

A vibrant outdoor market scene under a clear blue sky. In the foreground, a large wooden bowl is filled with green and yellow mangoes. To the right, a man in a green long-sleeved shirt stands next to a wheelbarrow containing a bunch of bananas. In the center, a woman in a bright orange hijab is seen from behind, standing near a wheelbarrow with green fruit. To her left, a man in a light blue shirt is walking. In the background, other people, including a woman in a dark blue hijab, are visible, along with market stalls and buildings. The overall atmosphere is one of a bustling, everyday market.

Area-Based Approach Durable Solutions Toolkit

Operational Guidance Document

Summary

This Operational Guidance provides step-by-step instructions for applying the Durable Solutions Area-Based Approach Toolkit. It is designed to support operational and policy actors working at the area level who can use the Toolkit to inform durable solutions action plans and response planning/design. The guidance explains not only the 'how' but also the 'why' – ensuring assessments are grounded in the policy and institutional realities of displacement contexts. Illustrative examples from two country pilots are included to support application of the Toolkit.

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1. Introduction and Background

The Durable Solutions Area-Based Approach Toolkit (hereafter 'the Toolkit') is a practical package of tools and guidance designed to help practitioners generate and use area-specific evidence to inform planning, programming, and policy dialogue on durable solutions to displacement. It consists of two data collection tools (Tool A – qualitative and Tool B – quantitative), a Decision Tree to guide tool selection, and a set of operational guidance notes to support implementation.

The Toolkit's purpose is to enable coordinated, area-level analysis that connects people's lived experiences with the systems, institutions, and legal frameworks shaping access to rights and services — turning evidence into actionable inputs for durable solutions strategies and plans.

Toolkit Development Process

The Toolkit was developed in response to the need for operationally ready tools that can guide practitioners in generating evidence to support solutions to displacement at the area level. Unlike global frameworks that often rely on national data and policy instruments, the Toolkit aims to support area-level planning and programming based on the specific characteristics, challenges and constraints of displacement-affected contexts, while still creating linkages to national level context and policies. The Toolkit design reflects both a thorough review of technical practices and real-world constraints, with an emphasis on practical use in diverse displacement-affected settings.

The iterative and collaborative process to design the Toolkit involved:

- A review of over 30 global and national durable solutions and multi-sectoral assessment tools, resulting in the report: [Assessing Durable Solutions to Internal Displacement at the Area Level: A Literature Review \(2010–2024\)](#).
- Extensive consultations with over 60 subject-matter experts, including workshops with operational and coordination stakeholders.
- Two country-level pilots including validation workshops, resulting in the reports. [Colombia \(Ciudad Bolívar, July 2025\)](#) / [Somalia \(Baidoa, June 2025\)](#)
- This process generated a robust evidence base and highlighted common challenges and opportunities, with area-based approaches proving beneficial for advancing durable solutions.

The pilots, together with ongoing consultation with subject-matter specialists throughout the design process, underscored the importance of embedding a rights-based lens within the assessment questions and incorporating a structured legal and policy review. These refinements, now integrated into the DS ABA Toolkit, ensure that findings move beyond describing needs to linking them with the frameworks and systems that shape access to rights and services. This will make the Toolkit's outputs more actionable for both programming and policy dialogue.

Annex 1: Key Terms and Definitions presents essential terms and definitions that underpin the concepts and approaches used in this toolkit.

Annex 2: Toolkit Design Process presents a visual summary of the Toolkit design process, highlighting the key steps of literature review, consultations, and in-depth analysis that informed the draft tool.

Rationale for Area-Based Assessments

- Generate granular, context-specific data that national surveys often overlook.
- Tailor national durable solutions strategies to the realities of specific displacement-affected areas and populations.
- Bridge the humanitarian–development–peace nexus by engaging local actors, authorities, and communities throughout the process.
- Translate durable solutions frameworks into practical, area-level guidance for planning and implementation.

Building on this rationale, the DS ABA Toolkit has been designed with five objectives that translate these benefits into practical guidance for operational actors.

Objectives of the Toolkit

The DS ABA Toolkit has five overarching objectives:

1. **Generate area-specific evidence:** Provide detailed, area-based data on displacement conditions, barriers to durable solutions, and needs across key domains.
2. **Enable inclusive and participatory assessments:** Engage displaced and host communities, local authorities, and operational actors to co-produce insights that reflect lived realities.
3. **Support evidence-based planning and investment decisions:** Use evidence and analysis to inform effective area-based durable solutions strategies and action plans, and programming design and responses.
4. **Bridge data gaps:** Complement existing national tools and monitoring frameworks by filling information gaps at the micro level, particularly in underserved or marginalised locations.
5. **Inform coordinated, multi-actor responses:** Equip diverse stakeholders across the HDP Nexus with the evidence required to jointly address barriers to rights, services, and displacement-specific needs, supporting pathways to self-reliance and durable solutions.

These objectives highlight the DS ABA Toolkit's role in enabling coordinated, practical responses that reflect the complexity and diversity of displacement-affected contexts.

Analytical Framework

The analytical framework provides the structure for achieving these objectives. It is designed to capture both the lived realities of displacement-affected populations and the wider systems that influence access to durable solutions — including policies, institutions, and service delivery mechanisms.

The framework is structured around two core research questions:

- **Research question 1 (qualitative):** What gaps and barriers exist across legal frameworks, service provision, stakeholder coordination, and community perceptions within the defined area that hinder progress toward durable solutions?
- **Research question 2 (quantitative):** What specific needs and vulnerabilities, including those related to legal inclusion, do displacement-affected populations face across and beyond the IASC criteria that must be addressed to enable progress toward durable solutions?

This structure is underpinned by the *IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons* (2010), which sets out eight criteria for assessing progress toward durable solutions. The criteria serve as a normative backbone while allowing the DS ABA Toolkit to remain flexible, adaptable, and operationally relevant.

By combining population-level evidence with systems analysis, the framework guides actors in generating findings that are directly usable for operational and policy stakeholders working within an area-based approach. Two key features strengthen this usability: the integration of a legal and policy review, and the incorporation of a rights-based lens into the assessment questions. Together, these ensure that findings connect people's needs and vulnerabilities with the frameworks that determine their ability to access rights, services, and durable solutions.

Audience and Ownership

The DS ABA Toolkit is intended for operational, policy and advocacy actors engaged in area-based planning and responses in displacement-affected contexts. Its audience comprises those who will apply the Toolkit in practice, participate in its implementation, or use the evidence it generates to inform planning and decision-making. This includes municipal and sub-national authorities, humanitarian and development agencies, civil-society organisations, coordination structures and advocacy actors engaged in durable solutions processes.

The Toolkit is designed for collective use, encouraging shared assessments and joint decision-making rather than parallel or siloed efforts. It provides a common framework through which diverse actors can generate, interpret, and apply evidence in a coordinated way.

- 1. To inform durable solutions strategies and action plans** - providing a basis for connecting evidence to policy priorities and systems-level change.
- 2. To inform programme planning and design** - grounding interventions in granular, context-specific analysis of displacement-affected areas, and explicitly linking identified needs to the policy and systems gaps that underpin them.
- 3. To inform advocacy and policy dialogue** - generating credible, area-specific evidence to support engagement with authorities and partners on rights, access to services, and durable solutions priorities.

