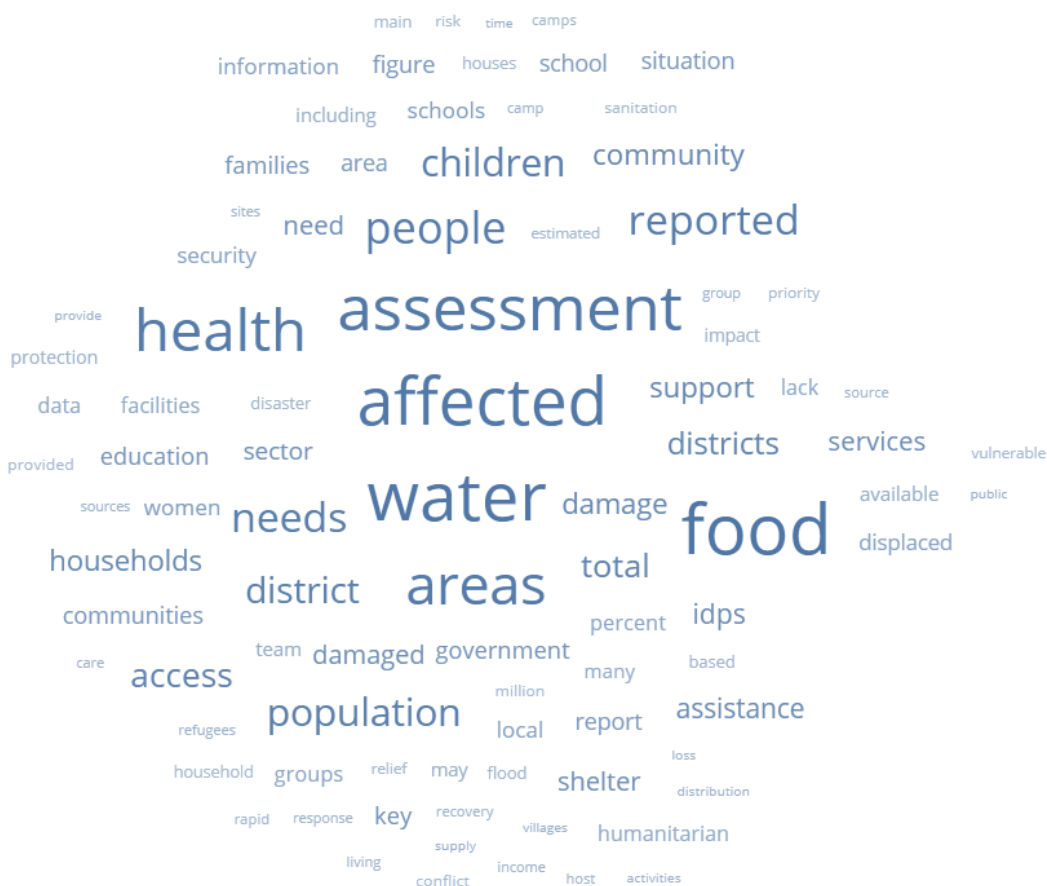


# Meeting information needs?

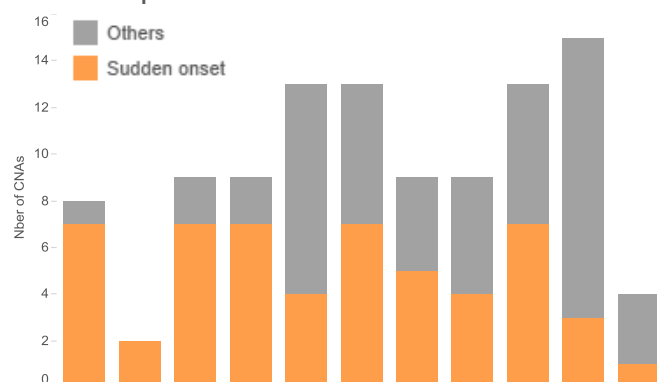
A review of ten years of multisector coordinated needs assessment reports



