

Ensuring Data and Analysis is Useful and Usable for Response -Tools

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<https://urlzs.com/vErm>

Needs Assessment Process: Common Steps among Organizations/ Clusters

When comparing Needs Assessment processes, it is evident that most steps are common among organizations/clusters that participated in this comparison¹.

Sometimes the order of implementation may vary among processes, and often organizations/clusters have different denomination for the same step.

Some organizations, for example, start with coordination and identification of information needs, others with defining the purpose, others conduct assessment of information landscape is done even before a new crisis, and included in “data preparedness”.

In a few cases, some steps are implemented only by some organization/cluster. This is mostly due to the specific mandate of each organization/cluster: e.g., some do not do primary data collection, others collect data as a service for other responders.

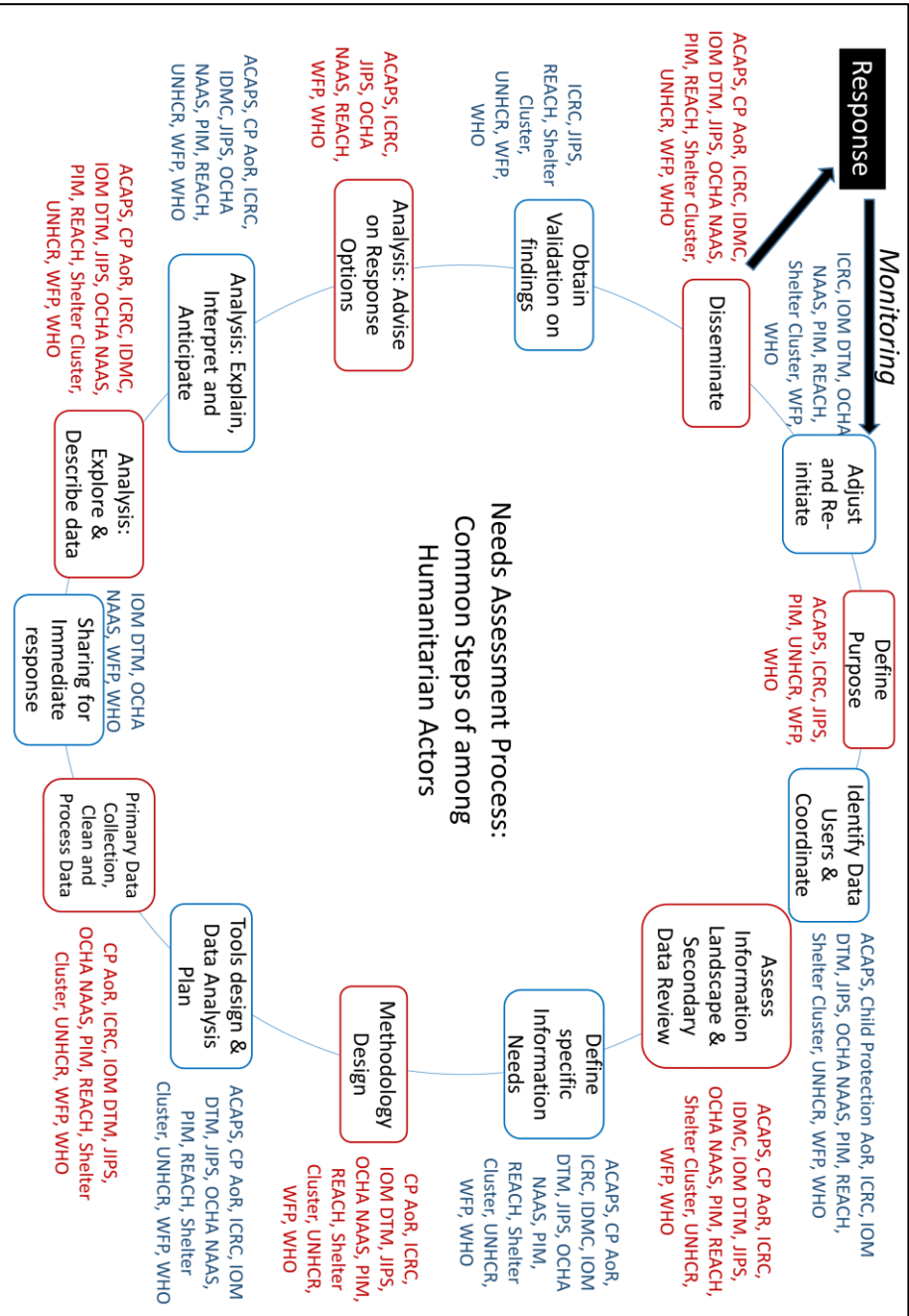
Some organizations include “capacity strengthening with national/local actors on needs assessments”, as part of their process, others look specifically at various modalities for dissemination to ensure they reach decision makers (e.g., presenting results to sectoral or inter-sectoral meetings, “elevator pitches”, in addition to preparing reports, infographics and website content).