Ownership is strongest when the Toolkit is embedded in area-based coordination mechanisms such as municipal authorities, durable solutions working groups, or inter-agency platforms. Where possible, assessments should be carried out collaboratively, leveraging the capacities of different stakeholders and anchoring the process in locally recognised structures.

2. Quick Start Guide

This guidance document offers an operational walkthrough of the Toolkit. Designed for operational-level and technical practitioners, it serves as both an implementation manual and a reference guide. It is structured to move users through each stage of applying the Toolkit - from planning and tool selection to data collection, analysis, and use. This guidance should be read alongside Tools A and B and the Decision Tree, which together form the core components of the Toolkit.

The Toolkit comprises the following key components:

- **Tool A:** A qualitative tool that generates contextual insights via Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Tool A primarily captures qualitative data and can be applied as a lighter, less resource-intensive option, particularly where high quality secondary quantitative data already exists.
- **Tool B:** A quantitative tool that collects statistically representative data through household surveys. Tool B primarily gathers structured quantitative data at household level.
- **Decision Tree:** A logic-based process that guides method and tool selection tailored to contextual needs, including available resources and capacity.

Some questions in the DS ABA tools are marked [SENSITIVE] to flag topics that may require careful facilitation or ethical consideration. Guidance on managing these is provided in **Step 7 (Operational Preparation)**.

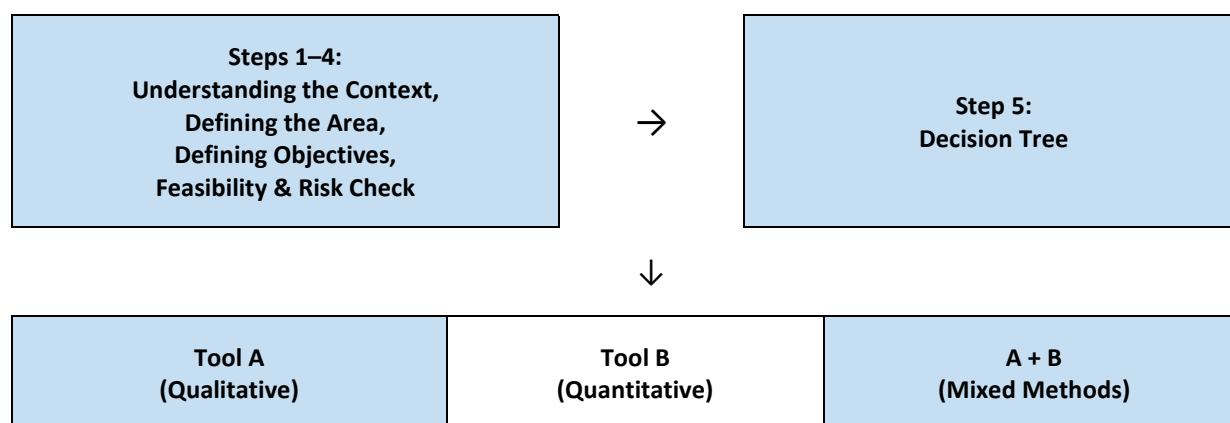





Figure 1: Toolkit Application Flow - From Planning to Tool Selection

Link: [Durable Solutions Area Based Approach Toolkit and Decision Tree](#)

 Funded by European Union Humanitarian Aid  IDMC internal displacement monitoring centre  IMPACT Shaping practices Influencing policies Impacting lives	
Title	IDMC-IMPACT Tool Selection Decision Tree (2025) for the ABA DS Toolkit
File name	idmc_impact_tool_decision_tree_aba_durable_solutions_2025
Creator	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and IMPACT Initiatives
Last updated	Nov-25
Description	The Decision Tree supports Step 5 of the Operational Guidelines by translating the analysis from earlier steps into a clear and feasible methodological pathway. It helps users determine whether Tool A, Tool B, or a concurrent combination of both is most appropriate. The tree ensures that selection is evidence-based, context-sensitive, and aligned with ethical and operational constraints.
Definitions	<p>Tool A – A qualitative tool that generates contextual insights via Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Tool A primarily captures qualitative data and can be applied as a lighter, less resource-intensive option, particularly where high-quality secondary quantitative data already exists.</p> <p>Tool B – A quantitative tool that collects statistically representative data through household surveys. Tool B primarily gathers structured quantitative data at household level.</p> <p>Tool A + B (mixed methods) – Both tools are used together to combine contextual understanding with statistically representative measurement, providing comprehensive evidence suitable for planning, coordination, and policy-level decision-making.</p>
How the Decision Tree works	The logic is structured around four sequential checks that are informed from by knowledge of the practitioners and complemented by previous steps of the Operational Guidelines. These checks narrow the assessment to the most appropriate tool family.

3. Limitations

The Toolkit focuses on providing granular data to inform area-based planning and programming. As such, it is not intended to provide a national-level picture of the situation with respect to durable solutions, and the results cannot be generalised to the whole population.

It is important to note that, based on lessons learned during the pilots, the Toolkit is not designed to comprehensively or longitudinally measure progress toward durable solutions. While it can identify gaps and conditions affecting progress to durable solutions, it does not include indicators specifically calibrated to track DS progress over time. Any attempt to use the Toolkit as a DS monitoring tool needs to be accompanied by consistent application over time, triangulated with other frameworks or indicators.

Using the Toolkit to understand changes must be approached with care and caution. A repeated assessment using Tool B (quantitative) at multiple points in time with a consistent sampling design can provide insights into trends, ideally complemented by contextual findings from Tool A (qualitative). A one-off assessment of both displaced and non-displaced households can highlight the different challenges each group faces across the topics addressed, and may help to identify displacement-specific vulnerabilities. Assessments across multiple areas can highlight differences in needs and services, guiding response prioritisation.

While the Toolkit provides a basis for linking evidence to policy and systems change, this depends on both robust analysis and uptake by relevant actors. Without these, assessments risk producing descriptive data with limited strategic value.

Other limitations identified during the pilots' lessons learned:

- Lack of a clearly defined end user from the outset can result in limited uptake of results, with the tool creating another evidence base that does not directly inform strategic priorities or fill critical gaps.
- Tool A depends heavily on skilled facilitation and trust-building with local actors.
- Tool B requires technical and logistical capacity, and may be difficult to implement in high-risk or remote areas.
- Coordination and buy-in from local authorities and DS Working Groups is essential but may vary significantly by location.
- Results may be influenced by seasonality, access constraints, or political sensitivities.
- Adaptations to questions must reflect the specific displacement context and policy environment. Input from local staff and displaced populations is essential to ensure relevance; for example, livelihood opportunities differ significantly between rural and urban context.
- Without a rights-based lens or explicit policy and legal review, assessments risk generating findings that are descriptive but not actionable. This limitation was identified during expert consultation and pilot testing and has since been addressed through refinements to the Toolkit.

4. Planning Your DS ABA Assessment

Before initiating an assessment, it is essential to establish a clear plan, timeline, and allocation of resources. The DS ABA Toolkit follows a structured process, but timelines will vary depending on the scope, context and resources.