## SUMMARY

- In 2015, ACAPS undertook a review of 105 multisectoral coordinated needs assessment (CNA) reports released over the previous ten years. The objective of the review was to determine trends in reporting relevance and methods, and to identify factors that influence the completeness and speed of reporting.
- Using a list of over 90 information needs, we found that the amount of useful information increased considerably over the years. More recent reports more often include essential information, such as the total number of people affected by a crisis event, and the techniques used to collect data.
- Some weaknesses remained throughout the period under review, however. Few reports provide an estimation of the number of people affected per sector. Sex and age disaggregated data (SADD) is largely missing and disaggregation of needs by population group (e.g. host communities, IDPs) is rare. While more recent reports are more likely to include information on data collection techniques, such information is still generally lacking: less than half of all reports provide readers with the sampling strategy and the limitations of the field data collection, while around 60% of reports did not include the questionnaire.
- Three factors are closely associated with completeness of the reports and/or the speed with which they are produced: preparedness before the event, use of a secondary data review, and support from assessment experts such as the Coordinated Assessment Support Section in OCHA or ACAPS.

Between 2005 and 2015, at least 105 CNA reports were released



Countries with the largest number of CNA reports were Pakistan (19), Bangladesh (12), and Syria (7)

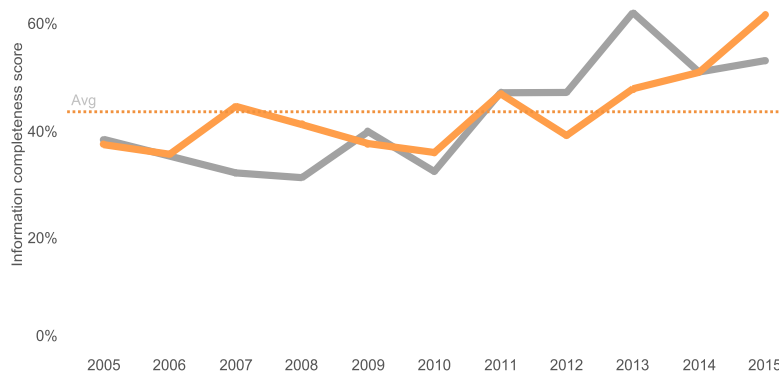


## COMPLETENESS

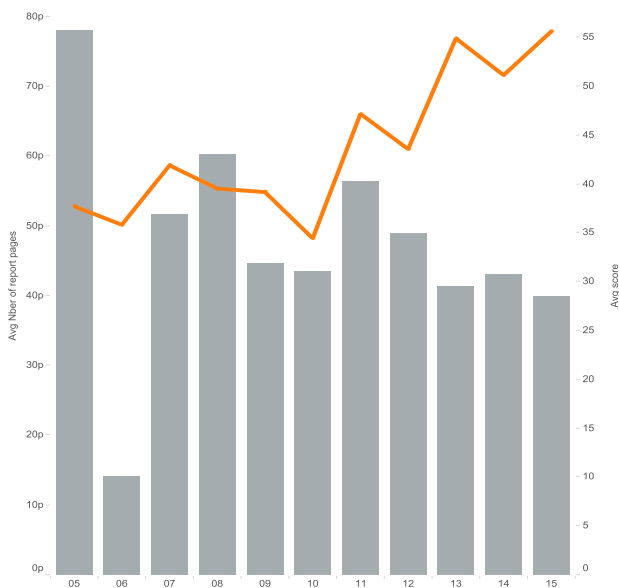
Over the last ten years, CNA reports contained an average of 44% of the required information components. This has improved over time: from 40% in 2005 to 56% in 2014.

Progress has been more consistent since 2011–2012, years when significant efforts were put into developing guidance and training for coordinated needs assessments.

