



TARGETING AND REGISTERING BENEFICIARIES

BIAS IN TARGETING CRITERIA

A. Corruption risks

Aid that does not get to the real emergency victims but is diverted to other groups is effectively wasted. Staff may be bribed or offered kickbacks to set targeting criteria that favour or exclude people from a particular group or location, rather than targeting those most in need. Staff may be biased or have **conflicts of interest** (e.g. social, political or commercial) that influence their choice of targeting criteria. They may set criteria as a result of collusion with external actors to divert aid, or they may deliberately set criteria that are very complex, making it harder for beneficiaries to hold an organisation accountable and increasing the opportunities for corruption.

B. Watch out for

- Criteria that are too general, vague, narrow or complex
- Criteria that would favour or exclude particular regions or groups
- Criteria that are not physically verifiable
- Local leaders pushing for or against particular criteria
- Resistance to your agency verifying criteria provided by others, e.g. the government

C. Prevention measures

- **Use both geographic and administrative criteria**
Have clear, strict pre-determined administrative criteria if your agency is setting them itself (e.g. in a rapid-onset emergency). Ensure they're understood in the community, as objectively verifiable as possible and applied transparently. Don't have too many or too complex criteria; focus on essential needs and their attributes. The more precise and quantifiable the criteria, the more objectively verifiable they are. Don't accept government criteria without verifying their suitability with other sources.
- **Involve the community and civil society groups as much as possible**
Community groups know best what constitutes vulnerability in their own context and who in the community has been most affected. Consult **beneficiaries** when developing targeting criteria and plan for a gradual increase in community participation as an emergency unfolds. (Where possible, establish multi-stakeholder groups bringing together community members, civil society groups and other agencies.) Decide criteria at community meetings, then cross-check targeting decisions through field visits and household surveys. Always publicise widely the subsequent beneficiary lists so the community can raise any questions.
- **Include women and marginalised groups in defining selection criteria**
Ensure marginalised groups help decide criteria, so they aren't excluded from assistance. Women often have very different ideas from men about vulnerability and suitable targeting criteria. Ensure they're adequately represented at any community meetings and that you have female staff that women can talk to if they wish to ask questions or report **intimidation and extortion**.
- **Coordinate with other agencies in setting or negotiating criteria**
Coordinate with other humanitarian agencies working in the same emergency to cross-check your criteria. Where agencies are given pre-determined criteria and/or beneficiary lists by the government or by the contracting UN agency, try to negotiate and build into

your agency contract the right to review and modify criteria and lists on a regular (annual or six-monthly) basis. Negotiations will be most effective if all agencies contracting with the same UN agency or working in the same region present a coordinated joint position.

- **Use M&E to check the validity of targeting criteria and processes**
Monitor and evaluate your programme to determine the appropriateness of your targeting criteria (have the groups in greatest need been identified and reached? Are objectives being achieved?). Keep verifying your targeting process, to improve accuracy and filter out any bias in initial targeting. Cross-check information on whether the right quantity and type of aid is reaching intended beneficiaries in time, and investigate shortfalls for possible corruption. Carry out periodic surveys of beneficiaries' perceptions of corruption in targeting and registration, including extortion and **SEA**.

You'll need

- To ensure targeting criteria are specific to the type of emergency and the type of humanitarian response planned.
- A criteria-setting team widely representative of different sections of the affected community, as well as government and your agency.
- To invest adequate resources for targeting (essential for programme impact and accountability).
- To communicate widely the aim of establishing targeting criteria, to prevent power groups from dominating and to enable minorities to speak.

Challenges

- Offsetting cleavages (ethnic, caste, new immigrants), corrupt leaders or unequal power balances, if the community does the targeting.
- Working with criteria pre-determined by the government and not as objective as those your agency would have developed.

Reference materials

AID: *Targeting Aid*, 2009.

FAO: *Targeting Practices*, in "Targeting for Nutrition Improvement: Resources for Advancing Nutritional Well-Being", chapter 2, Rome 2001.

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Maxwell, Daniel and Burns, John: *Targeting in Complex Emergencies: South Sudan Country Case Study*, FIC, Medford 2008.

The Sphere Project: *Targeting*, 2009.

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