The DS ABA Toolkit process is organised into three main phases - Planning and Research Design, Data Collection, and Analysis, Validation and Dissemination. This sequence represents the suggested approach; however, depending on context, adaptations may be required to suit the specific objectives, resources, and operational constraints of each assessment.

PHASE 1 <i>8 - 10 weeks</i>	PHASE 2 <i>4 - 6 weeks</i>	PHASE 3 <i>8 - 12 weeks</i>
Planning and Research Design Steps 1 – 6	Data Collection Steps 7 - 9	Analysis, Validation & Dissemination Steps 10 - 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding the Context• Defining the Area• Defining Objectives• Feasibility and Risk Check• Tool Selection (Decision Tree)• ToR Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operational Preparation• Data Collection• Ongoing Adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data Analysis• Validation and Interpretation• Dissemination
Endorsed ToR	Validated primary data	Evidence used for planning/policy

Figure 2: Overview of DS ABA Toolkit Phases and Key Steps

Minimum indicative duration: approximately 20 weeks for a full cycle from early planning to final dissemination and evidence use (subject to team size, access, and available data).

In contexts with limited time or resources, parts of the process can be streamlined by relying on secondary data, focusing on priority IASC criteria, or applying a light-touch version. The Toolkit is designed to be flexible, and can be scaled to the available timeframe without compromising methodological integrity. See Box 1: Applying the Toolkit When Resources Are Limited.

Annex 6: Phase Completion Checklist provides a checklist, summarising the three phases and 12 steps of the Toolkit process.

Box 1: Applying the Toolkit When Resources Are Limited: Guidance for Proportionate or Light-Touch Application

In some contexts, stakeholders may not have the time, funding or technical capacity to apply the full Toolkit. The methodology can be adapted for a *light-touch* application, ensuring proportional use of resources while maintaining methodological integrity.

In these contexts, practitioners are encouraged to:

1. Prioritise IASC criteria manually using the walkthrough note in **Annex 3**. This involves reviewing all eight criteria and selecting those that are most relevant and feasible for the intended purpose.
2. Rely primarily on Tool A (qualitative) methods, complemented by secondary quantitative data where available.
3. Condense the process to essential steps: context review, area definition, objective setting, feasibility check, qualitative data collection, and joint validation.
4. Maintain the Apply a rights-based and systems lens as a core analysis principal to ensure results remain comparable with full Toolkit applications.

A *light-touch version* should still capture the perspectives of displacement-affected communities, the functioning of local systems, and the principal barriers to durable solutions.

Annex 3 presents a practical walkthrough for applying the DS ABA Toolkit under resource or time constraints. It outlines a step-by-step method for manually prioritising IASC criteria, selecting the most relevant question modules, and conducting a proportionate, light-touch assessment that maintains the Toolkit's analytical rigour and rights-based framework. **Annex 4** presents an example Question Set for Light-Touch Application - HLP (Urban Self-Settled Populations).

PHASE 1: Planning and Research Design

PHASE 1 8 - 10 weeks	PHASE 2 4 - 6 weeks	PHASE 3 8 - 12 weeks
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The foundation of any durable solutions assessment is a robust design. Without this, even technically rigorous data can prove politically irrelevant or practically unusable. This phase is about anchoring the assessment in its legal, policy, and institutional environment; defining the geographical and social scope; establishing clear objectives; checking feasibility; selecting the appropriate methodological tools; and consolidating the design in a Terms of Reference (TOR).

The six steps presented here build on lessons from pilot assessments in Somalia and Colombia and consultations with subject-matter experts. A key insight from consultations, further reinforced by the pilots, was the value of including a structured legal, policy and institutional landscape (Step 1), now integrated into the refined methodology.

Annex 7: Colombia Pilot – Human Resources and Team Structure provides the structure applied during the Colombia pilot

Step 1: Understanding the Context

Intended Result: A grounded understanding of the legal, policy and institutional frameworks and actors, clarifying how displaced populations' rights are recognised in practice, which barriers exist, and where entry points lie for engagement and uptake of findings.

The first step is to situate the assessment within the broader legal, policy and institutional frameworks that define, at least in principle, the rights and entitlements of displaced populations — including freedom of movement, the right to work, access to services, housing, land and property, and civil documentation. In practice, these rights are often unevenly realised. If such realities are overlooked, the assessment risks generating findings that are disconnected from the systemic barriers and opportunities that shape progress towards durable solutions.

A **review of the legal, policy and institutional landscape** at national, sub-national, and local levels should therefore be conducted. This includes not only formal laws and regulations, but also durable solutions strategies, action plans, and policy frameworks that shape institutional responsibilities, resource allocation, and coordination mechanisms. It should also examine the extent to which durable solutions frameworks are integrated into development strategies, the political sensitivity of displacement issues, and the positions adopted by key stakeholders.

This review is not intended as a comprehensive legal analysis, but rather a practical appraisal of how laws and policies operate in practice, highlighting both policy commitments and implementation gaps.

Stakeholder mapping is an equally critical component of this step. It should include formal and informal local authorities, NGOs, CSOs, representatives of Displacement Affected Communities (DAC), international agencies, and any dedicated working groups or taskforces. The analysis should account for both influence and legitimacy within displacement-affected communities, as well as power and influence.

A **secondary data and information gap analysis** should accompany this step. Its purpose is to identify what information already exists, highlight any gaps, and determine how new research should be positioned. Depending on the context, this may involve preventing duplication, strengthening quantitative findings with qualitative insights, validating evidence through triangulation, or providing the background needed to interpret new data. This includes reviewing existing assessment tools and monitoring systems.

Pilot Insight 1 - Somalia: Durable solutions coordination mechanisms and assessment frameworks were already in place through government and partner initiatives in Somalia. Applying the DS ABA Toolkit in this context was therefore designed to complement, rather than duplicate, existing evidence and analysis efforts - filling data gaps and providing more granular, area-specific insights to inform local planning and coordination.

Step 1 – Context Review: Quick Checklist

- ☐ Legal and policy frameworks mapped (national and subnational)
- ☐ Institutional actors and mandates identified (formal and informal)
- ☐ Coordination mechanisms documented
- ☐ Stakeholder mapping completed
- ☐ Secondary data reviewed and gaps identified
- ☐ Political / institutional sensitivities documented
- ☐ Barrier Mapping Matrix initiated where relevant (as a structured way to capture findings)

Annex 8: Barrier-Focused Legal, Policy, and Institutional Framework Review: Guidance and Matrix provides detailed guidance on how to analyse the legal, policy and institutional frameworks using a barrier-focused framework and includes a blank matrix template for mapping findings.

Step 2: Defining the Area

Intended Result: A clearly bounded and jointly validated area of assessment that drives the scope of analysis, ensures operational feasibility and political relevance, and provides the foundation for inclusive, multi-sectoral findings.

With the contextual landscape established, the next step is to define the geographic area that will serve as the unit of analysis. Because the Toolkit adopts an area-based approach (ABA), the focus is on places rather than single population groups, recognising that displaced and host communities share interlinked needs and are shaped by the same local systems and governance structures.