Content has improved over time for both **sudden-onset disasters** and other types of crisis



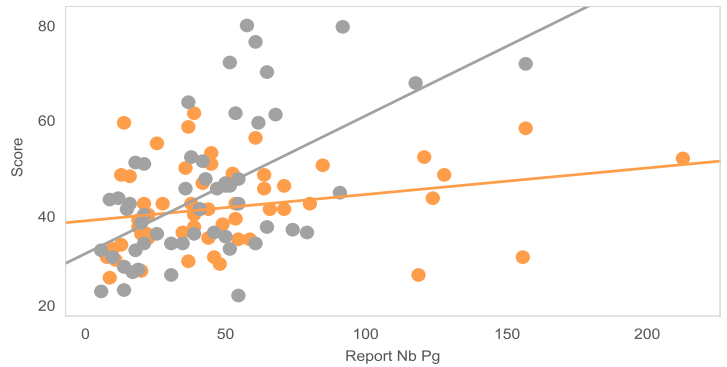
Less blabla and more **content**, especially in the last five years



Reports have become less wordy and more data-rich. In 2005, reports were on average almost 80 pages long. By 2015, the average number of pages had halved, while information completeness significantly improved.

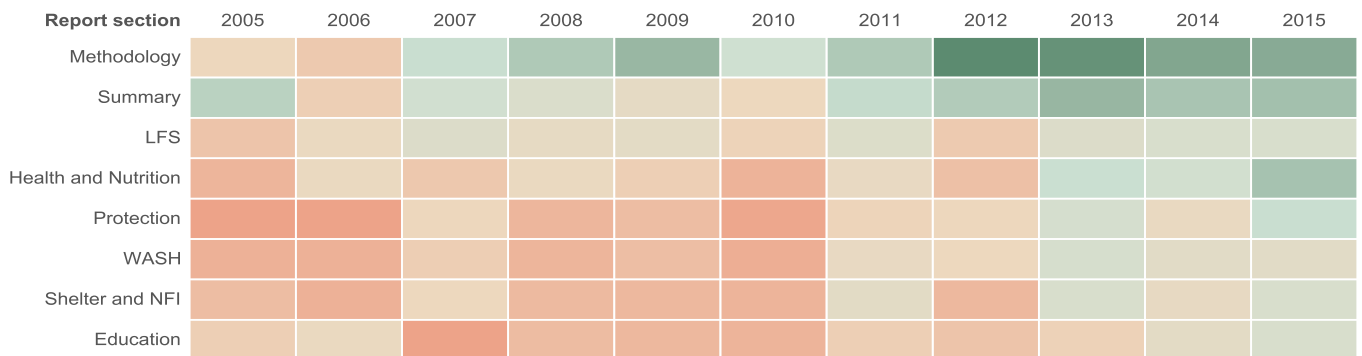
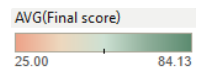
The length of the report provides little indication as to the completeness of the information. The highest completeness score was recorded for a report of 58 pages, while the report with the lowest score (23% of information needs) was 55 pages long. The longest report reviewed, published in 2008 in Myanmar, is over 200 pages long. The report captures 52% of information needs. The correlation between number of pages and information completeness is much lower for sudden-onset crises than for other types.

Lower correlation between score and report length for **sudden-onset** disasters



## PERSISTENT INFORMATION GAPS

For each topic of interest, ACAPS recorded the availability and completeness of information, on a scale from 0 to 100. In the last ten years, more useful information has become available within the reports.



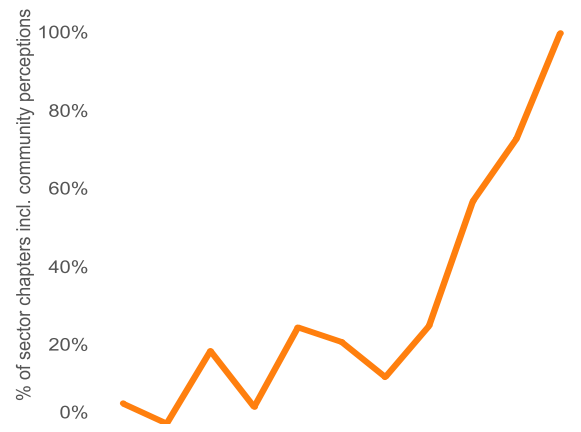
The methodology and summary sections have particularly improved. Since 2011 and within sector-specific chapters, there has been a significant increase in the number of reports that include the community’s views on priority needs.

However, some information is consistently lacking. In 60% of the reports, the questionnaire was not attached. Only half of the reports indicate the limitations of the assessment methodology.