A Grand Bargain output of the Needs Assessment Work Stream

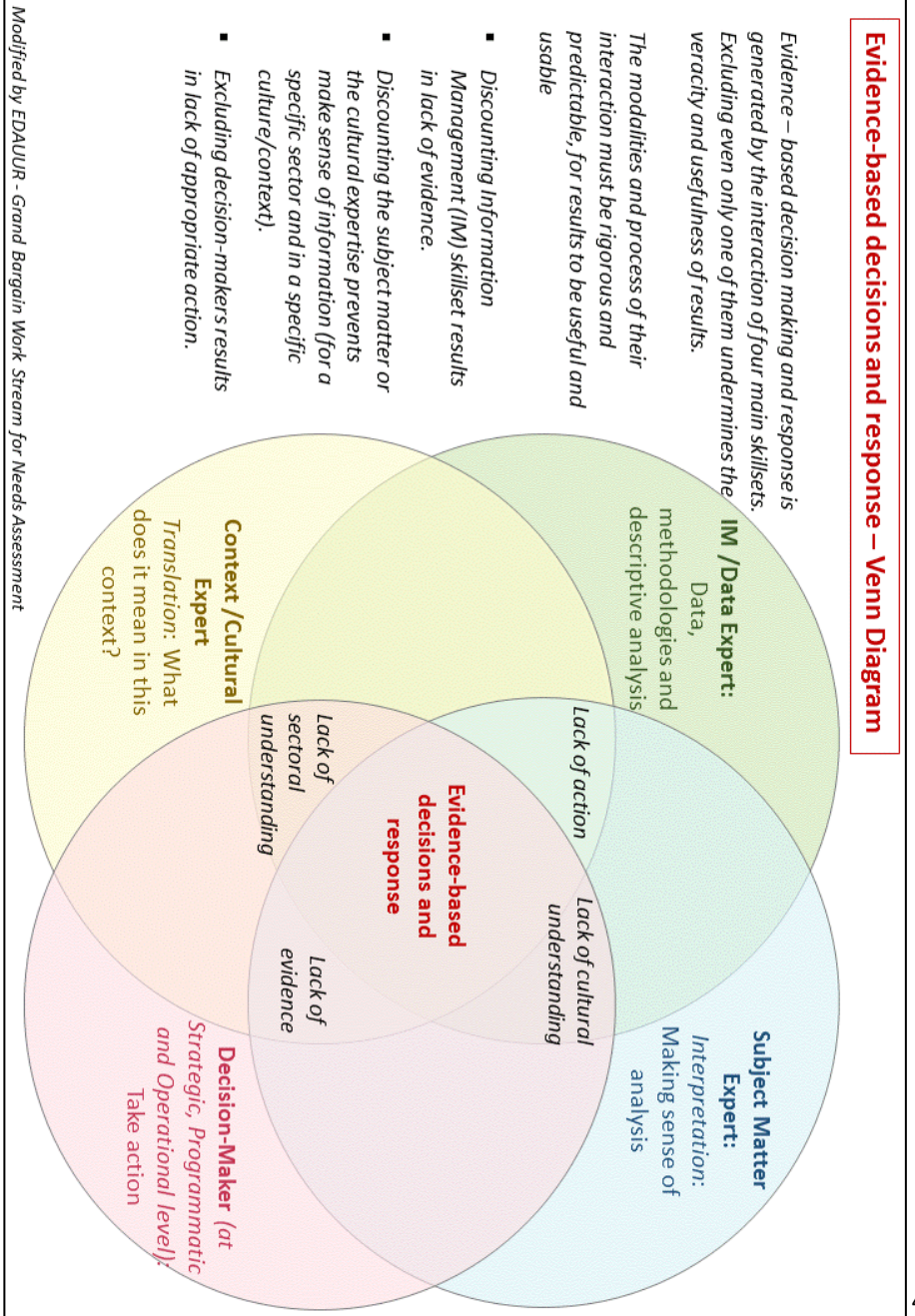
¹An Excel sheet illustrating comparison, as filled by participating organizations and clusters, AoRs, is available at:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1gDL8_MEtCS9tyRHgj11AwQI3UQGxbPTFL3htukF_fm/edit?oid=115241835277620149295&usp=sheets_home&ths=true