Defining the ‘area’ is not only a technical exercise but also a political and practical one. The choice of boundaries directly drives the assessment: it determines which populations are included, which governance structures are engaged, and how findings can be applied to durable solutions planning and programming. The selected area must therefore be both meaningful to local stakeholders and feasible for data collection. Key considerations include:

- **Administrative relevance** – aligning with existing governance or planning units (such as municipalities or districts) to facilitate engagement and ensure findings can be taken up.
- **Population dynamics** – capturing both displaced and host communities to reflect how their situations and opportunities are interdependent.
- **Displacement context** – determining whether the area represents a site of displacement, origin, or potential return/resettlement.
- **Feasibility** – weighing accessibility, available resources, and the practicality of collecting reliable data within the chosen boundaries.

Box 2: Area-Based Approaches

(Adapted from the Full Case Study Compendium of Area-Based Approaches)¹

Area-based approaches describe a family of methods sometimes referred to as area-based, settlement-based or neighbourhood-based. They share several core characteristics: they are multi-sectoral (addressing interconnected needs across different domains), multi-stakeholder (involving government, civil society, and affected communities), geographically targeted (focused on a clearly defined place), and inclusive of the whole population in that location, both displaced and non-displaced. Area-based approaches are applicable in urban, peri-urban, and rural contexts alike, wherever displacement intersects with complex, interrelated, and multi-sectoral needs.

Step 3: Defining Objectives

Intended Result: A focused objective statement, with clarity on both purpose and ownership that drives the scope of research, guides tool selection, and ensures findings are usable and relevant.

Once the assessment area is established, the next step is to define clear objectives. Without this, assessments risk drifting into generic evidence-gathering that adds little value or duplicates existing efforts. Objectives should be specific to the context, shaped by the primary actor driving the process, and aligned with the intended use of findings.

Who leads the assessment heavily influences the type and scale of evidence required:

- **Government-led processes** often require structured, quantitative data that aligns with national statistics and priorities.
- **Inter-agency or coordination platforms** may need mixed-method evidence to inform joint planning and decision-making.
- **NGOs or project-driven initiatives** might prioritise lighter, rapid, qualitative insights to inform programme design or adaptation.

Defining objectives is therefore not just about articulating purpose, but also about ensuring evidence is actionable, feasible to collect, and proportionate to stakeholder needs. Clarifying both the purpose and the driver increases the likelihood of uptake while preventing communities from being overburdened by unnecessary data collection.

Objectives should also take into account the type of area and the displacement phase (e.g. origin, displacement, return; acute/emergency, transition/recovery, protracted), as these will shape what kind of evidence is most relevant and how it will be used.

¹ Schell, J. (2019) Full Case Study Compendium of Area Based Approaches. Shelter Cluster, Settlements Approaches in Urban Areas Working Group. Available at: <https://sheltercluster.org/settlements-approaches-urban-areas-working-group/documents/full-case-study-compedium-area-based> (Accessed: 1 October 2025).

Possible objectives may include:

- Informing local action plans.
- Supporting programme design or adaptation.
- Strengthening coordination or advocacy.
- Generating evidence to feed into national durable solutions strategies or policy dialogue.

Step 4: Feasibility and Risk Check

Intended Result: A feasible, ethical research design adapted to the context, with clarity on sampling strategy, risk management, and operational requirements.

With objectives defined, the research design must be tested against feasibility and ethical standards. An overly ambitious design that cannot realistically be implemented risks wasting resources, undermining trust, or even exposing communities to harm. A feasibility and risk check ensures the design is achievable, appropriate to the context, and ethically sound.

Key considerations include:

- **Budget and timeframe** – whether the scope of work can be delivered within available resources. The Toolkit is designed to be flexible: if time or funding are limited, teams can prioritise key IASC criteria, streamline steps, or apply a light-touch version where full implementation is not feasible. However, the preferred approach remains full implementation of the Toolkit; a light-touch version should only be used when external constraints make this necessary. **See Annex 3.**
- **Technical expertise** – the presence of necessary skills in sampling, facilitation, analysis, and project management.
- **Security and access conditions** – the safety and practicality of reaching selected populations.
- **Political sensitivities and participant risks** – how the context may affect willingness to participate and the potential consequences of doing so.
- **Organisational capacity to respond** – avoiding raised expectations if identified needs cannot be addressed.
- **Ethical safeguards are integral throughout:** ensuring participation is voluntary and informed, remaining sensitive to trauma, and protecting participants from harm.

Once the area of assessment has been defined, a key methodological decision is the sampling strategy. Is statistically representative sampling (Tool B) realistic, or does the context require a lighter, purposive or qualitative approach (Tool A)? This choice is both methodological and ethical, balancing rigour with feasibility.

Feasibility checks should also include planning for validation and responsible use of findings, ensuring that results are fed back to communities and stakeholders in ways that support accountability and uptake.

Step 4 – Feasibility and Risk: Quick Checklist

- ☐ Timeframe and budget are realistic
- ☐ Technical capacity is available (survey and facilitation skills)
- ☐ Sampling approach is feasible in practice
- ☐ Access and security conditions are acceptable
- ☐ No foreseeable harm to participants or enumerators
- ☐ Expectations are aligned with local authorities / coordination structures

Annex 9: Sampling Design and Methodological Approach: Colombia Pilot summarises the approach used in the Colombia pilot.

Step 5: Tool Selection (Decision Tree)

Intended Result: A methodological choice that balances objectives, gaps, and capacities; ensures complementarity with existing evidence; adapts to the displacement context (including phases and return situations); and remains feasible in practice.

The Decision Tree is the instrument that brings together the analysis from the previous steps. It is not a stand-alone exercise but a logic-based tool that translates design choices (context, area, objectives, feasibility) into a clear methodological pathway. By walking through four sequential checks – policy and stakeholders, research objectives, information landscape, and capacities – the tree ensures that tool selection is evidence-based, context-sensitive, and feasible.

Link: [Durable Solutions Area Based Approach Toolkit and Decision Tree](#)

In practice, this means the Decision Tree:

- **Draws on the legal, policy, and stakeholder analysis from Step 1** to identify potential enablers, sensitivities, and existing evidence that will inform methodological choices.
- **Builds on the area definition from Step 2** to clarify the geographic scope of the assessment, while also considering whether the area is one of displacement, origin, or return, and what phase of displacement it is in.
- **Uses the objectives clarified in Step 3** to determine the type and depth of evidence required (perceptions, representative statistics, or both).
- **Tests choices against the feasibility checks from Step 4**, including available expertise, time, budget, access, and ethical safeguards.
- **Can be revisited iteratively** if feasibility, access, or political alignment shifts during implementation.
- **Helps ensure complementarity with existing assessments**, so that new evidence adds value rather than duplicates.