Sex and age disaggregated data is often missing. Around 40% of reports did not provide SADD for any sector; 20% provided disaggregated data for only one sector. A 2009 Joint NGO Assessment in Pakistan scored highest, with SADD data available for all six sectors covered in the report.

Only around 15% of reports allow for disaggregation of the information by group. An example of good practice in this regard is the Ukraine Multi-Sector Needs Assessment report, which presents sectoral findings by geographical areas and separately for IDPs in host families, rented accommodation and collective shelter.

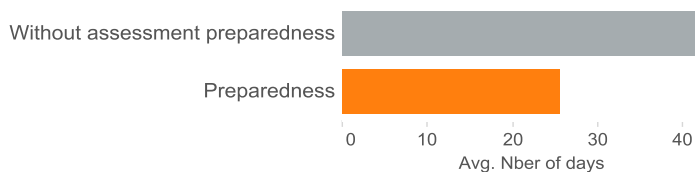
### Community views on sector-specific priorities increasingly included



## IMPACT OF PREPAREDNESS AND SECONDARY DATA REVIEW

The number of days between a disaster event and the release of a report is primarily influenced by the suddenness of the disaster. Assessments after a sudden-onset disaster are produced four times faster than reports covering an outbreak or escalation of conflict.

### Disaster preparedness yields faster reports

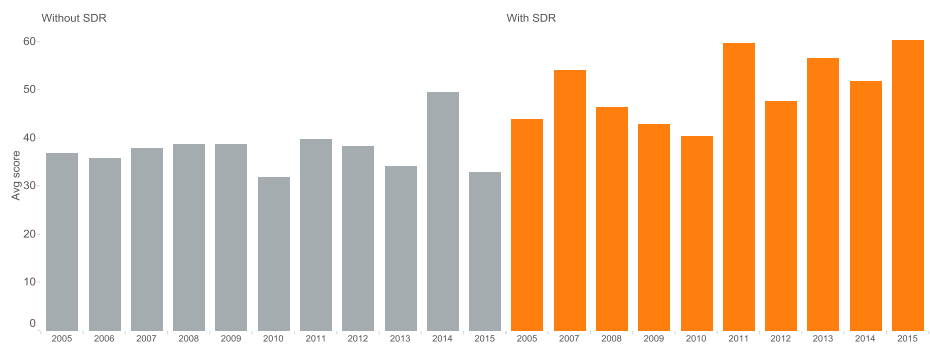


Regardless of the type of the disaster, preparedness measures can significantly speed up production. After sudden-onset disasters, assessments benefiting from pre-crisis assessment preparedness measures were published on average 17 days faster— 25 days after the event, compared to 42 days for those without preparedness.

Secondary data review (SDR) also proved effective in improving the quality of the report: 50% of information needs were on average met in reports including SDR, compared to 38% in reports without SDR.

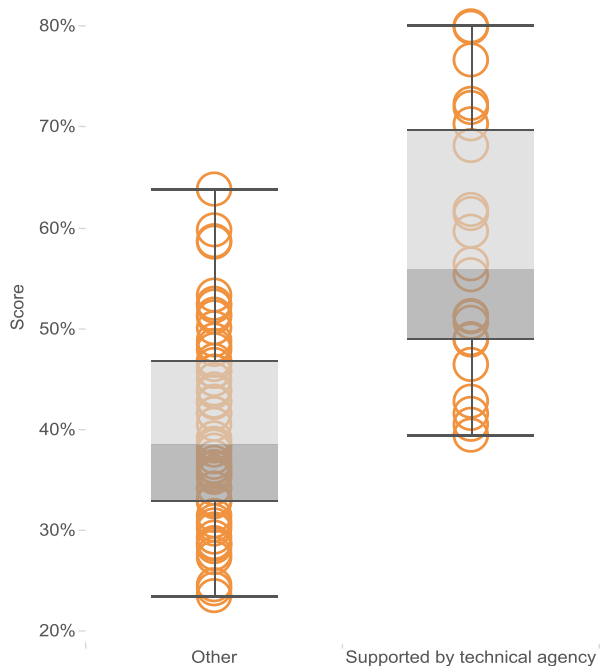
Over 60% of reports published in the last five years included a reference to SDR, compared to around 20% of reports produced during the preceding five years.