are visualized below.

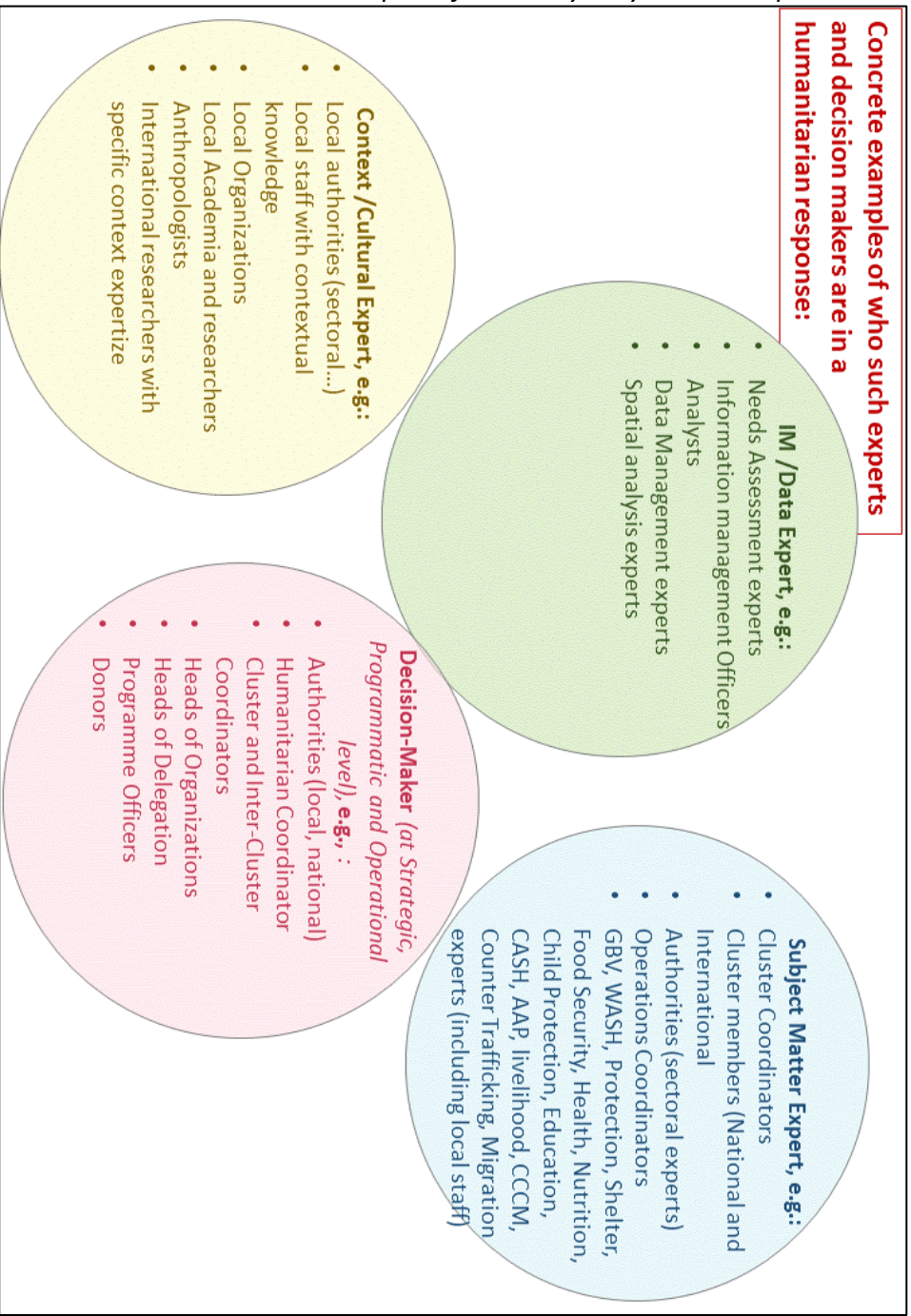


Skillssets: The visuals below illustrates the four minimum skillsets necessary for evidence-based decision-making and the consequence of excluding even only one of them



Skillsets: Concrete examples of who they may be in a response

Concrete examples of who such experts and decision makers are in a humanitarian response:



Four key steps where the 4 skillsets have to work together

Close cooperation among the four skillsets is crucial at all steps of the Needs Assessment process. The group identified four key steps of the process where it is particularly important that the four skillsets work together, each according to their role:

1. Define Specific Information Needs,
2. Methodology Design,
3. Tools and Data Analysis Plan Design,
4. Analysis. Analysis is considered one 'composite' step.

Roles for each of the four 'skillsets, Guiding Questions and Checklists at each key step

As each skillset contributes to the process complementarily. It is essential that each actor understands the complementarities of the different roles and respects the different professional competences. Roles at the four identified steps are illustrated below, together with tools (guiding questions and/or checklists of actions to be taken) that help each actor clarify their own role and clearly identify the role of the others.

Step 1 – Identify information needs

Identifying information needs before developing questions is essential to get the needed results for response. Questions can thus be more targeted and obtain the right data.

Roles:

- **Decision-Makers** clearly identify the decisions they have to take, and, with others support, the information they need in order to take such decisions.
- **Subject-Matter Experts** identify what information is available and accessible, and where gaps are. They identify the essential building blocks of sectoral information. They help IM experts identify most appropriate sources of sectoral information and, with IM support, unit of analysis and modality of data collection. They provide the sectoral perspective to the conversation.
