DRAFT OXFAM OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

SITE SELECTION FOR TEMPORARY SETTLEMENTS

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GLOSSARY

term	*definition for the purposes of these guidelines*
Forced migrant	Refugee, IDP and environmental migrant.
Temporary settlement	Grouped self-settlement, transit centre, refugee camp.
Physical planning	Site planning, or the layout of a settlement.
Emergency	Phase when there is a considerable influx of migrants.
Care and maintenance	Phase following the emergency when settlement conditions stabilise.
Sector	Disciplines of agency activity, such as health, water and sanitation.
Carrying capacity	Maximum sustainable use of environmental resources in a given area.
Environmental resource	Natural material harvested by inhabitants, such as fuel wood, construction timber and water.

1 AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

1.1 Aims, objectives and scope

These guidelines provide a practical tool for the site selection of temporary settlements. They aim to integrate social, economic, environmental and technical considerations, and to maximise developmental opportunities for the host population.

A flow-chart on page 2 summarises the recommended assessment and decision-making structure. The following text supports this flow-chart, lists potential impacts for each sector, and provides checklists for assessment.

Dispersed and urban self-settlement are not within the scope of the proposed method for site selection, as they require no collective site. However, either of these options may be the most appropriate for a given situation, especially for short-term displacements.

A **Aims**, to:

– identify for non-specialist field staff the role of their sector in site selection assessments and decision-making;

– support the active participation of host governments, host communities and forced migrants in making collective site selection decisions;

– provide a decision-making framework for the selection of sites to be implemented or advocated, with appropriate phased or contingency plans;

B **Objectives**, to:

– identify the ideal type of temporary settlement for a given migrant population and test this ideal against the technical considerations for each potential site;

– identify and co-ordinate suitable assessment techniques to make more accurate site selection decisions.

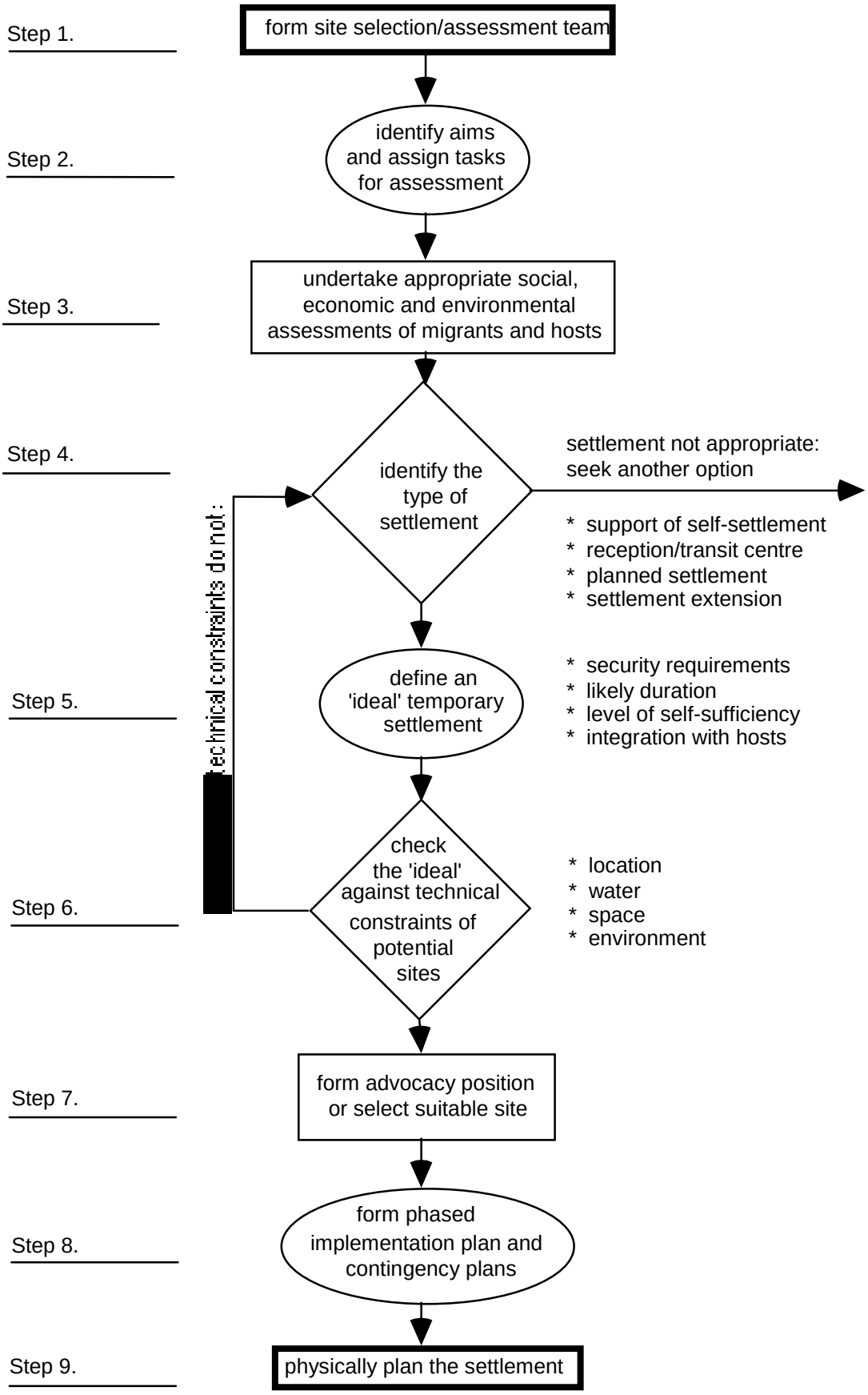
C **Scope**, for:

– any group of forced migrants requiring protection, material aid, or shelter;

– temporary settlements, whether the support of self-settlement, reception or transit centres, or planned settlements or their extensions;

– rural conditions, although similar decisions may be required in urban situations.

1.2 Site selection flow-chart



1.3 Summary of steps in site selection

Step 1: form a site selection team
A site selection team should comprise representatives from the forced migrants, host population, host government, UNHCR (or lead agency) and its implementing partner agencies.

Step 2: identify aims and assign tasks for assessment
Assessment aims should be identified, along with available resources and personnel. An assessment programme should then be drawn up, integrating sectoral assessment needs. Tasks can then be delegated to individual personnel or teams.

Step 3: undertake appropriate social, economic and environmental assessments of both migrants and hosts
The assessment programme should be undertaken, using either the basic techniques listed, or more sophisticated specialised methods such as PRA, if time and resources allow.

Step 4: identify the type of settlement
Four types of temporary settlement are considered here for support by the aid community: non-dispersed self-settlement, transit and reception centres, planned temporary settlements, and extensions to planned temporary settlements. Each typology has its associated requirements and likely impacts. Assessments (step 3) may indicate that a temporary settlement is not the appropriate method of response, in which case another option should be sought, such as dispersed self-settlement or settlement within host communities.

Step 5: define an 'ideal' temporary settlement
This step defines the form that the typology selected should take most appropriate to the needs of the migrants and their hosts, regardless of the physical characteristics of potential sites and the environmental resources available. This exercise ensures that objectives remain clear and site selection is not driven by short-term technical considerations. Issues to consider may include security; the likely life-span of the settlement; the level and forms of self-sufficiency that might be reached by migrants; and the optimum integration between migrants and hosts.

Step 6: check the 'ideal' against technical constraints of potential sites
It is necessary to consider whether the siting options available offer the necessary:
- location, security, access to and from sites, and desired proximity to local settlements;
- water, for migrants, hosts, and the desired provision for livestock and agriculture;
- space, with the desired topographic characteristics for occupation or agriculture, on land that could be occupied without un-reconcilable impacts upon the host economy;
- environmental resources, sufficient for cooking fuel and shelter construction needs over the desired duration of the settlement, without resulting in unrecoverable impacts.