### Including secondary data improves completeness



# TECHNICAL SUPPORT

## Specialised support makes a difference



Multisector assessments supported by technical agencies scored higher than those without support.

In the 22 reports directly supported by either ACAPS or the OCHA Coordinated Assessment Support Section, the median completeness score was 56%, compared to 38% for assessment reports produced without support.

Assessments undertaken with technical support were published slightly faster. Assessments without support were published on average 39 days after a sudden-onset disaster, compared to 36 days later for assessments with support.

## ANNEX 1. METHODOLOGY

The findings of this report are based on a review of 105 CNA reports, published between 1 January 2005 and 31 December 2015. The reports included within this review were retrieved mostly from the public domain (Reliefweb, Humanitarian Response, Oneresponse, OCHA, NGO forums, etc.), as well as by targeted searches and contacts with stakeholders involved.

It is estimated that 70% of all coordinated assessments undertaken between 2005 and 2010 have been captured. Since internet was not yet widely available during this period, it is likely that some assessment reports were never published, and therefore were not found for inclusion in the review. Between 2010 and 2015, it is considered that 95% of all coordinated assessments have been included (some reports were embargoed by governments and never published).

### CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION IN THE REVIEW

In total, 105 assessment reports were identified: 55 undertaken for sudden-onset disasters and 50 for other types of crisis (conflict, displacement, food insecurity, etc.). For inclusion in the review, a report had to meet the following criteria:

- Assessment in response to a specific crisis, either man-made or natural
- Coordinated assessment (either joint or harmonised)
- Multi-agency assessment (more than three organisations/actors)
- Assessment of three or more emergency humanitarian sectors
- Purpose of informing strategic decision making (a large-scale assessment aiming to identify key priorities)
- Inclusion of primary data collection

Assessments by single organisations (e.g. MSF, IMC, ACF, Care), field visits from humanitarian partners (e.g. UNDAC, DEMA) and cluster-specific assessments (e.g. WASH, food security) were not included. Humanitarian Needs Overviews were not included as they do not include primary data collection.

### LIST OF KEY INFORMATION NEEDS

For each assessment report, metadata was captured and information availability was checked across a series of pre-determined information needs, grouped by topic in the following table:

Metadata	Methodology	Summary	Sectoral information
Year	Objectives	Disaster overview	Pre-crisis information
Country	Sampling strategy	Area background information	Total number of people affected
Disaster type	Sample size and locations	Total number of people affected	SADD
Report name	Data collection techniques	Recommendations for coordination	Group and area disaggregated data
Coordination type	Limitations	Cross cutting issues	Key findings
Number of sectors covered	Date of field assessment	Operational constraints	Key priorities identified by communities and assessment teams
Lead agency name and type	Questionnaire included	Key findings	Key recommendations
Disaster date		Key priorities	Ongoing response
Report date		Key recommendations	Cross cutting issues
Use of secondary data		Most affected groups, geographic areas and sectors	Constraints
Support received			
Questionnaire availability			
Report length			
Preparedness			

The list of information needs was drawn from the 2012 [ACAPS review of Flash Appeals](#). It is considered to cover all requirements for informing strategic decision-making in emergencies (i.e. situation analysis reports or HNOs) and is still current, with very few exceptions. When a report covered a particular information need, it scored “100”. (One of the limitations of this review is that it does not assess the extent to which the information need is covered or the validity of the information.) The final score for the completeness of each report is the percentage of all the information needs that have been covered. The score is calculated on the basis of the sectors assessed, it does not take into account sectors that were not included (if only food security, shelter and wash has been covered, the score is computed for those three sectors).