- **Cultural/Context Experts** help turn abstract information needs into specific local ‘meaning’. They identify the most appropriate way of translating information needs into questions that will be correctly understood in that specific context/culture.
- **IM Experts** contribute their technical know-how on data analysis, questionnaire development and data collection methods. They translate information needs of decision makers as well as sectoral and cultural perspectives into questions that can be analysed to inform decision-making.

Questions (and who should answer):

1. What is it that we have to do? (Decision Makers)
2. What are the decisions we need to make? (Decision Makers)
3. What information do you miss in order to make that decision? (Decision Makers, supported by Sectoral experts, Context experts and IM expert)
4. How often should that information be updated, at a minimum, to be still usable? (Decision Makers, supported by Sectoral experts, Context experts and IM expert)
5. Is that information already available/ accessible? (Sectoral Experts, Context Experts and IM experts)
6. Can we integrate this information need into already existing or planned data collection exercises? (Decision Makers, supported by Sectoral Experts, Context experts and IM experts)
7. How will this information help in the decision-making (*What are logical flow & benchmarks*)? (Decision Makers, supported by Sectoral Experts, Context experts and IM experts)
8. What are the components of the information (e.g., data that can be analysed to obtain the needed information)? (Sectoral Experts, Context Experts and IM experts)
9. Are any of these data already available/accessible (review secondary data²)? (Sectoral Experts, Context Experts and IM experts).
10. What are the missing data we need to collect? (Sectoral Experts, Context Experts and IM experts)

²Reviewing secondary data includes quantitative and qualitative information, like “stories” that sectoral or cultural experts have previously been told by members of the community. These can also guide the identification of information needs.