Box 3: Displacement Phases and Methodological Choices

The phase of displacement strongly influences which methods are most appropriate. The Decision Tree can be read with the following guidance in mind:

- **Acute/Emergency phase:** Quantitative approaches are often prioritised, as they enable the rapid collection of data on urgent needs (e.g. food, shelter, water, health, protection) to inform life-saving interventions. Embedding solutions thinking from the outset is essential to start identifying pathways towards durable solutions for displaced populations.
- **Transition/Recovery phase:** A mixed-methods approach is typically most effective. Quantitative data helps capture disparities in access and outcomes, while qualitative insights reveal community priorities, institutional capacities, and systemic barriers. Together, these methods support the alignment of humanitarian and development planning and help to build the foundations for durable solutions.
- **Protracted phase:** Qualitative approaches may be sufficient, particularly where robust quantitative datasets already exist. The focus shifts towards understanding systemic gaps, institutional capacities, and policy barriers, and using these insights to inform and advance progress towards durable solutions and sustainable recovery.

Note: These phases are indicative. Practitioners should adapt methods to context – for example, returns may combine acute needs (for new arrivals) with protracted challenges (for longer-term residents) in the same location.

Box 4: Return Contexts and Methodological Choices

While the Toolkit was not piloted in return contexts, returns are a frequent and sensitive feature of displacement situations. The following suggested approach can be used alongside the Decision Tree to guide methodological choices:

When assessing feasibility of return: Use Tool B (quantitative) to generate representative evidence on whether minimum conditions are in place (safety, access to services, livelihoods, housing/land/property). Complement with Tool A (qualitative) to capture perceptions, barriers, and political or systemic constraints.

When supporting ongoing returns: Prioritise understanding the needs of displacement-affected communities (DACs), service delivery, and institutional capacities. Tool A may be sufficient if strong quantitative baselines already exist. Where comparative evidence is needed (e.g. to differentiate returnees, hosts, and stayees), a combined approach (Tools A + B) is recommended.

In both situations, analysis should explicitly understand whether displaced populations are able to make voluntary, safe, and informed decisions about return, free from coercion.

Pilot Insight 2 - Somalia: A strong base of quantitative data was already available from government and partners, and stakeholders needed complementary insights into perceptions and barriers in Somalia. A further household survey was unnecessary, and feasibility considerations confirmed that resources and access were in place to conduct KIIs and FGDs, making Tool A both appropriate and feasible. The Decision Tree therefore pointed towards Tool A only, ensuring the assessment added value without duplication.

In Colombia, the municipality needed disaggregated evidence to adapt components of the national durable solutions strategy to local realities, particularly to inform municipal planning. This required quantitative household surveys to provide representative comparisons across displaced and host groups, combined with qualitative KIIs and FGDs to capture systemic issues, community resources, and contextual barriers. With sufficient capacity in place, the Decision Tree therefore guided the use of both Tool A and Tool B together.

Box 5: Adapting the Toolkit to Organisational Frameworks

The DS ABA Toolkit provides a common analytical structure for generating area-based evidence to inform progress toward durable solutions, aligned with the IASC Framework's eight criteria. It is designed to be adaptable. Organisations may interpret or group findings according to their own strategic or conceptual frameworks – for example, models structured around dimensions such as safety, inclusion, or wellbeing – while maintaining consistency in data collection and analysis.

To adapt the Toolkit, practitioners can map their internal framework to the existing IASC-aligned domains. This allows integration of alternative approaches such as those focusing on “safety” dimensions, development and governance indicators, or value-based community priorities, ensuring that evidence remains comparable while reflecting each organisation's priorities.

Annex 12: Example of Organisational Alignment offers an example of linking organisational priorities with the Toolkit's assessment framework.

The Decision Tree is designed to be applied collaboratively with stakeholders and adapted to the specific context. It provides structure but works best when grounded in contextual judgement and meaningful participation.

Annex 10: Applying the Decision Tree: Operational Guidance, illustrates how the four sequential checks are reconciled to arrive at a final tool choice.

Annex 11: Applying the Decision Tree: Somalia Worked Example presents a worked example, showing how the Decision Tree arrives at Tool A, and how signals can be interpreted across the four checks.

Step 6: ToR Development

Intended Result: A jointly endorsed ToR guiding Phase 2, providing clarity, accountability, and a framework for collaborative implementation.

The final output of Phase 1 is a Terms of Reference (ToR) that brings together all design decisions, including objectives, scope, area, methods, sampling approach, timeframe, roles and ethical safeguards, into one validated document. Developed collaboratively and endorsed by all stakeholders, the ToR ensures shared ownership, accountability and a clear roadmap for implementation.

The ToR is more than an administrative document: it signals political agreement, formalises commitments, and provides a reference point for all actors throughout the assessment. By clarifying roles, responsibilities, and expectations up front, it helps prevent duplication, strengthens coordination, and ensures that findings will be recognised and used.

Step 6: ToR Completeness Checklist

- ☐ Objectives and scope are clearly defined
- ☐ Target area and population are specified
- ☐ Methodology and tools (A/B) are agreed
- ☐ Roles, responsibilities and governance arrangements are defined
- ☐ Timeline and resource requirements are feasible
- ☐ Ethical, data protection and safeguarding considerations are noted
- ☐ Relevant authorities and coordination structures have reviewed the ToR
- ☐ ToR is formally endorsed / ownership confirmed

Terms of Reference for the pilot exercises

Somalia ToR

Colombia ToR

Area-based Assessment (ABA) on durable solutions, Dec 2024

IV. Horseed	IDPs
V. Hooseedag	IDPs
VI. Iaha	IDPs
VII. Salamey	IDPs
VIII. Towiq	IDPs
IX. Wadaj	IDPs
X. Waben	IDPs
XI. Bende	Host Community

The neighborhoods highlighted in red in the above table are the ones selected for the focus group discussions based on a stratified purposive sampling of the IDP sites.

The following table presents the targeted neighborhood's IDP sites:

Derivativo	IDP Site names	Catchment Area	Partners	Date of Establishment	Ref HHs	# of Individuals	Latitude	Longitude
Horseed	Horseed 1	CA05	IDP	ICM	Dec05	120	3.1298915	41.3590645
	Horseed	CA05	IDP	ICM	Mar18	165	3.1299024	41.3610772
Barewaq	Barewaq	CA06	IDP	ACTED	Mar18	165	3.1186742	41.3326275
	Tawakal 1	CA06	IDP	ACTED	Jan13	150	3.1154374	41.3321669
	Oosate	CA11	IDP	ICM	Mar20	140	3.1503302	41.3719707
Adado	Dayeel	CA15	IDP	ACTED	Mar18	275	3.1279597	41.37443833
	Dabale	CA14	IDP	RHW	Oct17	112	3.1314255	41.3772651

A) Focus group discussions gender breakdown:

A) Focus group discussions gender breakdown:			
	IDP	Host community	Total
Barewaqo	1 M+ 1F	1 M	3
Horseed_baioa	1 M+ 1F	1 F	3
Adaado	1 M+ 1F	1 F	3
		Total	9

EBA Soluciones Duraderas para IDPs, Febrero 2025

Tabla 3: Metodología y muestreo para la EBA sobre soluciones duraderas.