If none of the potential sites do offer the necessary attributes, the team should return to reconsider what type of settlement (step 4) is appropriate.

Step 7: form advocacy position or select suitable site
If the host government has proposed sites, the site selection team can used the proposed method to form substantiated arguments as to why they are or are not suitable. If no sites have been proposed, the method can be used to identify suitable sites to present to the government. If migrants have self-settled, the method can determine site suitability.

Step 8: form phased implementation plan and contingency plans
After a site is selected, a programme of implementation needs to be formed that responds to consecutive phases of operation: the temporary settlement will need to perform different functions during the emergency and care and maintenance phases, and will present different potential impacts and opportunities. Contingency plans will also be required to respond to likely eventualities later in this programme, such as further influxes, or an outbreak of cholera. Likely eventualities will have to be identified and evaluated, leading to series of indicators being put in place to signal the need for plans to be implemented.

Step 9: physically plan the settlement
The site must be planned to allow for the appropriate location of plots for migrants and of facilities and infrastructure, such as clinics, leisure areas, and water distribution systems. This requires specialist intervention or, if this is not available, physical or site planning guidelines should be consulted.

2 IMPORTANCE OF SITE SELECTION

2.1 Introduction

From the emergency phase on, the siting and form of a settlement influence the security of forced migrants and the effectiveness of each agency sector operating within it. A considerable proportion of sectoral resources is often expended trying to mitigate bad siting or inappropriate planning, and this proportion increases over years that the average settlement is in use.

Site selection is often seen as a political decision, with agencies powerless to influence decision-making; or as a decision made by the migrants themselves before agencies are present. If alternatives are offered by hosts, they rarely include suitable or sufficient land.

These guidelines are intended to provide substantiated arguments to support both advocating the best option possible in political negotiation, and the selection of sites. They support each sector of agency operation in defining and assessing the needs of forced migrants from its perspective. These perspectives are then co-ordinated and integrated with host needs to inform final decision-making.

Goma Case-study

Siting has played a key role in the success of many recent temporary settlements and their attendant aid programmes. For example, in Goma in Zaïre in 1994, poor siting led to delays in the provision of potable water in the emergency phase and vastly inflated costs for water supply. It led to the severe degradation of the environment in the care and maintenance phase. Military incursions finally forced the population to leave food, water and health services for the relative safety of a jungle. Before and after 1994, the continual siting of camps near borders has contributed significantly to the destabilisation of the Great Lakes region.

2.2 The Sphere Project 'Standards for Humanitarian Response'

The aims, objectives and method of these operational guidelines have been included in abbreviated form in the 'Standards of Humanitarian Response' (Chapter 5, pp. 25-30, 1998) defined by the Sphere Project, which is supported by Oxfam and most other major aid agencies.

3 NEW PROCEDURE FOR SITE SELECTION

3.1 Site selection team

A site selection team must be formed, comprising representatives of UNHCR (or lead agency), implementing agencies, host government, host population and forced migrants. Such wide consultation is not unrealistic and participation at site visits and subsequent meetings is essential to ensure all groups share responsibility for decisions made.

The second step is to assign roles within the team, to ensure there are no gaps or overlaps in responsibilities, by delegating assessment tasks (see assessment checklist, Section 4).

Due to inevitable pressures on time and resources, the emergency assessments proposed are not exhaustive. The ultimate intent of this procedure is to involve all the groups affected in both thinking through what likely impacts may be, and in making the final decisions.

3.2 Types of temporary settlement

Assessments (Section 4) will allow the site selection team to decide whether to support: (A) the self-settlement of forced migrants; (B) building a transit centre; (C) establishing a temporary settlement; or (D) making an extension to an existing temporary settlement. It is not appropriate to use the same approach to site selection for each of these options, as they each have greatly differing requirements, impacts, and opportunities. Temporary settlements on sites selected by migrants still require the input of a site selection team to determine whether they are appropriate for the migrants and future influxes, their hosts, the host government, and supporting agencies.

