



Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations	
Executive summary	9
1 Introduction	16
1.1 Background	16
1.2 The evaluation	16
1.2.1 Terms of reference	16
1.2.2 Scope of the evaluation	17
1.2.3 Evaluation team	17
1.2.4 Methodology	18
1.2.5 Limitations and constraints	19
1.2.6 Coordination with other TEC evaluations	20
1.3 Analytical framework	20
1.3.1 Terminology: what is assessment of needs?	20
1.3.2 Immediate and longer term humanitarian needs	21
1.4 Main actors in needs assessment	22
2 Evaluation findings	23
2.1 Timing and timeliness	24
2.1.1 Humanitarian needs assessments	24
2.1.2 Recovery assessment	26
2.2 Coverage	27
2.2.1 Geographical coverage	27
2.2.2 Sectoral coverage	28
2.3 Validity (methodology and standards)	30
2.3.1 Lack of common definitions	31
2.4 Coordination: connectedness and consistency	32

2.5 Continuity	33
2.6 Analysis and added value	34
2.7 Dissemination	35
2.8 Relation with appeals for funding	36
2.9 Influence on decisions	37
2.9.1 Decision on whether to intervene	37
2.9.2 Decision on the scale of intervention	38
2.9.3 Decision on the nature of the intervention	39
3 Sectoral assessments: summary of findings	41
4 Effectiveness as perceived by affected individuals or families	42
4.1 Introduction	42
4.2 Results	43
5 Overall conclusions and recommendations	45
5.1 The tsunami: a special case?	45
5.2 Natural sudden-onset disasters and complex emergencies	47
5.3 Status of needs assessment	48
5.3.1 Humanitarian versus economic assessments	48
5.3.2 A standardised approach to assessment	49
5.3.3 Differentiating and prioritising needs	49
5.3.4 Added value to decision makers	50
5.4 Did it matter?	51
5.5 Performance of the assessment mechanisms	52
5.5.1 UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC)	52
5.5.2 The OCHA Humanitarian Information Centre (HIC)	53
5.5.3 The United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC)	54
5.5.4 Sector/cluster lead agencies	55
5.5.5 NGOs and the Red Cross movement	56
5.5.6 Bilateral assessment teams	56
5.5.7 The prime source of information: local authorities	57
5.5.8 The military, the banks and the media: trump cards?	58
5.6 Alternative: a people-based approach	59
5.7 The ideal needs assessment scenario	60
6 Key recommendations	62
6.1 A pragmatic approach	62
6.2 Investing in national assessment capacity	63
6.3 Let affected households assess their own needs	64
6.4 Streamlining the international assessment mechanisms	64
6.4.1 Institutional changes	64
6.4.2 Administrative and financial changes	67
6.4.3 Changing attitudes toward assessments	68
6.5 A common information system for all affected individuals	69

References	70
Annexes	72
Annex 1: Terms of reference	72
Annex 2: Evaluators and contributors	78
Annex 3: List of persons interviewed	81
Annex 4: List of needs assessment reports	90
Annex 5: The Interagency Offshore Health Assessment	97
Annex 6: Health sector needs assessments	99
Annex 7: Water and sanitation needs assessments	103
Annex 8: Food and livelihood-security needs assessments	105
Annex 9: Shelter needs assessments	110
Annex 10: Remote sensing in needs assessment	113
Annex 11: UNDAC terms of reference	118
Annex 12: Financial statement	120