

Shelter Market Assessment - Standard Operating Procedure¹

If a market is not functioning, a Cash Based Intervention such as **Cash for Rent** (CfR) or Occupancy Free of Charge (OFC) will fail. Even though when housing indicators at *the macro level* might show a dysfunctional Shelter Market; what is paramount is the local /community level market functionality: relatively stable prices, some (affordable) units vacant or available, and a market system, as well as self-regulating mechanisms (such as property agents and a range of formal and informal rental agreements).

When focusing on *Shelter* as a sector, and within the context of chronic poverty, there are *not* readily indicators (adopted by the humanitarian community) to determine whether the lower-cost shelter market is functioning. When implementing CfR, it is required to evaluate the supply available for an increased influx of families (meaning vacant units). This information is obtained to a lesser extent from Key Informants and secondary data, and to a larger extent from scouting the communities and conducting household (HH) surveys.

Define the scope

- Identify villages, districts and neighborhoods with traditional linkages to displaced populations, communities placed in strategic locations, and where target populations are already living or seeking for accommodation;
- Prioritize areas of current and/or potential intervention – for example, in the catchment areas of NRC supported schools or NRC Community Centers and Neighbourhood Committees supported by the UDOC project.
- Exclude areas where there is *no* basic infrastructure and services (specially schools, markets, public transportation and clinics) or where the infrastructure is overwhelmed already; where displaced families have no interest in living; where they are not accepted; or where the average rent cost would be unaffordable for vulnerable families;
- Focus in *affordable housing / rental / secondary units* (exclude higher-cost residential buildings or homes). Conduct the survey at houses that would fit these criteria and exclude from the survey houses that clearly belong to higher brackets of the housing market and/or are occupied solely by the property owners.

Get ready

- Do not put the security of those conducting or responding to the survey at risk. Consult the Access / Security team as needed to liaise with local authorities, other stakeholders or community elders to determine access and assess security risks as needed;
- The best time to undertake a market analysis is when there is no immediate need for it (when there is no crisis);
- Set the surveyor team with members that have technical knowledge and are also familiar with the area. They should be able to best collect data from all groups in a culturally appropriate manner;
- The team should be gender balanced and where culturally appropriate, men and women should be interviewed separately;

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For a quality assessment

- Do not bias the scope of your market analysis towards a specific outcome.
- Team members should also be aware of the biases of informants and interest groups. Each surveyor should be ready to use their experience and intuition. Most respondents will provide reliable answers. However, make a note whenever answers seem to be uninformed guesses or do not match what surveyors can corroborate through observation.
- Be ready to learn. Pay attention to different answers to key questions such as Do you live in an overcrowded house now? Is your house a safe place to live? or Did you have trouble finding a place to rent?

Introducing the assessment

- The way you introduce yourself is key, especially in pre-crisis settings. Some people can be suspicious when we ask questions about market functioning.
- To avoid any potential issues, agree to a set of talking points. Field teams can introduce themselves by explaining that they are: Collecting community-level information and that no identifying/sensitive information will be shared; Conducting a market assessment to better design humanitarian programmes; Not from the government; Independent humanitarian actors; Identifying opportunities to benefit the local economy; and, Concerned about the impact of a future crisis on livelihoods in the area².
- Do not raise expectations – especially when a Market Assessment will include talking to HH & informants that are not members of the target groups for our programmes.

Confidentiality and Informed consent

- Do not to collect data that will not be analyzed and used in the project design / decision making process;
- We should not be perceived as intrusive. Requesting limited personal information is also a sign of respect, and of data protection (the data that is not collected cannot be misused).
- Before you start asking questions, always ask for consent to conduct the interview.
- Highlight that participants do not have to answer any questions they are not comfortable with, and that the information collected can remain anonymous if they ask.
- Consider language barriers, low literacy and low levels of education. Giving consent without understanding what is written as well as the purpose of the questionnaire does not constitute informed consent;
- Make sure the discussions are confidential. If necessary, respectfully and tactfully ask neighbours or other people to let have the interview without them.
- The questionnaire includes GPS location, name and phone number. If a respondent request to be anonymous, initials could be used instead of a full name. The phone number is set as a non-mandatory question.
- Do not let a respondent wonder why you skip some questions. If several questions “do not apply” the surveyor should say so to the respondent, for example “these questions do not apply, since they refer to the cost of rent, and you have mentioned you own the house, am I correct?”.