Step 2: identification of Methodology

Roles

- **IM experts** is responsible to facilitate the process towards the identification of an appropriate and sound methodology for the specific context and purposes. Decisions on the methodology will be often taken jointly with sectoral, cultural experts and ultimately decision-makers. The choice will be based on type of needed information, the level of details, the time frame, access and available resources. IM experts also help others understand how and why different data collection methods and unit of analysis impact results. *Note that in some organizations Needs Assessment experts are tasked with designing the methodology (included under IM experts for the purpose of this document).*
- **Sectoral Experts** are fully involved in the process to define the methodology, as their expertise is needed to identify, among others, appropriate unit of measurement, method of data collection, typology of respondents, resolution of data³ and affected groups to focus on.
- **Cultural/Context Experts** are crucial part of the conversation, as they provide insight on information that lead to the choice of methodology: for example, on most appropriate respondents, affected groups, geographic boundaries (e.g., groups living across admin boundaries, control of territory), accessing gatekeepers, respondents' likely reaction to a type of interview.

- **Decision Makers** are crucial to the identification of the methodology, and their involvement in deciding on methodology greatly increases their understanding of meaning and reliability of final results.

It also increases their level of trust in the results. If Decision-Makers cannot participate, they take necessary time to understand the limitations and strengths of results and reasons for agreed methodology. The limitations and strengths of results as well as the reasons for choosing such methodology should be presented to decision-makers in a format they can easily absorb and communicate to others.

³Resolution of the data may be villages, sub-districts, districts, etc.). See: Aldo Benini, *Documenting methods and data in rapid needs assessments*, ACAPS, 2012.

Guiding Questions:

IM Experts use these questions to facilitate the identification of a sound and appropriate methodology. Identification is done jointly with Sectoral Experts, Cultural Experts and Decision Makers, however IM skillset is crucial to choose a methodology that can give quality results, in line with what Decision-Makers need for their response.

WHERE:

- What are the geographic boundaries?

WHEN:

- What is the timeframe for the assessment?
- Should this be a 'one off' or an 'on-going' exercise?

HOW MUCH:

- How much will it cost?
- Who /how many will need to work on it?

HOW - Data collection methods:

- Is the needed information better collected through qualitative or quantitative methods?
- What is the most appropriate unit of analysis⁴ (e.g., individual, household, community or facility), or a structured phased approach is to be used over time, starting with community-level information, then household /individual- level?
- Do we need the results to be generalizable or can we use some type of convenience sampling?
- What method of data collection is most appropriate?⁵ (e.g., KII, FGD, surveys, administrative data)

⁴ Unit of Analysis can be individual, household, community or facility (e.g., health center or school). Methods of data collection can be used for various unites of analysis, e.g., surveys (representative or non-representative) can be used for individual and household level, Key Informants Interviews and Focus Group Discussions are used for community level, and administrative records and KII are used for facility level.

⁵Useful tools to jointly identify most appropriate system for data collection include: PIM matrix, that can be adapted to other sectors (http://pim.guide/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Quick-Reference-Flyer_Principles_Matrix_Process_2018-1.pdf);

- Do results need to be reproducible and comparable over time?
- Do we/others need to re-use the data for other purposes?
- Is the information better captured through structured or semi-structured interviews?

WHO

- Who do we ask? (e.g., selection of KI, composition of groups...)
- Can we access the relevant gatekeepers?
- Define the universe, the set of units (affected groups, communities, areas)⁶ about which the assessment was conducted
- Define the resolution of the data (villages, sub-districts, districts, etc.)

AND VERIFYING:

- Would Decision Makers be able to make identified decisions based on data from these sources, methodologies/modalities and unit of analysis?
- How will the selected method, timeframe, geographic boundaries, selected respondents impact on the results and ability to accurately inform decision-making?
- Would Decision Makers trust results obtained with this methodology?
- What are the possible negative consequences that may result from data collection/analysis done with this methodology and how can these be mitigated? (this must be include all actors Sectoral experts, Context/Cultural experts, IM, Decision-Makers, in addition to Protection experts)

ACAPS "Direct Observation and Key Informant Interview Techniques for primary data collection during rapid assessments": <https://www.acaps.org/direct-observation-and-key-informant-interview-techniques>; UNHCR overview of data collection methods and their use in UNHCR Needs Assessment Handbook, p 81: <http://needsassessment.unhcr.org/>

⁶Aldo Benini, Documenting methods and data in rapid needs assessments, 2012.

Step 3: Data Analysis Plan and Assessment Tool Design

The purpose of developing and sharing a data analysis plan is to visualize the final descriptive analysis and verify whether it provides the information originally identified as needed by decision makers.