Método de recolección	Número por localidad	Unidad de Análisis	Tipo muestreo	Población	Tipo herramienta	Localidad	Desagregaciones
Cualitativo – Entrevista a informante clave	10	NA	No probabilístico Bola de nieve	Autoridades locales, Líderes comunitarios, Organizaciones locales y humanitarias.	Guía semi estructurada		NA
Cualitativo – Grupo Focal de Discusión	3	NA	No probabilístico Bola de nieve	Población desplazada, Comunidad de acogida.	Guía semi estructurada	Barro Bella Flor, Barro Paraiso Quiba y Barro el Mirador	NA
Cuantitativo – Encuesta a Hogar	285 (62 en Bella Flor, 144 en Paraiso Quiba, 83 en El Mirador)	Individuo o y hogar	Análisis estratificado	Población desplazada interna y de acogida residente en los tres barrios. Población de acogida residente en los tres barrios	Cuestionario estructurado		Personas víctimas de desplazamiento, género. Población de acogida.

Se utilizarán para la EBA las herramientas contenidas en la caja de herramientas puesta a disposición por la sede de IMPACT, las cuales fueron previamente diseñadas y construidas por la sede junto con **DMC** y modificadas a través de consultas que se realizaron con diferentes países y actores.

La caja contiene una herramienta cuantitativa y una cualitativa. Ambas fueron traducidas al español, revisadas por el equipo de evaluación de IMPACT, por socios externos expertos en temas de desplazamiento interno y por el grupo de trabajo, para asegurar:

- Evitar recopilar información ya disponible y así no saturar las comunidades con preguntas innecesarias o levantar expectativas para cumplir con este objetivo, algunos de los bloques del cuestionario cuantitativo y de la guía cualitativa no fueron incluidos en el Plan de Análisis de Datos (Excel anexo).
- Minimizar el posible impacto psicológico de las víctimas y hogares respondientes
- Adaptar las preguntas al contexto colombiano y local para evitar herir sensibilidades o poner en riesgo a los respondientes a través de temas sensibles como el conflicto interno.

Las encuestas entrantes serán monitoreadas a través de un dashboard para poder visualizar el número de encuestas efectuadas por zona y las faltantes. Los datos recopilados serán monitoreados por una oficial de datos, la cual averiguará el correcto diligenciamiento de la encuesta. Esto permitirá poder avisar los encuestadores desde el primer día de recolección de datos y mejorar la calidad y perfeccionar los datos recopilados.

3.5. Procesamiento & análisis de datos

Encuesta de hogares

Después de cada jornada de recolección de información, se recopilarán y limpiarán los datos brutos y centralizados, se eliminarán las entradas duplicadas, los valores atípicos y se realizarán un seguimiento de los equipos de campo si es

PHASE 2: Data Collection

PHASE 1 8 - 10 weeks	PHASE 2 4 - 6 weeks	PHASE 3 8 - 12 weeks
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The credibility of any durable solutions assessment depends not only on a robust design but also on effective implementation. Even a well-developed methodology can fail if data collection is poorly prepared, sampling is inaccurate, or findings are not validated with stakeholders. This phase focuses on putting the assessment into practice, ensuring that teams are well prepared, data is collected inclusively and reliably, methods are adapted to context, analysis is rigorous, and findings are validated.

The six steps presented here build on lessons from the pilot assessments in Somalia and Colombia. While these pilots did not alter the underlying methodology, they highlighted the importance of strong groundwork, trust-building with communities, comprehensive enumerator training, and flexibility during data collection. The pilots also showed that challenges such as sampling inaccuracies or gaps in validation are not technical oversights but reflections of real-world constraints that must be anticipated and managed.

Importantly, the Toolkit's instruments are designed to be adaptable and flexible, allowing users to tailor questions and modules to their specific context. This ensures that each assessment remains relevant and responsive to local realities rather than following a rigid, standardised approach. Phase 2 sets out a structured process that reflects these operational realities, increasing the likelihood that data collection and analysis are not only technically sound but also politically credible and practically useful.

Before data collection begins, teams should review the final tools to ensure they remain contextually appropriate and ethically sound, paying particular attention to any questions marked [SENSITIVE] that may require careful facilitation or additional safeguards.

Step 7: Operational Preparation

Intended Result: A well-prepared and trusted assessment team, supported by accurate sampling frames, adapted and contextually relevant tools, which can be co-designed with displacement-affected communities in line with accountability commitments, and strong local entry points, ensuring smooth and credible data collection.

Successful data collection depends on thorough preparation through close collaboration with stakeholders, recruitment and training of enumerators, verification of sampling frames, and trust building with local communities. Early coordination among key actors, including government counterparts, NGOs, and community representatives, helps align expectations, clarify roles, and secure safe access to target areas.

Equally important is finalising the tools themselves. Once the methodological choice has been made (Step 5), the instruments should be reviewed and adapted to reflect the objectives of the assessment and the specific information needs identified. This may include adding, removing, or rephrasing questions; excluding whole sections that are not relevant; or aligning wording with local terminology. For key informant interviews, the adaptation process should also identify which thematic areas are most relevant to each stakeholder, ensuring that only the corresponding sections of the tool are applied. This preparation avoids asking irrelevant questions, strengthens data quality, and reduces the burden on respondents.

Finalising the tools can also involve consultation with displacement-affected communities (DACs). Their perspectives can highlight which issues are most pressing, which terms and concepts are understood locally, and which topics may be sensitive or inappropriate. Including DACs at this stage improves contextual relevance, demonstrates accountability, and helps ensure that communities are not only participants in data collection but also shape the questions being asked. This reflects broader global standards such as the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions, and the Core Humanitarian Standard, which emphasise participation, inclusion, and accountability to affected populations.

Box 6: Approaching Sensitive Issues in Practice

Sensitivities are more often shaped by the wider political and social dynamics of the context than by the wording of individual questions. They may relate to protection, power relations, or competing interests that shape who participates and what is shared. Recognising and managing these dynamics is essential to ensure participation is voluntary, safe, and credible.

In some contexts, government actors may be party to conflict, implicated in displacement, or not prioritising a durable solutions agenda, while non-state actors may control territory or provide services that affect displaced populations. Engagement with either must be principled, impartial, and transparent, avoiding any action that could legitimise harm or create false expectations. Where appropriate, consult trusted local partners or coordination mechanisms before initiating dialogue, and ensure participants are not exposed to risk as a result of engagement.²

Practitioners should be aware of assessment fatigue and unmet expectations in communities repeatedly consulted without visible outcomes. It is critical to explain the purpose and limits of engagement clearly, and pause or redirect discussions that become sensitive or unsafe.

When discussing return or relocation, uphold voluntariness, safety, and dignity. In higher-risk settings, separate consultations or remote modalities may better protect participants.

Some questions in the DS ABA tools are marked [SENSITIVE] because they may relate to protection concerns, politically or socially sensitive issues, or require particular care during facilitation. Before data collection begins, teams should review these questions to confirm they remain appropriate for the context. This review should be informed by discussion with colleagues, local partners, or community representatives who understand local dynamics and can advise on whether a question should remain, be rephrased, or be excluded. Enumerator training should explicitly cover how to handle sensitive topics, ensure privacy, obtain informed consent, and recognise when a discussion should be paused or stopped. When uncertainty arises, practitioners should seek guidance from those familiar with the context. These preparatory steps help ensure that sensitive subjects are approached responsibly and that participation remains voluntary, safe, and respectful.