## ANNEX 2. MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF CNA REPORTS

This review used only “completeness of information” to inform the score assigned to each can report. However, this is only part of measuring a CNA’s success. The scores in this review should not be mistaken for a judgement on the overall quality of the CNA process and outputs. A complete review of a CNA’s success would include ten variables:

Variable	Description	How to measure
Agreement	How much consensus was there among key actors regarding the assessment conclusions?	Consult key actors and notes of discussions during joint analysis sessions following the assessment, if any. Ask participants to note the level of agreement on key findings at the end of the process.
Comprehensiveness/ depth	To what extent were the key information needs covered within the report? How disaggregated (by sector, geographic area, affected group, sex and age) is the information?	Compare list of key information needs established in the objectives, analysis plan, situation analysis report or HNO templates to the information available in the final report. Determine the proportion of relevant categories assessed and disaggregated findings.
Confidence	How much is clearly communicated about uncertainty?	Judge the narrative communicating key uncertainties and compare to the robustness of the methodology used. Assess statements differentiating between facts and assumptions. Identify if confidence intervals are provided in case of representative sampling.
Cost	How much was spent on the total process as a proportion of the overall amount of funding requested to respond to the population in need?	Compare the assessment budget to the funding requested in subsequent UN or government appeals.
Ethics	Were sufficient measures in place to protect the enumerator and respondent? Did all respondents provide informed consent before participating? How much effort was made to adopt the least intrusive data collection method for respondents?	Consult assessment teams, data protection and safeguarding protocols, if available (i.e. information sharing protocols, management of paper questionnaires, etc.)
Level of analysis	How deep is the analysis?	Compare available narrative to the following analytical levels: descriptive, explanatory, interpretive and forecasting.
Quality	How trustworthy is the information?	The reliability and validity of findings could be inferred from an examination of the assessment methodology, and whether the results are reproducible. The validity could be estimated by comparing assessment findings to other available data. For assessments using purposive sampling, use credibility and transferability criteria to judge the trustworthiness of the results.
Speed	How quickly was the report produced?	Count of the number of days between a disaster event or escalation of a protracted crisis, and the publication of the final report.
Transparency	How much of the methodology, tools, data and processing decisions are documented and readily available?	Judge comprehensiveness of methodology section and accompanying documents by using a predetermined list of requirements. At a minimum, check that the questionnaire, data and data dictionary are available.

Use	How much of the information provided was used for decision making?	Consult response actors to see if results were used to inform strategic planning and prioritisation.
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## ANNEX 3. HOW TO IMPROVE PRACTICE, AN EXAMPLE

This review shows that, on average, the level of relevant information available in assessment reports has increased significantly during the last years. However, there is still room for improvement. This annex provides a detailed review of the last CNA report to be made available before this review's publication, in an effort to show how assessment reports can be improved.

A multi-sectoral assessment was undertaken between May and July 2015 to inform the 2015 Libya Humanitarian Appeal. It assessed 20 conflict areas, using a combination of key informant interviews, household interviews, and focus group discussions. The assessment covered seven emergency sectors. It scored much lower in this review (48%) than many of the other reports produced in the last three years.

### STRENGTHS

- The 50-page document is concisely summarised in four pages. The narrative includes information on methodology and key findings by sector.
- The methodology chapter is clear and covers almost all information criteria.
- The report presents information by sector, population group and, for some sectors and topics, geographic area.

### WEAKNESSES

- The assessment report does not outline a clear objective, other than 'informing the 2015 Libya Appeal'.
- The absence of specific objectives might explain the unavailability of several core components of a multi-sector assessment:

**Absence of cross-sector analysis:** There is no indication of priority sectors, cross-cutting issues or how concerns in one sector impact others. This lack of collective multi-sectoral prioritisation means the report defeats the purpose of multisectoral assessments, particularly as it was designed to inform strategic decision making on resource allocation.

#### Recommendation for future multi-sectoral assessments:

Cross-sectoral analysis of assessment findings should be provided. If an assessment is supposed to feed into an appeal process, this analysis is the most important component.

Multisectoral analysis is not just an outcome of a joint analysis session once data collection is finalised. To be able to compare sectors, assessment tools need to include cross-sectoral questions (i.e. priority sectors) and sector-specific questions that yield comparable results, such as severity of needs or number of people in immediate need.

**Number of people in need by sector:** The assessment design does not allow for a quantification of people in need. In light of the resources spent on this assessment and its objectives (informing the flash appeal), this is a missed opportunity.

