice, none of the approaches listed above is applied in isolation. Organizations employ a mix of different targeting approaches to improve targeting accuracy and ensure that the exclusion and inclusion errors born by each of the methods is minimized:

- geographic targeting - to determine key geographic locations/livelihood zones where there is high concentration of needs and/or hazards - complemented by
- categorical targeting - to ensure the most vulnerable groups (households headed by elderly heads, widowed or divorced females, households with SAM/MAM, IDPs, marginalized populations etc.) are captured, further combined -if possible- with proxy means testing to ensure that other vulnerable groups in need of assistance are also captured (e.g., household with no income source, high dependency ratio, very poor living conditions, deprived of essential assets, etc.).

Overall, in a complex context like Yemen, with good mitigation measures to reduce inclusion and exclusion errors of methods considered, mixed targeting is probably the best approach in order to ensure that the highest priority groups are targeted and receive assistance.

4. Targeting Errors

One of the key objectives of targeting and prioritization is to minimize both inclusion and exclusion errors; these are monitored using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data sources.

Targeting errors can be divided into those that occur at i) the design stage of targeting, and ii) the implementation stage:

- Design errors: These occur as a result of the targeting method - when the vulnerability/eligibility criteria applied leads to the inclusion of non-vulnerable households/individuals and the exclusion of vulnerable households/individuals. This is when the choice and definition of the vulnerability criteria in place is not suitable and leads to a bias against people not selected, however clearly being vulnerable.
- Implementation errors: These result from the operationalization and lead to households/individuals being wrongly included or excluded, for example due to communication challenges and subsequent lack of awareness among affected populations in cases where they have to make themselves known. It might be due to wrong application of the targeting criteria, overachieving quotas, or being restricted to a geographic ceiling of caseloads.

Targeting errors are unavoidable but measures SHOULD be taken to mitigate them to the fullest extent possible.

To support enhanced targeting and prioritization, relevant household demographic and vulnerability data (e.g., presence of elderly, people living with disabilities, high-dependency ratios, household incomes and expenditure patterns etc.) could be collected for verification purposes.

It is essential and necessary to differentiate between people who are affected, people who need assistance, and people who will be targeted through a specific response.

5. Proposed ways to strengthen the existing FSAC vulnerability and targeting mechanisms include the following:

- Recognition of the FSAC two track assistance through WFP and partners and NGOs (both international and national)
- Definition of a coherent approach considering a set of **core food-security based targeting and monitoring tools**, complemented with specific adaptations and **additional tools** and methods.
- Use of **Food Security and Livelihoods Assessment (FSLA)** data to be pursued, as a cross verifying mechanism of vulnerability profiles by geographical area (allowing for “red flag” system on divergence between expected profiles by district and ongoing assistance).
- The use of composite multi-dimensional summary indicators such as the **CARI Console**⁸ needs to be explored:
 - (a) to “talk/inform” IPC processes on regular basis, while recognizing that CARI reflects the outcome after assistance is provided and should therefore not be utilized to assess the needs.
 - (b) for food-security based targeting and monitoring. Proposal would be to proceed with a pilot, possibly focusing on one area under NGO assistance.

⁸ The CARI / Consolidated Approach to Reporting Indicators supports the reporting and combining of food security indicators in a systematic and transparent way, using information collected in a typical VAM survey. Central to the approach is an explicit classification of households into four descriptive groups: food secure, marginally food secure, moderately food insecure, and severely food insecure.

- Explore the possibility of further enhancing the currently piloted targeting criteria in the future, using PMT indicators derived from statistical models using FSLA and other secondary data.
- A set of harmonized **core food security-based targeting and monitoring tools (see following table)** should be used by all FSAC partners in order to reinforce direct evidence base (routine) of food security need/response in country. Regardless of the modality employed (face-to-face or remote monitoring), the core set of harmonized tools is to be used by all to allow for aggregation and production of comprehensive overview.
- To harness full potential of targeting exercises, partners should also develop a **harmonized registration template** that incorporates structured data on key household demographic and vulnerability information. This is critical to avoid duplication/overlap of assistance.

A number of ways to improve targeting are being piloted and now need to be brought to scale, and complemented exploring use of other possible methods (e.g., Proxy Means Testing (PMT), CARI, etc.).

Table1: Proposed ways to strengthen the existing FSAC vulnerability and targeting mechanisms⁹

	Targeting	Verification	Monitoring	Re-targeting
WFP and Partners (95% of FSAC Emergency Food Assistance response in 2020)	<p>Current practice:</p> <p>Two stage (geo/IPC, and community based categorical)</p>	<p>Current practice:</p> <p>CD/TPM/WFP field 25% verification of provided list (inclusion error identification)</p>	<p>Current practice:</p> <p>TPM/call center-mVAM monitoring (FCS and r-CSI)</p> <p>Monitoring of registered cohorts receiving assistance.</p>	<p>Current practice:</p> <p>Opportunistic/ad-hoc re-targeting</p>

⁹ The suggested measures to improve targeting and verification through exploration of PMT criteria and the inclusion of income estimates and use of food security indicators is launched as a pilot and being scaled up. Similarly, the suggested measures for monitoring and re-targeting are in practice.

