

STEP 3 – QUESTIONNAIRE ON TRIGGER INDICATORS

Developing questions to monitor the risk

For each of the target risks, the community representatives should participate in trying to identify the most contextualized indicators of emerging problems. In most cases these will be examples of behaviors people do in response to their perception of growing problems. It is best if the questions are answered with either “yes” or “no.” Examples include:

| COMMON RESPONSES TO FOOD SHORTAGE | QUESTIONS THAT CAN BE ASKED TO MONITOR EMERGING RISK |
|---|---|
| Increase food supply | Have you needed to borrow food from someone else in order to have enough food during this past week? Have you eaten any wild foods that you collected in the past week? |
| Decrease number of people to feed / household | Have you sent any children to live with relatives in the past month? Have any members of your household left to find work somewhere else in the past month? |
| Sell assets | Have you sold any livestock in the past month? If so, what did you do with the money you received? Have you sold any of your tools in the past month? |
| Reduction in traditional risk-sharing support systems | Has anyone stolen food or crops from your field in the past month? Has anyone refused to loan you food or share food with you in the past month? |
| Debts | Have you had to work for someone else in the community in order to have food in the past month? When you harvest your crops, will you have to give some away immediately to pay off debt? |

Tailor the questions to the target problem

For each problem, the community needs to decide what behaviors are most likely to indicate a problem is emerging and a short list of questions should be written to measure the presence or absence of that behavior. This questionnaire should have no more than ten questions and most should be written so they can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”:

| TARGET PROBLEM | EXAMPLES OF TRIGGER MONITORING QUESTION |
|---------------------|--|
| Malaria | Has anyone in this household had a fever in the last two weeks? |
| HIV/AIDS | Have you participated in a conversation about HIV/AIDS in the community in the past month? |
| Soil erosion | Have there been heavy rains that washed away soil in your field in the past month? |
| Drought | Did you delay planting this year because the rains did not begin? |
| Food shortage | Did you eat any of the seeds you had saved for planting? |
| Community isolation | Did anyone here die in the last month because they were unable to travel to a hospital? |

Remember, behaviors that are normal in some communities, like collection of wild foods, may indicate an emerging problem in others. CEWS wants to focus on questions that will identify emerging shocks.

TRIGGER INDICATORS AND FOOD FOR PEACE

Understanding the role of trigger indicators

Relying on Trigger Indicators has become an essential component in the Title II programs supported by USAID/Food for Peace. USAID notes that it is important to:

- Establish locally specific baseline information on what constitutes “normal behavior.”
- Decide what specific variables to monitor as trigger indicators.
- Set conservative thresholds for trigger indicators.
- Establish processes for ongoing monitoring of data to provide triangulation and validation of the selected trigger indicators.
- Design appropriate action plans to respond to slow onset shocks when trigger indicators suggest deterioration of local conditions.



STEP 4 – COMMUNITY-BASED ADMINISTRATION

Conducting the Survey

- For each of the target problems, one community volunteer should select a small number of households (usually 10-20) and ask the ten questions on the monitoring questionnaire.
- The survey should be administered on a regular basis, usually once per month.
- The people who answer the survey should not be the same people each month.

Because the community volunteers are giving some time each month to collect this information, program staff should be prepared to analyze and use the information collected by the community for planning development activities. The communities will see how this information is useful and can trigger a response when appropriate.



Understanding and Implementing Community-Based Early Warning Systems in the Context of Title II Programming

The purpose of this guide is to facilitate the scale-up of Community-Based Early Warning Systems

(CEWS) that reduce risk, identify trigger indicators, and mitigate against community vulnerabilities.

This guide draws from experiences in World Vision and other Title II-funded programs as well as donor technical papers, and illustrates how this approach can be used to address a variety of local problems.

Community-Based Early Warning Systems make local people partners in identifying problems and finding strategies to address them.

What are Community-Based Early Warning Systems?

Community-Based Early Warning Systems are ways of gathering actionable data at a local level that can be used to identify priorities for programming in vulnerable areas, and provide a way for communities to be active participants in identifying the challenges that most affect them. Unlike baseline surveys, vulnerability assessments, or midterm evaluations, the emphasis is on community members collecting qualitative information on a small scale, and using this to monitor local conditions and plan for interventions. This information is then fed upward to NGOs, local and national governments, and other early warning systems, who can support mitigation and response plans.

Local people identify the problems most significant for their area, assess whether conditions are changing, and identify community strengths and vulnerabilities. They then learn how to mitigate against the most serious problems.



What are Community-Based Early Warning Systems?

What are the strengths of community-based early warning approaches?

There are many advantages of using a community-based approach to gathering information about local needs:

- This strategy uses the wisdom gained by local people in dealing with their community's conditions - knowledge that has been handed down through generations.
- We learn about the composition of the community and indigenous systems of decision making, leadership, and consensus building.
- By inviting the participation of local people before beginning development activities we make them partners in identifying the priorities for interventions.
- Because this approach creates "buy-in" by community members it is more sustainable and should improve long-term positive impact after the completion of Title II programs.
- This approach is bottom-up rather than top-down and thus requires less staff and time to implement. This investment in the community is generally cost effective and less expensive than more hands-on interventions.

STEP 1 – COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION AND EMPOWERMENT

What is a community?

It is critical to gain an understanding of what the local people use to define the boundaries and composition of their community.

CEWS Programs should learn:

- What is the influence of ethnicity, kinship, religion, and economic interdependence on determining community membership?
- Who are the local traditional and government leaders?
- What indigenous systems and safety nets are already in place (such as through kin groups, religious groups, or women's groups)?
- What types of monitoring activities are already in place?

Recruiting Participants

The process of CEWS requires participation from local community members from the very beginning and a community meeting should be held to introduce the approach and clarify the type of support the NGO can provide. Communities should select their own representatives to participate and participation by women should be encouraged. Roles and responsibilities of volunteers should be defined before the community meeting. This will help the volunteers know what is expected of them.

Engaging the Community

STEP 2 – IDENTIFYING SHOCKS AND TRIGGER INDICATORS

Identifying problems to target

The second step is to gather representatives from each local community to begin identifying the common problems for their area. The participants should be encouraged to think about problems, sometimes called "shocks."

- What are the problems that might be infrequent, but have serious consequences (such as a flood, cyclone, or earthquake)?
- What are the problems that are chronic and affect almost everyone (such as malaria, crop pests, or lack of access to transportation)?
- What are the social problems in the community (such as violence, theft, or lack of education)?
- What are the problems that arise gradually and can be viewed as a slow-onset shock (such as rising food prices)?

Setting priorities

When the community problems have been identified, discussions should try to develop a consensus about which problems are the most important. Discussions should narrow down the complete list of problems to a short list of four or five problems that will subsequently cascade forward into the monitoring activities.