**Recommendation:** Include sector-specific estimates of the number of people in need. If these are not (yet) available, design the assessment and choose a methodology that enables estimation of the scope and scale of needs per sector.

### Libya 2015 report score: information available and missing

#### Methodology

Objective	Available
Sampling strategy	Missing
Sample size	Missing
Data collection technique	Missing
Limitations	Missing
Date of field data collection	Available
Questionnaire attached or not	Available

#### Summary

Disaster overview	Missing
Background information (area profile)	Available
Total affected population figures	Missing
Coordination	Available
Cross-cutting Issues (S&A, E, HIV)	Missing
Operational constraints	Available
Key inter-sectoral findings	Missing
Key inter-sectoral priorities	Available
Key inter-sectoral recommendations	Available
Most affected groups	Missing
Most affected areas	Missing
Most affected sectors	Available

#### Breakdown

Area	Available
Group	Missing
Sector	Missing



## Libya 2015 sector data: information available and missing

Sector-specific information needs	WASH	LFS	Health	Shelter	Education	Protection
Pre-disaster information on sector						
Affected population number within sector						
Sex and age disaggregated data						
Groups disaggregated data						
Area disaggregated data						
Key findings						
Key priorities identified by communities						
Key priorities identified by assessment team						
Key recommendations						
Response						
Cross-cutting issues						
Constraints						

**Affected groups:** The methodology clearly outlines how communities in conflict-affected areas can be divided into groups. However, this categorisation is not used consistently throughout the report. Comparisons between groups leave out returnees, and the group ‘non-displaced communities’ is replaced by ‘host communities’, which is not the same as it does not include non-displaced, non-hosting communities.

**Recommendation:** Establish a humanitarian profile at the beginning of the assessment, clearly defining groups of concern, and who will be targeted by the assessment. Use these definitions consistently throughout the analysis and compare group-specific findings to the situation of *all* other groups concerned.

**Use of statistics:** The assessment design does not allow for extrapolation of conditions for all populated areas in Libya. The use of percentages to reflect household-level responses for such a small, non-random sample could be misleading.

**Recommendation:** Avoid the use of percentages to reflect responses to what is in practice a qualitative study. For example: 18 out of 50 refugee households interviewed is less likely to be misinterpreted than ‘36% of refugees’. Equally, be specific about what has been measured, e.g. refugees vs refugee households interviewed

**Questionnaire:** While the report provides a comprehensive methodology section, the tools that were used when interviewing key informants, households, and focus groups are not annexed.

**Recommendation:** Always include the questionnaires and checklists used. This not only helps correct interpretation of the findings but also encourages replication of questions in future assessments to allow trend analysis, and indicates what other data are available in the database.

**Key priorities identified by assessment team:** Key priorities identified by enumerators are not mentioned in the report.

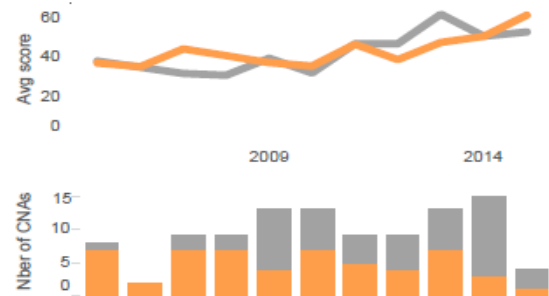
**Recommendation:** The main instruments of a (qualitative) multi-sectoral assessment in a humanitarian setting are the enumerators, not the questionnaire. Their opinion on key priorities should be valued and represented in the final report, and compared with needs expressed by the population.

**Secondary data review (SDR):** Although the methodology mentions five months of SDR, only a very limited number of SDR findings are integrated into the report. No pre-crisis information is available in the report.