	<p><u>WAYS to improve:</u></p> <p>Proxy Means Testing (PMT) using FSLA for vulnerable profiles by districts</p> <p>Include income estimate per HH</p> <p>Integrate SAM-MAM cases as targeting criteria</p> <p>Integrate newly displaced as targeting criteria and develop ‘bridges’ from RRM to appropriate programmes.</p> <p>Integrate Marginalized groups as targeting criteria.</p>	<p><u>WAYS to improve:</u></p> <p>Phase I: Verification exercise to include L-CSI, FCS and verification of income levels against thresholds.</p> <p>Phase II: Where possible explore use of CARI: FCS/LCSI and % Food Expenditure. [Implementation informed by the piloting - see below / NGO section]</p> <p>Purposeful review of inclusion (exclusion) of under-represented profiles (as per FSLA regression) or pop. groups</p> <p>Receipt and purposeful review of WHO / UNICEF SAM-MAM lists</p> <p>Receipt and purposeful review of RRM lists</p> <p>Receipt and purposeful review of UNICEF Muhamasheen lists</p>	<p><u>WAYS to improve:</u></p> <p>Quarterly monitoring and analysis of registered cohorts assisted over longer periods (e.g.: groups who received assistance for last 6 months, for last 1 year, for past years, etc.).</p> <p>Where possible explore use of the CARI: FCS/LCSI and % Food Expenditure. [Propose pilot; See below / NGO section]</p>	<p><u>WAYS to improve:</u></p> <p>Once a year caseload review informed by FSLA, quarterly monitoring and two stage targeting (IPC)¹⁰</p>
NGOs (5% of FSAC Emergency Food Assistance response in 2020)	<p>Current practice:</p> <p>Community based/local authorities/other INGO programming</p>	<p>Current practice:</p> <p>INGO 15% verification of provided list (categorical)</p>	<p>Current practice:</p> <p>No monitoring for the 6 months of entitlement to Emergency Food Assistance</p>	<p>Current practice:</p> <p>End-line survey - no defined exit</p>

¹⁰ The calculation of the 2021 FSAC caseload was based on a combined approach, factoring in the IPC results and vulnerability analysis using FSLA data]

<u>WAYS to improve:</u>	<u>WAYS to improve:</u>	<u>WAYS to improve:</u>	<u>WAYS to improve:</u>
<p>PMT using FSLA vulnerable profiles by district.</p> <p>Direct (INGO) independent (baseline) representative assessment of FS at district/targeted location.</p> <p>Pilot CARI method: FCS/LCSI and % Food Expenditure.</p>	<p>Verification exercise to include r-CSI and FCS of verified caseload.</p> <p>Purposeful review of inclusion (exclusion) of under-represented profiles (as per FSLA regression) or pop groups (as per baseline assessment)</p> <p>Pilot CARI method: FCS/LCSI and % Food Expenditure.</p>	<p>Mid-programme (3 months) monitoring of verified caseload.</p> <p>Pilot CARI method: FCS/LCSI and % Food Expenditure.</p>	<p>End-line survey to define caseloads for differential transition support or continuation under Emergency Food Assistance (WFP or NGO).</p> <p>Pilot CARI method: FCS/LCSI and % Food Expenditure.</p>

Table2: Proposed enhanced FSAC vulnerability and targeting indicators/criteria

The results of the WFP Proxy Means Testing (PMT) eligibility/vulnerability criteria derived from the model overlap with the current criteria applied in the WFP pilot exercise, except for the SAM/MAM criteria due to absence of data on SAM /MAM in the FSLA dataset.

It is important to note, however, that there were some differences between North and South with regards to the significance of some of the criteria (dependency ratio, female headed households, IDPs, Marginalized population groups etc.).

For the purpose of simplification, it is proposed to re-group the FSAC vulnerability criteria into 4 categories with 16 criteria (8 currently piloted criteria with a set of 8 additional new criteria) as follows:

a. Indicators of social and demographic status:

- i. IDPs
- ii. Marginalized
- iii. Female single headed households
- iv. Child-headed households (-18)
- v. Elderly-headed households (+60)

b. Nutrition and health status:

- i. SAM / MAM
- ii. Chronic illness in the household
- iii. Chronic disability

c. WASH and living conditions:

- i. Household is using either of the following: an open hole, tube/pipe outside, defecation between trees, uncovered water source, covered water source
- ii. Using wood / charcoal or something similar as source of cooking fuel
- iii. Crowding index > 2 (considering the Yemen context, we might need to consider the severity at a higher threshold than the standard)

d. Economic Capacity:

- i. Dependency ratio (representing the HH Size + economic productivity)
- ii. Main source of income (North: either casual labor or Government employee)
- iii. Reliance on assistance as main source of food
- iv. Deprivation of essential assets (inclusion criteria)

Further contextual review of the derived list of criteria predicting household vulnerability is necessary. The list however is as a good starting point for i) reviewing the strongest predictors of household vulnerability (based on the odds ratio), ii) informing the targeting working group discussions with the cluster and with communities, and for iii) reviewing against the intended targeting methodology (community-based), what variables would be possible and appropriate to include.