A **Support of the grouped self-settlement of forced migrants**
Potentially longer-term settlements where forced migrants have spontaneously settled in an area, yet require possible partial relocation, a sustainable supply of environmental resources, and infrastructure provision. Dispersed and urban self-settlement are not within the scope of these guidelines.

Issues:

- *is the density of occupation appropriate in terms of health and self-sufficiency?*
- *how will vulnerable groups within the migrant population be identified and supported, for example if self-settlement is too dispersed?*
- *what was the previous land use and how will the settlement impact upon the host population, socially and economically?*
- *are there more suitable alternative sites for complete or partial relocation?*

B **Reception centres or transit centres**
Short-term settlements where forced migrants stay for short periods for registration, rest and the distribution of FI and NFI. They can be used to allow time for accommodation in planned settlements to be prepared. Centres should be considered as planned settlements (C) when the environment is unable to sustain demands on it, or when they must operate over a long period.

Issues:

- *will any inhabitants of the centre be required to live therefore more than two weeks? If so, their accommodation should be planned to the standards of a planned settlement (C).*
- *what density of occupation and form of accommodation is appropriate for the migrant population to be supported?*
- *is the centre located appropriately to allow all migrants to reach it, and can they then reach the planned settlements they are in transit to?*
- *if environmental resource use can not be sustainable, will irreversible damage be caused during the operation of the transit centre?*

C **Planned temporary settlements**
Potentially longer-term settlements, designed by physical planners in advance of an influx, where forced migrants arrive from reception or transit centres.

Issues:

- *how can any additional planning time available best be used to involve forced migrants, local hosts, and the host government in assessment, decision-making, and integrating development objectives?*
- *what level of self-sufficiency is feasible and sustainable among forced migrants?*

D **Extensions to settlements**
Extensions required to accommodate a new influx, natural population growth, or partial relocation made necessary by overcrowding or unwanted impacts.

Issues:

- *how can any additional planning time available best be used to involve forced migrants, local hosts, and the host government in assessment, decision-making, and integrating development objectives?*
- *should the existing settlement be upgraded through the gradual re-location of the population by rotation to extensions?*
- *should extensions be planned for specific population groups within existing settlement, such as single parents, different ethnic groups or political factions?*
- *what additional or different demands will be placed on the environment?*

3.3 What to aim for: defining an 'ideal' temporary settlement

The new procedure proposes that an 'ideal' temporary settlement is defined for each forced migrant population, based upon the type of settlement selected above, and assessments set out in Section 4. Such an 'ideal' settlement would be the most appropriate for a given migrant population, for their hosts, for the environment, and for implementing aid agencies, irrespective of the technical constraints that may be encountered on potential sites.

Four interdependent key considerations, or others agreed by the site selection team, may be used to determine the 'ideal' temporary settlement and its location:

A **Security, internal and external**
In general, the greater the external security concerns, the further the settlement should be located from the border or origin of conflict; and the greater internal security concerns, the smaller and more dispersed settlements should be.

Issues:
- *are military incursions likely?*
- *are groups within the settlement population vulnerable to intimidation by other forced migrants? are there factions seeking to intimidate such groups?*
- *is conflict with the host population likely, for example over resources?*

B **Duration, as estimated**
In general, the longer a temporary settlement is intended to last, the more important it is for: (1) the inhabitants to achieve a level of self-sufficiency, both in terms of management and resources; (2) sustainable environmental management; (3) integration with the economy of any local population.

Issues:
- *what contingency planning is required, should the planned duration be exceeded?*
- *what local development objectives are in place? what impact should the relief programme make?*
- *what environmental programmes are appropriate?*

C **Dependence/self-sufficiency of settlement**
In general, the more self-sufficient, the better the relations: (1) inside that population; (2) between that population and the local population; (3) between that population and the implementing agencies. It is easier to increase self-sufficiency in low-density, dispersed settlements.