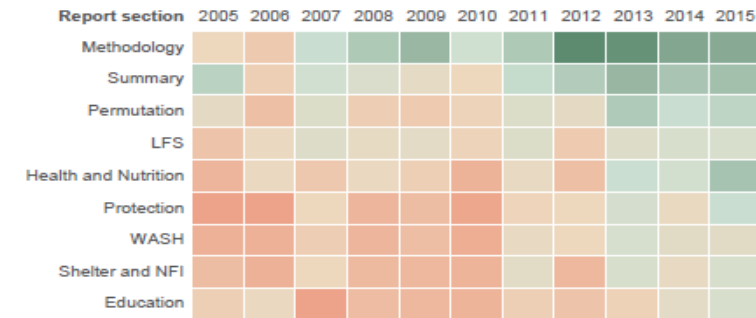
**Recommendation:** Always triangulate, complement, and compare assessment findings with relevant secondary data. Include pre-crisis information or highlight the lack of it.

# ANNEX 4. DASHBOARD OF 105 MULTISECTOR AND MULTI-AGENCY NEEDS ASSESSMENTS, 2005–2015

Content of CNA has improved over time for both **sudden onset disasters** and other type of crisis

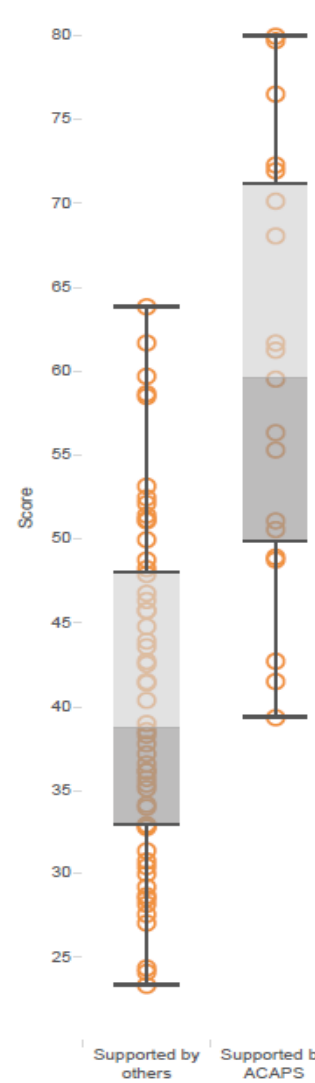


Most **significant** and **regular** improvements have been realized over the last three years

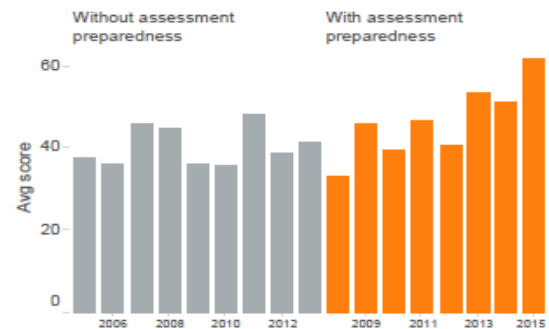


Avg score  
25 — 84

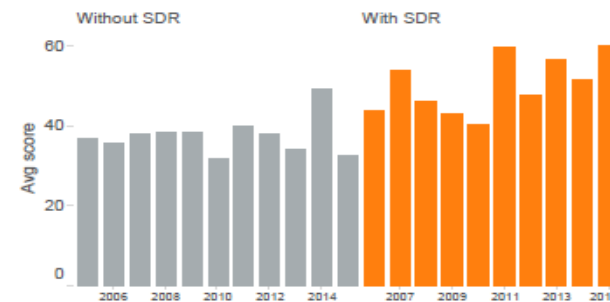
Specialized support **DOES** make a difference



Preparedness efforts yield **better** results in content...



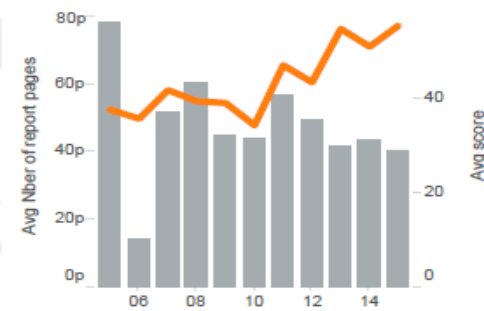
**Better and more consistent** results are achieved when using secondary data



Coordinated Needs Assessment location 2000-2015



Less blabla and **more content**, especially in the last five years



Also, after sudden onset disasters, **faster** results and **better content** are registered