Strong operational preparation also relies on collaboration and contextual validation. Early consultation with government counterparts, local organisations, and technical experts helps align tools with existing

² IMPACT Initiatives & IDMC (2024) *Assessing durable solutions to internal displacement at the area level: Literature review*.

frameworks, build trust, and identify context-specific sensitivities. These joint discussions ensure that methods are feasible, language is appropriate, and the assessment reflects local realities and priorities.

Preparation should include:

- Recruitment of locally trusted enumerators with relevant language and cultural knowledge.
- Direct communication with municipal and community authorities to avoid misaligned expectations or late changes in assessment areas.
- Verification of sampling frames in the data collection phase to reduce misclassification (e.g. ensuring that intended IDP households are correctly identified).
- Structured consultation with government, local organisations, and displacement-affected communities to test and validate tools, identify contextual sensitivities, and strengthen ownership.
- Training and supporting enumerators not only on technical tasks but also on facilitation, ethics, and sensitivity to trauma.

Pilot Insight 3 - Somalia and Columbia: Experience from the pilots in Somalia and Colombia demonstrated that strong operational preparation relies on early testing, contextual adaptation, and local trust building. In Somalia, using dialect-speaking enumerators and conducting early scoping visits helped open access to areas that would otherwise have been closed. In Colombia, limitations in available population data and indirect communication channels created delays and reduced sampling accuracy, highlighting the importance of direct engagement with municipal actors and early verification of sampling frames. Teams also conducted line-by-line comparisons with national surveys and partner tools to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication. Testing and consultation during preparation also helped identify context-specific themes: in Colombia, local organisations emphasised the inclusion of disability and double displacement, while in Somalia, partners highlighted the need for greater nuance on housing, land, and property (HLP) questions. Incorporating this feedback during design ensured tools were relevant without altering the core methodology.

Some questions in the tools are marked [SENSITIVE] because they may relate to protection concerns, politically or socially sensitive issues, or require careful facilitation. Teams should review these items before data collection to confirm they remain appropriate for the context.

Where necessary, consult colleagues, local partners, or community representatives who understand the context to validate whether each sensitive question should remain, be rephrased, or be excluded. Enumerator training should cover how to handle sensitive topics, maintain confidentiality, and know when to avoid or stop a discussion.

Step 7: Operational Readiness Checklist

- ☐ Operational teams/implementing staff have been identified and briefed
- ☐ Roles and responsibilities are clear across the team
- ☐ Tools (A and/or B) have been adapted to context
- ☐ Training / orientation has been completed
- ☐ Permissions / access arrangements are confirmed
- ☐ Logistics and data collection materials are in place
- ☐ Referral pathways and safeguarding measures are in place
- ☐ Risks and mitigation measures have been reviewed before deployment

Step 8: Data Collection

Intended Result: A data collection process that is inclusive, representative of diverse perspectives, and methodologically aligned with the expertise of each informant — ensuring credibility, efficiency, and respect for stakeholder contributions.

Data collection should balance methodological rigour with inclusivity. Quantitative surveys (Tool B) must adhere to the agreed sampling strategy, while qualitative exercises (Tool A) such as key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) should capture diverse perspectives, including those of women, youth, and marginalised groups.

Key informants must be carefully selected for their relevance, impartiality, and credibility. It is equally important that the questions posed reflect their subject-matter expertise. For example, a local water utility or health service provider can offer valuable operational insight on service delivery but is unlikely to provide accurate analysis of broader policy or institutional frameworks. Conversely, national or municipal authorities may clarify governance or coordination aspects but not necessarily community-level barriers. Mapping these distinctions in advance helps ensure that each interview captures the type of information each actor is best placed to provide.

To avoid irrelevant or weak data, teams should map in advance the thematic areas most relevant to each informant and prepare tailored question sets accordingly. This requires cross-checking the stakeholder list (see Step 1) with the objectives of the assessment (see Step 3) to determine who is best placed to speak on which issues. In practice, this may mean applying only selected sections of the tool during each interview, rather than running through the entire instrument. Such tailoring improves data quality, respects informants' time, and reduces fatigue among stakeholders who are often approached by multiple assessments.

Effective participation can also depend on respecting local authority structures and community protocols, ensuring that engagement is perceived as legitimate and inclusive.

Pilot Insight 4 - Somalia and Columbia: *In Somalia, gender-segregated FGDs created space for women's perspectives, while in Colombia, collaboration with community leaders and local organisations facilitated access. However, some groups - such as youth, minority clans, and the private sector - remained under-represented, highlighting the need for deliberate inclusion strategies.*

Annex 13: Key Informant Interviews — Somalia Pilot provides an example list of Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), illustrating the breadth of actors engaged, including local authorities, traditional leaders, service providers, NGOs, and displaced community representatives.

Step 9: Ongoing Adaptation

Intended Result: A flexible, adaptive process that maintains methodological integrity while responding to contextual and cultural realities, supported by regular debriefing and feedback mechanisms that ensure data remains relevant, accurate, and usable.

Even with strong preparation, data collection realities demand adaptation. Enumerators may need to simplify tools after testing, rephrase complex concepts, or adjust facilitation methods to maintain engagement. Structured debriefings between field teams and coordinators can help identify these challenges early, allowing small, controlled adjustments that improve clarity without altering the methodology.

Enumerator confidence, contextual awareness, and consistent communication among field teams are as important as the tools themselves. Ongoing feedback loops during implementation ensure that adaptations remain consistent with agreed objectives and that learning from the field continuously informs the process.

If a question marked [SENSITIVE] cannot be asked safely or appropriately, it should be skipped rather than altered, and this decision briefly recorded in field notes.

Pilot Insight 5 - Somalia and Colombia: In both pilots, teams made minor refinements to data-collection methods during implementation. When participants found certain questions abstract or repetitive, enumerators rephrased or simplified language to improve understanding and maintain engagement. These small, real-time adaptations — guided by experienced field teams — strengthened data quality and ensured that responses remained relevant and meaningful. Enumerator confidence and contextual familiarity proved critical to maintaining methodological integrity.

PHASE 3: Analysis, Validation, and Dissemination

PHASE 1 8 - 10 weeks	PHASE 2 4- 6 weeks	PHASE 3 8 - 12 weeks
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Phase 3 marks the transition from data collection to evidence generation. The focus is on systematic analysis, participatory validation, and targeted dissemination. Together, these steps ensure that findings are methodologically sound, contextually grounded, and aligned with the assessment's objectives — whether to inform policy dialogue or guide programming — while consistently strengthening accountability to displacement-affected communities.

The Toolkit's methods are designed to be adaptable and flexible, enabling teams to align analysis and interpretation with their organisational frameworks and decision-making processes. This adaptability supports the integration of diverse analytical perspectives while maintaining rigour, comparability, and relevance across different institutional settings.

Experience from the pilots in Somalia and Colombia demonstrated that the credibility and utility of an assessment depend not only on the quality of the data collected, but also on how results are interpreted, tested with stakeholders, and communicated to diverse audiences. Embedding accountability and

aligning outputs with institutional and policy processes are therefore critical to ensuring that evidence informs durable solutions planning and programming in practice.