Issues:
- *what nutritional need are not met by the likely aid food basket?*
- *do the migrants have livestock or agricultural tools?*
- *what agriculture is practical in the area and what are the migrants familiar with?*
- *how will agricultural activity affect the local economy and environment?*
- *do the migrants have tradable skills required in the region?*

D **Economic integration with/segregation from the host population**
In general, economic integration with the host population: (1) promotes communication and understanding, reducing tension and conflict; (2) provides an opportunity for aid to reach host populations.

Issues:
- *how would the use of environmental resources by migrants impact upon local market prices of those resources?*
- *would forced migrants entering a local labour market undercut local wages, leading to conflict with host labour?*
- *do the migrants have tradable skills required in the region?*
- *what will be the impact when, or if, the migrant labour leaves?*
- *what would be the likely impacts of a strong forced migrant economy upon the local economy?*

3.4 Implications for all sectors

This section lists some likely impacts of siting to each sector of agency operation (A-D). Three factors that effect sectors differently are considered here: (1) the location of the settlement; (2) the density of the settlement; and (3) the dispersal of migrants into more than one settlement.

These three factors are included as part of the criteria for deciding upon an 'ideal' temporary settlement for a particular forced migrant population, prior to testing against the technical constraints of a particular site (Section 3.5).

A Physical planning

A.1 location, settlements sited near:

- *the place of origin of migration increase insecurity through opportunities for cross border incursions by both external forces and migrants*
- *the place of origin of migration may allow migrants to continue agricultural activity in, rebuilding in and contacts with their home settlements*
- *host settlements produce potential competition for resources with hosts, yet allow greater integration with host economies*
- *host settlements offer opportunities either for hosts to be violent towards migrants, or migrants to be violent towards their hosts*

A.2 low density and dispersed settlements:

- *increase the difficulty of managing resources centrally by outside organisations*
- *require more road infrastructure*
- *reduce the intensity of use of natural resources*

A.3 high density settlements:

- *offer opportunities for intimidation and control by factions*
- *can create tensions in communities through lack of privacy or space*
- *concentrate environmental degradation*
- *increase the risk of serious fires*
- *generally require more surface water drainage*

B Water and sanitation

B.1 location, settlements sited on land that is:

- *upstream of local settlements, collection pans or reservoir dams should be avoided, so as to prevent contamination of water sources*
- *low-lying or in a valley are prone to flooding and ground water may be polluted*
- *on a hill may be some distance from a source of ground water*
- *on a hill are prone to soil erosion and the flooding of latrines*

B.2 low density and dispersed settlements:

- *often require more water supply infrastructure*
- *can sometimes draw upon a greater variety of sources*

B.3 high density settlements:

- *may put pressure on water supply infrastructure*
- *require more sophisticated sanitation and waste disposal policies*

C **Food and logistics**

C.1 location, temporary settlements sited near:

- *host settlements and infrastructure require less infrastructure to be built as they can take better advantage of local storage, foodstuffs and roads*

C.2 low density and dispersed settlements:

- *often require more warehousing or more frequent distribution*
- *provide opportunities for forced migrants to supplement their food baskets through agriculture*

C.3 high density settlements:

- *usually make warehousing and distribution easier to manage*

D **Health**

D.1 location, temporary settlements sited near local settlements:

- *increase the chance of communicable diseases spreading to local populations*
- *can make better use of and develop existing health infrastructure*

D.2 low density and dispersed settlements:

- *there may not be resources for therapeutic feeding centres in each settlement*
- *generally increase the demand for staff and infrastructure*

D.3 high density settlements:

- *therapeutic feeding centres can be managed optimally*
- *generally make primary health monitoring easier as travel distances are less*
- *imply hygiene problems with rural forced migrant populations*
- *accelerate the spread of epidemics and hamper control*
- *make refuse disposal programmes more difficult*

E **Environmental management**

D.1 location, temporary settlements sited near:

- *local settlements can result in conflict over environmental resources*
- *local settlements often makes easier the emergency assessment of carrying capacities and agricultural opportunities, as locals can be consulted*
- *fragile or protected ecosystems should be avoided, wherever possible*

D.2 low density and dispersed settlements:

- *distribute environmental impacts, which is preferable unless it is inevitable that migrant requirements are beyond the local carrying capacity*

D.3 high density settlements:

- *concentrate environmental impacts, which should be avoided, unless this concentrates irreversible damage that is inevitable*

3.5 Testing against technical criteria

Preliminary assessments (Section 4) lead to the design of an 'ideal' settlement. The next step is to test the 'ideal' settlement against the physical characteristics of each potential site, to determine whether they can support these requirements. Technical criteria are based upon the site selection matrix in the RedR 'Engineering in Emergencies' and the UNHCR 'Handbook for Emergencies' (see Appendix B).

A Access

- *what is the proximity of, the condition of, and the security of access to the local road infrastructure? railheads? ports? airstrips?*
- *does access vary at different times of the year?*
- *should a road/railhead/port/airstrip be built? what would be the local impact?*

B Topography

- *what density of occupation is possible, given the slope and condition of land?*
- *is the site prone to flood?*
- *is soil erosion likely?*
- *is standing water present or likely?*
- *what is the altitude and how does this influence climate and the use of fuels?*

C Water

- *is sufficient water available within a suitable distance throughout the year for forced migrants, hosts, agriculture, and livestock?*
- *is there more than one source to reduce the vulnerability of water supply?*
- *how high is the water table and will this be polluted by sanitation or flooding?*
- *is the water quality adequate, are seasonal variations in contamination likely?*

D Space

- *who owns the land?*
- *what is the current land use of the site?*
- *is there sufficient space for the desired density and dispersal of population?*
- *is there space for extensions, should the forced migrant population increase?*
- *what land is available for agriculture or livestock and what farming is best suited?*

E Environment

- *is the environment particularly vulnerable or valuable ?*
- *is there sufficient fuelwood for forced migrants and locals?*
- *what construction materials are available? are they appropriate and sufficient?*
- *what are the likely impacts of increased agriculture and livestock?*

3.6 Phased response and contingency planning

Responses to the issues raised in the previous sections will change over the duration of a temporary settlement. The changes may be gradual, such as when settled migrants look for more land to cultivate, or rapid, such as when a large influx of new migrants arrives. It is essential that, using the same decision-making processes used for site selection:

A phased programmes are designed for more likely eventualities;

B contingency plans are formed for less likely eventualities.

The conditions that will vary in each situation are, to some extent, predictable. Phased programmes and contingency plans quantify and qualify: (1) the additional resources that may be required in response to these new conditions; (2) how these variations might affect existing programmes; and (3) how these variations might impact on local economies and environments.

4 EMERGENCY ASSESSMENTS

4.1 Planning an emergency assessment

The appropriateness of site options and the accuracy of decision-making is dependant on the quality and co-ordination of assessments undertaken. When planning emergency assessments, objectives must be carefully matched against time and resources:

A list assessment objectives and checklist information required (4.2);

B list likely sources for this information, preferably with more than one source for each of the more important objectives, so assessments can be compared (4.3);

C list the personnel, specialist skills and attendant resources available (4.3);

D compose an assessment programme and delegate assessment tasks (4.3).

It is essential to record sources and the assessment methods employed: it is common for assumptions made or conclusions reached in the emergency phase to be used in later programmes, when more comprehensive assessments would be more appropriate.

Specific additional assessments may be required to provide detailed or quantitative information on social, environmental, and technical issues listed in the procedure. These are not detailed here, as specialists should be consulted in such circumstances: it is not the intention of these guidelines to support assessment or decision-making by unqualified personnel.

