



## Beneficiary Targeting and Verification Guide for FFP Emergency Food Security Activities

### Overview

The Office of Food for Peace (FFP) mission is to reduce hunger and malnutrition and ensure that adequate, safe and nutritious food is available, accessible to, and well-utilized by all individuals at all times to support a healthy and productive life. Through its emergency activities, FFP provides food assistance to save lives, reduce suffering, and support the early recovery of populations affected by both acute and protracted emergencies.

FFP responds to emergency situations, or crises, where the food supply is severely disrupted and populations lack access to sufficient food through normally available means such as production, barter, or purchase in markets. Such situations may involve drought, floods, earthquakes, and/or civil conflict. An economic shock such as a rise in food prices due to global price increases, or reduced remittances due to a recession, will be considered an aggravating rather than primary factor for determining eligibility for emergency food assistance. In addition to resource transfers to help populations meet immediate food needs, FFP emergency activities may be accompanied by complementary programming that has a direct impact on food security. Across all activities, FFP strives to uphold the following principles:

- Do no harm in the process of providing food or other food assistance resources;
- Strive to keep the interests and voice of the vulnerable at the center of our work;
- Adhere to the highest standards of human rights, respect and dignity in our provision of assistance;
- Provide access to food to those in greatest need in an impartial manner, without bias or prejudice; and
- Enable communities to find durable means to meet their own food security needs.

FFP defines three categories of emergency activities:

- A. **Relief** - Activities that meet the immediate, life-saving food assistance needs of populations directly affected by an identifiable shock, or which protect livelihoods from further degradation.
- B. **Recovery** - Activities implemented for a specified, appropriate timeframe that assist populations recovering from an identifiable shock and, if possible, place them on a trajectory that facilitates their return to at least a subsistence level and capable of participating in development activities.
- C. **Protracted Crisis** - Activities that meet the food needs of populations in those environments in which a significant proportion of the population is acutely vulnerable to death, disease, and disruption of livelihoods over a prolonged period of time.

## Purpose

This *Beneficiary Targeting and Verification Guide for FFP Emergency Activities* will serve as a technical reference guide for all potential, new or existing implementing mechanisms of FFP emergency food security activities. The guide includes links to resources best practice research, and toolkits for the following: 1) Engaging communities for setting and applying beneficiary targeting criteria; 2) minimizing inclusion and exclusion errors; 3) eligibility verification processes and reporting; and 4) developing a beneficiary database.

### 1. Engaging Communities – Setting and Applying Targeting Criteria

[The Operational Guidance and Toolkit for Multi-purpose Cash grants](#) (UNHCR, CaLP) provides a set of minimum standards for multi-purpose cash programs in line with program objectives, pragmatic evidence of target populations' needs, practical realities faced by implementing agencies, and global or regional experiences and best practices. The Toolkit also includes best practice recommendations that are common to good humanitarian programming, such as selection of financial service providers, and/or accountability to affected populations. It serves as a template structure to adapt for programming in emergency contexts. Refer Module 3, Part 3, *Response and Design Plan* for guidance and tools on the targeting strategy and determining eligibility including how to engage communities throughout the targeting cycle, ensuring the views of affected communities – and particularly those of potentially marginalized and most vulnerable groups – can influence the targeting process.

[The Cash in Emergencies Toolkit](#) (ICRC) provides tools, practical guidance, minimum standards and good practices to guide field staff and volunteers. The goal is to improve the quality of cash transfer programming (CTP) during the phases of the project cycle. According to the Toolkit, the humanitarian sector increasingly recognizes CTP as an effective way to support people affected by emergencies. CTP includes all forms of cash and voucher-based assistance. Refer to Module 3 *Response Analysis* for guidance on the targeting criteria and mechanisms and the toolboxes for templates.

[Targeting Food Aid in Emergencies](#) (Emergency Nutrition Network Series 1) focuses on targeting food aid within geographic areas. The Series concludes that within area targeting is only likely to be appropriate when: there are routinely identifiable differences between the targeted population and the non-targeted population, where the community cooperates with the targeting strategy, where distribution mechanisms can be established which are not subject to massive diversion by powerful groups, and where the amount of resources available broadly matches, or even better, exceeds the scale of the immediate needs of the population.

[Targeting and Distribution in Complex Emergencies](#) (Elsevier Food Policy Abstract) analyzes practices in the targeting and management of humanitarian food assistance in complex emergencies, the constraints to recipient communities' participation, and the possibilities for participatory approaches to improve targeting. According to the Abstract, extensive literature on community participation in the targeting and management of humanitarian food assistance suggests that participatory approaches work best in slow-onset emergencies with no conflict or displacement. However, the policies require that the recipient community participate in decisions about the assistance they receive including targeting, regardless of the causes of the emergency.

[Assessing the Effectiveness of Community-based Targeting](#) (IFPRI/WFP) concludes that community-based targeting may work better when programs face tight budgets. In one program, where communities allocated both public works and free distributions, targeting was better in the latter program, which was more resource constrained. Second, better flows of information within communities have the potential to improve the effectiveness and consistency of targeting as well as increase residents' trust that assistance is being disbursed according a rational criteria.