² 2016, Helene Juillard, The International Rescue Committee, *Revised PRE-CRISIS MARKET ANALYSIS (PCMA)*.

Conduct household surveys and key informant interviews

- The Shelter Market Assessment will collect data on general demographics and size of households; average rent costs (per size and location); access to housing and security of tenure; local shelter market supply and housing stock quality; living conditions, gender and protection considerations; livelihood opportunities and community services; as well as information relevant to inform the frequency and duration of payments.
- Administer the questionnaire in teams of two: one asking the questions and the other taking notes.
- Coordinate data collection (within the team and other agencies) to avoid duplication;
- We depend on the collaboration of every person that welcomes us and interrupts their activities to fill in the questionnaire. We should not take more than 20 minutes of their time (shouldn't be rushed either).
- As with most data-collecting applications, the surveyor will need to fill in the response to a question before 'scrolling or swiping' into the next. However, surveyors may not necessarily need to ask every single question. The questionnaire has some "hints" where specific answers can be answered by observation or through the conversation that has already taken place. For instance, if a respondent has already expressed that they have lived in the same house for several decades or, in the opposite case, if the respondent has showed a repatriation certificate, it is not necessary to ask their status as "Host Community" or "Returnee".
- Observation and technical skills are also necessary in able to rate the shelter from general conditions of the construction to the specific materials and state of the different building and sanitation components.
- Stay alert and report protection concerns. Pay attention and report any potential risks to vulnerable groups (e.g. threats or exploitation). Be prepared to react if a respondent raises intra-familial violence or protection issues. Communicate to the Shelter PM, Shelter or Protection Adviser and complete a separate short report.
- The HH questionnaire has also a self-checklist for the surveyor to confirm at the end of the survey they have given an opportunity to the respondent to ask any questions, and if it is clear that this is a first stage of a market survey for research purposes (and that the teams are not conducting surveys selecting beneficiaries).
- The principles above also apply when talking with Key Informants. House owners and shelter agents / brokers are often members of the same community. In fact, local state agents or brokers and Elders / Maliks can act as gatekeepers to access housing). As much as possible, sample representatives that are linked to different levels of the housing market.

Data management

- Review the questionnaire in advance. The questions should be translated into the local language.
- The data should be tagged by geographical area, date, source of information and reliability to facilitate merging it with primary data.
- The Kobo platform has integrated some functions to control the consistency of the data (e.g. some questions allow for multiple answers others are restricted by a range of values). Even with these functions, pay attention to detail. For example, making sure the rent inserted is the monthly cost (not weekly or yearly) and only for the unit the HH occupies (not the full compound); and that a consistent currency is used (AFN).
- Upload the data from the tablets immediately after the survey is completed or as soon as there is internet connection.
- Only aggregated data will be used for reports.
- Follow NRC Data Protection Policy *to protect the privacy of the individuals whose data is processed in line with applicable legislation and humanitarian principles.*

Following these guidelines, the collected information will help to develop evidence-based programming on Cash for Rent (CfR) or Occupancy Free of Charge (OFC), relying on the local rental market and also contributing to it. A Shelter Market Assessments does not replace a Needs Assessment and neither collects sufficient information regarding the vulnerable conditions of a household. Nonetheless, the data collected also contributes to the understanding of the communities where we work, in terms of needs and capacities. NRC might go back to these communities and specific households to conduct beneficiary selection assessments to offer further assistance.

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