4.2 Assessment checklists

The site selection team should compose a list of assessment objectives for each situation (4.1A), however the following categories and issues may be considered important:

A Situation profile

- *regional security situation*
- *points of entry or sources of influx*
- *host government policy and attitudes towards influxes*
- *access by migrants to employment*
- *contingency plans for influxes in place*
- *regional development plans in operation or planned*
- *external agencies operating regionally*

B Profile of potential sites

- *access and supply routes, security concerns and seasonal variations*
- *proximity to local settlements, local agriculture, and other temporary settlements*
- *land use by locals, for agriculture, grazing, fuelwood collection and hunting*
- *standing water and other opportunities for vector proliferation*
- *area suitable for habitation*
- *topography, surface water drainage patterns*
- *vegetation cover, preventing soil erosion, shading or shielding from winds*
- *soil conditions, such as suitability for latrines, drainage and agriculture*

C Forced migrant profile

- *reasons for flight*
- *number and estimated size of imminent influx*
- *physical condition and vulnerable groups*
- *ethnic or economic links with host population*
- *endemic diseases in home areas*
- *composition, in terms of ethnicity, origin, caste, gender, age, and family size*
- *backgrounds and skillbases, whether urbanites, farmers or pastoralists*
- *leadership, politicisation and cohesion of communities*

- *presence of intimidating or violent factions*
- *livestock and its distribution within the migrants*
- *connections with any land under cultivation in home areas*
- *traditional settlement patterns and shelter construction practices*
- *traditional patterns of water use, such as quantity used*
- *traditional hygiene practices, such as whether pit latrines are commonly used*
- *traditional cooking practices, such as how much fuelwood is used*

D Local population profile

- *endemic diseases*
- *land use practices and land law*
- *agricultural and livestock practices suitable in the area*
- *use and sources of environmental resources, such as water and fuelwood*
- *economic profile*

E Environmental profile

- *carry capacity for extraction of fuel and construction timber, and thatch grasses*
- *vulnerable areas or areas with global ecological significance*
- *water sources, quantity, location and quality*
- *seasonal variations, impacting on water and environmental resources*

Emergency environmental assessments have not yet been fully developed. However, it is essential that a basic picture is formed of environmental resources available and of patterns of their use by local populations. Managing a settlement over the longer-term relies heavily on the planned use of these resources, for example planning for the high demand for construction timber during the emergency phase, balanced against the reduced demand later.

4.3 Assessment techniques

General emergency assessment techniques are also in the early phases of development. 'People Oriented Planning' (POP, UNHCR, 1994) provides a useful framework to ensure that the respective roles of all members and sub-groups of the populations are identified and represented. UNHCR proposes, in 'Initial assessments in Emergency Situations' (1998):

A Baseline or background data collection

Information includes: maps, technical reports, policy papers, contingency plans, regional development plans and data sets such as satellite images, census reports and inventories.

Sources include: government line ministries, universities, mapping agencies, hospitals, local education or health departments, embassies, NGOs, UN agencies and the military.

Limitations include: speed of access to and the selective nature of information.

B Visual or direct observation

Information includes: condition of migrants, security, interactions between groups, and technical considerations such as the characteristics of the landscape.

Sources include: observation by site selection team members, which can also often be recorded through photographs or videos, when security considerations allow.

Limitations include: minimising personal interpretations of observations and of images.

C Surveys

Information includes: health, hydrology, water sources and other environmental resources.

Sources include: experts within the site selection team, or from baseline data collection (A).

Limitations include: availability of relevant expertise and time-consuming data collection.

D Interviewing

Information includes: migrant and host cultural, land use and agricultural practices, economic profiles and environmental resource use.

Sources include: unstructured interviews or structured techniques such as Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and participatory techniques such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA).

Limitations include: locating representative groups in the emergency phase, soliciting responses to problems that may be encountered in later phases, and having sufficient personnel and time to acquire sufficient data.

E On-site surveillance

Information includes: public health, water supply, and local or regional development projects.

Sources include: host government line ministries, local and international NGOs.

Limitations include: speed of access to and the selective nature of information.