Roles:

IM experts develop draft questions with support of sectoral and cultural experts, in coordination with decision-makers, to ensure the link between NA objectives and draft questions is clear and correct. IM experts then visualize potential results using fake data. Results are discussed with decision makers, cultural and sectoral experts to verify the questions can provide needed information. IM experts make necessary changes to the questions, finalize and share the data plan. IM also designs the tool, according to best practices⁷.

Guiding Questions and Tasks (and who should answer/do it):

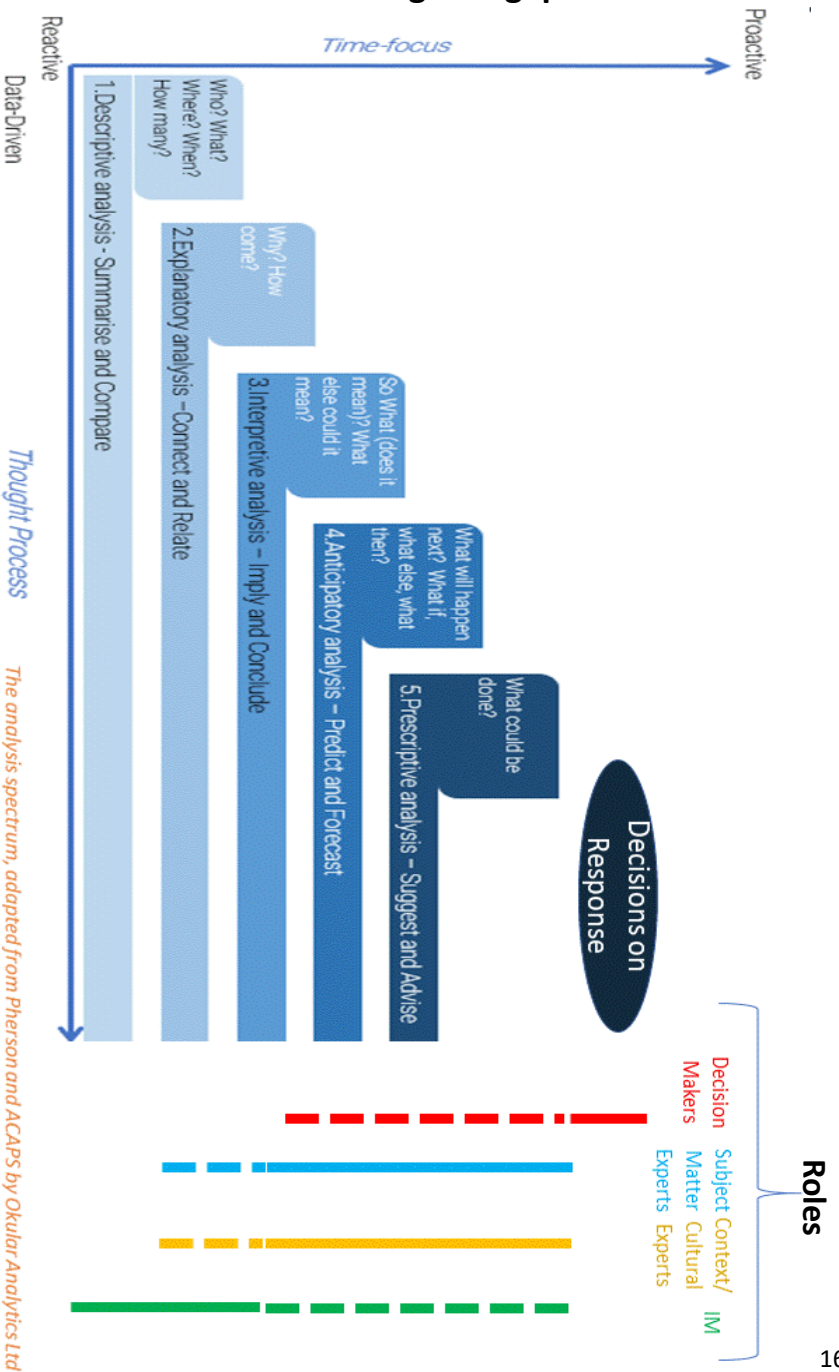
1. In this context, using this methodology/modality at this level of analysis, what question/questions we should ask in order to obtain the data we need? (Sectoral Experts, Context Experts and IM experts)
2. In this context, using this methodology/modality at this level of analysis, what options for answers we should give in order to obtain the data we need? (Sectoral Experts, Context Experts and IM experts)
3. In this context, using this methodology/modality at this level of analysis, can this question and its analysis do harm? (Protection experts, Decision-Makers, Sectoral Experts, Context Experts and IM experts)