## 2. Minimizing Inclusion and Exclusion Errors

[The Operational Guidance and Toolkit for Multi-purpose Cash grants](#) (UNHCR, CaLP) includes lessons learned, common pitfalls that lead to inclusion and exclusion error, and recommendations for the response plan. The guidance also reinforces the importance of the targeting strategy for identifying those who would otherwise be eligible but do not meet strict criteria. It also references various referrals, appeals, complaints and feedback mechanisms for reducing bias and correcting inclusion and exclusion errors. Finally, it identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the various targeting methods in minimizing inclusion errors. Refer to Parts 3-4 Targeting Strategy and Determining Eligibility, and Annex 3 for standard operating procedures and templates.

[Targeting Food Aid in Emergencies](#) (Emergency Nutrition Network Series) concludes that inclusion and exclusion errors can occur at all levels. Errors can occur at every stage of the targeting process and will never be entirely eliminated. Careful judgements on expected and acceptable errors should be made and factored into food aid planning. The Series includes ways to minimize errors by applying key principles and combining approaches.

[CaLP Urban Toolkit](#) underscores that best practice in targeting requires a clear definition of the vulnerability criteria, a selection process that prioritizes the neediest families, and a verification process that can ensure that exclusion and inclusion errors are corrected transparently and quickly. Refer to the Targeting and Verification and the Monitoring and Evaluation sections for further guidance.

[Targeting in Complex Emergencies](#) (Tufts University) study fosters an understanding of how operational decisions are made that affect targeting and related programmatic issues on the ground in complex emergencies. The Study includes a discussion of the essential practical questions that any system of targeting must address, and a description of the roles of the multiple stakeholders in the process of targeting and distributing food assistance. It also includes an examination of the information systems (particularly assessments and monitoring/evaluation) that underpin decision-making; a review of the evidence regarding inclusion and exclusion, the targeting errors that result from inclusion and exclusion, the post-distribution dynamics that either correct or exacerbate these errors; and a discussion of operational constraints.

## 3. Eligibility verification processes and reporting

[CaLP Urban Toolkit](#) identifies key steps to verify the eligibility of selected beneficiaries before providing assistance including: verifying the selection criteria, selecting and training the verification team, verifying at the household level, identifying discrepancies, and communicating the results of the verification process to community leaders and beneficiaries. Although this Toolkit focuses on emergency assistance in urban areas, the principles for the eligibility verification processes and reporting are relevant to all emergency activities. Refer to the standard operating procedures for verification and identification of staff.

[The Cash in Emergencies Toolkit Data Management Resources](#) (ICRC) provides templates, preconfigured forms, analytical tools and training to review the master beneficiary list and analyze the eligibility verification and reporting process. The Resource includes a beneficiary verification data spreadsheet, analysis, and reconciliation spreadsheet templates.

#### 4. Developing a beneficiary database

[Cash Transfer Programming Toolkit](#) (MercyCorps) provides general guidance for CTP and the rationale and best practices for implementing cash transfers. The Toolkit includes guidance on manual paper-based questionnaire for collecting household-level quantitative data, training for data entry staff on how to use the database, clean data and use Smartphones for data collection and uploading into an Excel, Access or file with SurveyToGo.

[Protecting Beneficiary Privacy](#) (CaLP) includes the key principles and operational standards for the secure use of personal data in cash and e-transfer programs. This guidance is for organizations engaged in the delivery of cash or vouchers especially with a specific focus on e-transfer programs. The guidance also addresses the risks inherent in the use of beneficiary data including the collection, storage, use and disclosure of beneficiaries' personal data.

[The Cash in Emergencies Toolkit Data Management Resources](#) (ICRC) provides mobile data collection tools, spreadsheet tools and cash information management resources. Each of these resources includes templates, preconfigured forms, analytical tools, and training guides. The data management resources include cash information management resources for: adapting existing forms, loading to a mobile device, analyzing data, and storing the beneficiary data via various platforms. This resource also includes beneficiary master information templates and guides.

[USAID ADS Chapter 579](#) includes guidance for research data and databases, and research involving human subjects.

#### 5. Information Resources

1. Cash Transfer Program Methodology Guide, MercyCorps  
<https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/CTP1MethodologyGuide.pdf>
2. Cash transfer programming in urban emergencies: a toolkit for practitioners.  
<http://www.cashlearning.org/resources/library/251-cash-transfer-programming-in-urban-emergencies-a-toolkit-for-practitioners>
3. WFP Targeting in Emergencies. See the Annex for additional analysis of strengths and weaknesses of different methods <https://www.wfp.org/sites/default/files/wfp083629.pdf>
4. WFP Assessing the effectiveness of community-based targeting Cash in Emergencies Toolkit (IFRC)  
<https://www.wfp.org/content/assessing-effectiveness-community-based-targeting-emergency-food-aid-bangladesh-ethiopia-and-malawi>
5. UNCHR and WFP MENA Targeting Review <http://www.cashlearning.org/resources/library/816-review-of-targeting-of-cash-and-food-assistance-for-syrian-refugees-in-lebanon-jordan-and-egypt>
6. WFP Gender and Food aid Distribution in Emergencies: <http://www.ungef.org/07b.pdf>
7. USAID Office of Inspector General Fraud Prevention and Compliance guide  
[https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/other-reports/oig\\_fraud\\_prevention\\_handbook\\_082016.pdf](https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/other-reports/oig_fraud_prevention_handbook_082016.pdf)