

Direct Observational Tool in emergencies

WHAT is it for?

This Direct Observational Tool will help individuals **record their initial observations systematically in the immediate aftermath of a rapid-onset emergency.**

This tool records observations from the assessor's point-of-view, which is especially helpful if baseline data or household visits and surveys are not immediately possible in the aftermath of a rapid-onset emergency.

This tool will help identify the priority needs and geographical locations affected and can lead to more detailed assessments as and when appropriate. It may also generate questions for further investigation and help frame future discussions or questions in case of inconsistency of data capture.

The **purpose** of this tool is:

- To know more about the situation on the ground
- To help make initial decisions on what needs to be done
- To feed into Tearfund's Humanitarian Review – to determine the most appropriate response options to the emergency (ie whether to call an Emergency Response Committee or request a detailed needs assessment)

WHEN is it for?

To be used within the **first 24 to 72 hours** of a rapid-onset emergency.

WHO is this for?

For any individual sent to assess the emergency situation. This tool is straightforward to use and especially useful for staff, partners or local churches that do not have previous experience in conducting needs assessments in emergency contexts.

HOW to use

Please use this form to provide an initial assessment of areas that you visit. The assessor should **spend time in communal or public places** such as markets, religious buildings, water points and key road junctions to give a basic indication of how people are coping in response to the emergency. We recommend completing this form while you are still present in the community.

The form is very short and there is no need to conduct any form of household survey or interviews to complete it. **Your answers should be based on your impressions from visiting the area, village or community.**

You will need to:

- **Record basic information** about the community you are assessing (ie location, population size).
- **Circle the pictures** that best describe the situation on the ground.
- **Write down any additional observations.**

Observations will focus on the following sectors:

1. **WASH** (water, sanitation and hygiene) – looking at the availability of and access to safe drinking water
2. **Food security** – looking at the availability of food
3. **Shelter** – looking at the level of damage to shelter
4. **Markets** – looking at the level of market/trader presence

If you have time, consider doing a transect walk and draw it on the back of this paper, noting general observations.

Limitations of this tool

- This tool only provides a time-bound snapshot of the situation in four sectors, and has limited use when the emergency evolves rapidly (ie population movements, conflict context).
- The assessor will need to be aware that their own perceptions and expectations are subjective and have an impact upon how they report and interpret their observations.

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1. GENERAL QUESTIONS			
1. Crisis type		5. Location (including village/community)	
2. Start date of crisis		6. GPS coordinates	
3. Name of observer		7. Population size	
4. Date of observation		8. Population type (eg urban, peri-urban, rural, IDP)	

2. SECTORS

WASH <i>– circle the level of access to safe drinking water.</i>	 Plenty of safe drinking water/ Very good access to safe drinking water	 Some safe drinking water/ Limited access to safe drinking water	 No safe drinking water/ No access to safe drinking water
Food <i>– circle the level of food availability.</i>	 Access to food/ Normal food intake	 Some access to food / People limit food intake due to fear of food running out	 No access to food / People limit food intake
Shelter <i>– circle the level of damage to the buildings.</i>	 No damage	 Partial damage	 Heavy damage / completely destroyed
Markets <i>– circle the level of market/trader presence.</i>	 Market is fully functional/ Supplies fully present	 Market is partially functional/ Supplies are partially present	 Market is not functional/ Supplies are running out

3. ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

Additional observations (security, vulnerable population, communication, challenges, access, underlying risks etc):

Has the community received any support or assistance from other groups or organisations?

What do you observe to be the top THREE priorities?

Tearfund

learn.tearfund.org
 100 Church Road, Teddington TW11 8QE, United Kingdom
 T UK +44 (0) 20 3906 3906 E publications@tearfund.org