4. Questions and answers are included in a data plan, which may also include dissemination modality, source of data and more⁸. (IM Expert)
5. Fake values are attributed to each question and mock-up visuals (e.g., charts, maps and tables) are created for each question, and combination of questions, as deemed appropriate. (IM Expert)
6. Mock-up visuals are discussed with Decision- Makers to verify whether the analysis of the questions would provide the information identified as needed by decision makers. (Decision Makers, Sectoral Experts, Context/Cultural Experts and IM Experts)
7. Changes to questions, options for answers and visualizations are made according to outcome of previous discussion, and final version is shared with other actors. (IM Expert)
8. Assessment tool is designed, according to best practices (IM Expert).

⁷For example, see ACAPS brief on questionnaire design:
https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/resources/files/acaps_technical_brief_questionnaire_design_july_2016_0.pdf

⁸For an example of Analysis Plan, see page 14 of ACAPS Questionnaire Design, How to design a questionnaire for needs assessments in humanitarian emergencies, July 2016, available at:
https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/resources/files/acaps_technical_brief_questionnaire_design_july_2016_0.pdf

Levels and guiding questions:



Step 4: Analysis

As analysis is done at various levels, those levels should be clear to all actors. In each level of analysis different actors/ skillsets answer different questions. Each level relies on the preceding ones.

Roles:

Exploratory & Descriptive Analysis:

- **IM experts** explore the data, and tries to identify what is in the results and how usable it is. In addition, they develop visuals, charts, tables and maps, according to data analysis plan.
- **Decision Makers, Sectoral and Cultural experts** have previously agreed with IM experts on types of descriptive analysis that will be useful for interpretation, included in the data plan. *Decision Makers have previously provided their information needs and those were used to design the data analysis plan.* **Sectoral and cultural experts** can discuss with IM experts initial findings and propose additional ways to compare and link data.

Explanatory Analysis, Interpretation and Anticipatory Analysis:

- **Decision-Makers, Sectoral Experts and Cultural Experts** use descriptive analytical products to connect, relate, make sense of data and interpret information, for that specific sector and that specific context and culture. This would happen, for example, in cluster or inter-cluster meetings. **Decision Makers'** involvement in the interpretation greatly increases the likelihood that their questions are addressed by the analysis. It also increases their ownership of results and likelihood that decisions are based on provided evidence. If Decision-Makers cannot participate, they take necessary time to understand the analytical results. These results should be presented to decision-makers in a format they easily absorb.
- **IM experts** support by providing guidance on correct interpretation of descriptive analysis products, and information on question phrasing and data collection modalities. Their involvement will also contribute to their increased understanding of sectoral information needs and likely lead to more effective IM support in coming assessments/data collection exercises.

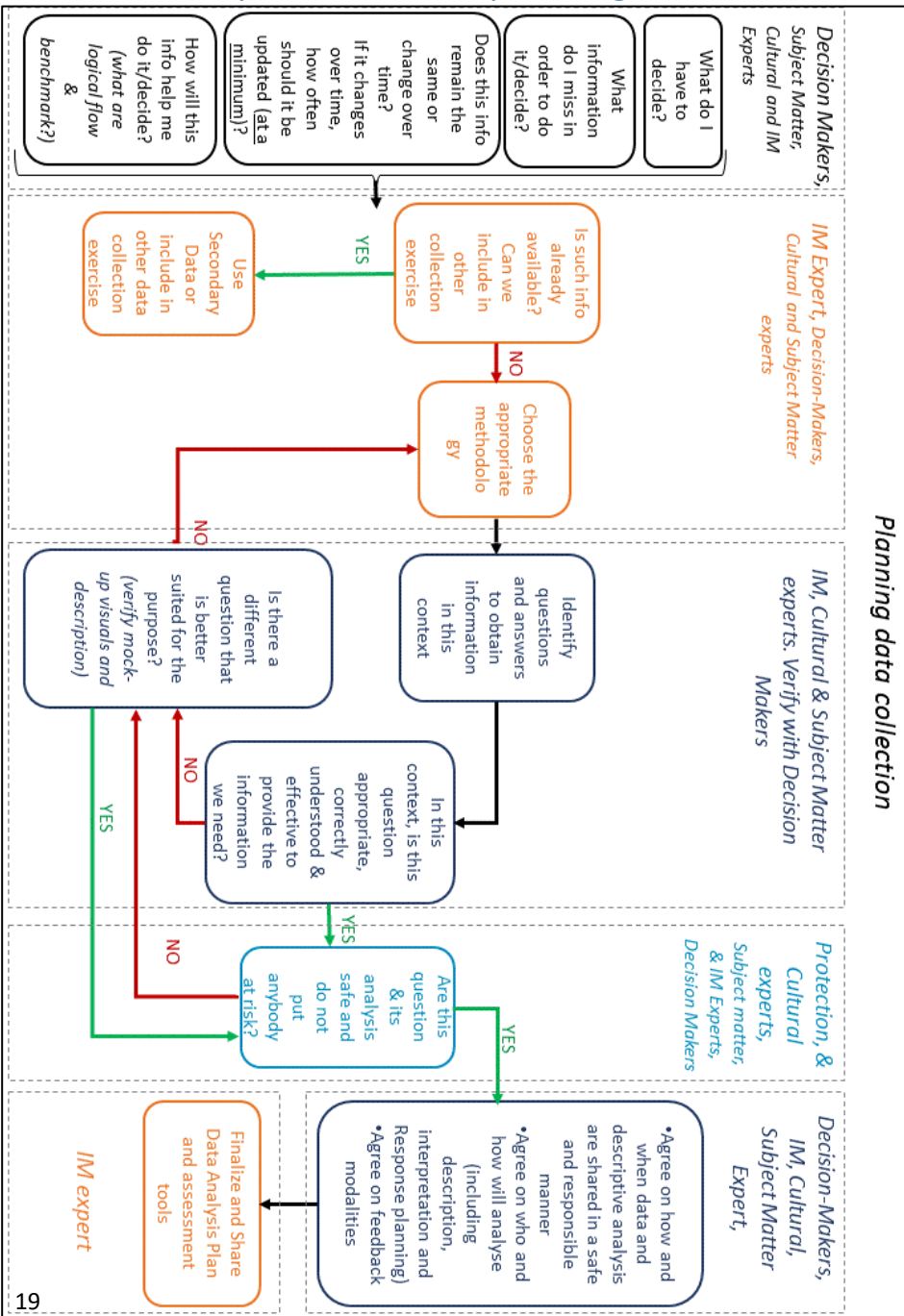
Prescriptive Analysis:

- **Sectoral Experts, Cultural Experts** develop Response Options on the basis of previous analysis and present them to Decision Makers.

Response Planning/Decision Making:

- **Decision Makers** identify most feasible options for response and have them implemented.
- **Affected Community** must also be involved in response planning.

Summary flow chart for planning data collection



These tools were developed by the **Working Group on Useful and Usable Data and Analysis (EDAUR)** under the Grand Bargain work stream on Needs Assessment. The EDAUR working group is composed by:

- ❖ *Global Clusters and AoRs (including Global CCCM Cluster, Global Child Protection AoR, Global Education Cluster, Global Food Security Cluster, Global GBV AoR, Global Health Cluster, Global Protection Cluster, Global Shelter Cluster, Global UNICEF Cluster Coordination Team, Global WASH Cluster)*
- ❖ *UN Offices and Agencies (including UNHCR FICS, DTM IOM, WFP VAM, OCHA FIS, OCHA NAAS)*
- ❖ *Donors (including DIFD, ECHO, OFDA)*
- ❖ *NGOs (including DRC, Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Demining, MapAction, REACH - Impact, Terre Des Hommes Lausanne) and*
- ❖ *Other organizations and initiatives (including ACAPS, JIPS, PIM, IDMC, ICRC)*