Step 10: Data Analysis

Intended Result: A rigorous, transparent analysis that integrates systemic and household perspectives, combines new and existing data, accounts for external risks, and translates evidence into coordinated, area-specific entry points and practical pathways for durable solutions.

The analysis stage is where raw data becomes actionable evidence. Findings should not only describe conditions but also illuminate the structural barriers, systemic gaps, and opportunities that shape durable solutions. A rigorous analysis requires combining household-level statistics with qualitative insights, and embedding both within the broader legal, policy, and institutional context established in Step 1. Interpreting results against this baseline makes it possible to compare formal rights and commitments with lived realities, highlighting the gaps that are most critical to address.

The analysis stage operationalises the Toolkit's five objectives, translating collected data into area-specific evidence that informs planning, coordination, and durable solutions strategies.

Core principles for analysis:

- **Apply a rights-based and systems lens:** Household and community findings should be interpreted through the lens of rights realisation and system performance. This means assessing not only whether services and opportunities exist, but whether displaced and host populations can access them on an equal basis and through accountable, functioning systems. Reading household data against policy frameworks, governance arrangements, and service delivery structures helps distinguish between immediate needs and the structural barriers — such as documentation gaps, insecure tenure, inequitable access, or weak institutional capacity — that sustain vulnerability and limit progress toward durable solutions.
- **Interpret findings against the Step 1 context review:** Building on the rights and systems perspective above, analysis should explicitly compare observed conditions with the legal and policy frameworks mapped in Step 1. This strengthens accountability by linking lived realities to formal commitments and identifying where implementation gaps persist.
- **Integrate methods systematically:** Mixed-methods analysis should be planned from the outset, aligning variables and themes across qualitative and quantitative tools. Analysis should intentionally link statistical trends with qualitative explanations to test, interpret, and refine findings. Joint debriefs between quantitative and qualitative teams support consistent interpretation and ensure that both data types contribute to a unified narrative.
- **Integrate and consolidate existing evidence:** Analysis should combine new qualitative and quantitative findings with relevant secondary data - such as organisation-specific multi-sector needs assessments (MSNAs), data compiled under the Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF), or existing government statistics - into a shared analytical baseline. Practitioners should assess the timeliness, level of disaggregation (particularly between displaced and host populations), geographic coverage, and comparability of these sources to ensure they are fit for area-based analysis. Collaborative use of secondary data strengthens coherence, prevents duplication, and grounds analysis in a collective evidence base.
- **Account for external drivers and contextual limitations:** External risks and shocks—such as climate variability, natural hazards, conflict dynamics, or market fluctuations, can influence the

barriers identified by communities and affect confidence in findings. These factors should be incorporated into the framing and interpretation of results, drawing on relevant system reviews and early-warning data where available.

- **Translate evidence into actionable entry points:** Analysis should conclude with clear implications for programming, coordination, and policy dialogue, identifying where systemic reform, targeted investment, or community-based action can reduce barriers and support solutions.

Step 10: Analytical output checklist

A complete analysis process under the Toolkit will normally produce the following outputs:

- ☐ Domain-level summary tables presenting key indicators and patterns
- ☐ Barrier analysis showing root causes and systemic drivers
- ☐ KII/FGD thematic summaries capturing contextual nuance and lived experience
- ☐ Triangulated findings integrating qualitative and quantitative evidence
- ☐ Gap analysis comparing lived conditions to legal/policy commitments
- ☐ Implications for programming and policy (entry points / pathways)

Pilot Insight 6 – Somalia and Columbia: *In Somalia, the pilot focused exclusively on qualitative data collection, as robust quantitative datasets were already available. However, these existing data were not systematically incorporated into the analysis or reporting, which reduced opportunities for triangulation, comparison, and the identification of programming entry points. A more integrated approach would have strengthened area-specific evidence and enhanced the relevance of findings for coordinated planning and investment decisions. In Colombia, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected, but analysis remained largely descriptive, with findings presented in parallel rather than fully integrated.*

Step 11: Validation and Interpretation

Intended Result: An inclusive and transparent validation process that strengthens accountability to displacement-affected communities, enhances ownership among institutional stakeholders, and increases the likelihood that evidence informs coordinated planning, policy dialogue, and programming for durable solutions.

Validation is a critical step to ensure that analysis is credible, inclusive, and grounded in lived realities. Findings should be shared back with stakeholders, including local authorities, NGOs, community representatives, and national actors, through participatory processes suited to the context. These may include workshops, bilateral consultations, or community dialogues, depending on accessibility and participant availability. Validation should occur at multiple levels, engaging both local communities and higher-level decision-makers, and ensuring that marginalised voices are included through accessible and context-appropriate formats.

Validation also reinforces accountability to displacement-affected communities (DACs), ensuring they can confirm whether findings reflect their experiences. It aligns with the IASC Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations and the Core Humanitarian Standard, which emphasise that affected people must influence decisions that shape their lives.

Pilot Insight 7 - Somalia: The validation workshop in Somalia brought together DAC representatives, local authorities, NGOs, and national actors, marking the first time many community members engaged directly with decision-makers in a joint analysis forum. The event provided an open platform to discuss barriers to durable solutions, including livelihoods, access to finance, and land tenure, and to identify shared priorities for programming. Participants endorsed the relevance of the toolkit and highlighted opportunities to strengthen coordination and integration with national frameworks.

Step 12: Dissemination

Intended Result: Evidence that is communicated in accessible and context-appropriate ways, aligned with objectives and audiences, and disseminated through suitable channels to support accountability and inform policy, planning, and programming decisions.

Dissemination completes the evidence-to-action cycle of the DS ABA Toolkit by ensuring that findings generated through analysis and validation are communicated effectively to inform planning, coordination, and durable solutions strategies. The scope and format of dissemination should be determined by the objectives, context, and intended users of the assessment. In some cases, a single comprehensive report may be sufficient; in others, a multi-channel approach — combining reports, briefs, presentations, and accessible formats for affected communities — will maximise uptake, accountability, and influence.

Dissemination can include:

- **Comprehensive assessment reports:** full reports were produced in the pilots in [Colombia \(Ciudad Bolívar, July 2025\)](#) and [Somalia \(Baidoa, June 2025\)](#), designed to inform local and national durable solutions strategies and planning processes.
- **Tailored outputs:** concise policy briefs for authorities; datasets or dashboards for coordination platforms; thematic summaries for donors and NGOs; and accessible formats — such as short briefs, infographics, or community meetings — for displacement-affected communities.
- **Strategic alignment:** communication can be timed with policy or planning processes to maximise influence, and wherever possible carried out with government endorsement to strengthen ownership.
- **Transparency and accountability:** findings can be fed back to displacement-affected communities in clear and accessible ways, reinforcing participation and trust.
- **Responsible data use:** dissemination must follow ethical standards, protecting confidentiality and preventing misuse of sensitive information.

Pilot Insight 8 - Somalia and Columbia: In Somalia, the report and key findings presentation were disseminated through the government-led Durable Solutions Working Group (DSWG), following final inputs and endorsement from the national government. This enabled formal circulation and online publication through national platforms, strengthening ownership and visibility. In Colombia, engagement with local authorities progressed more slowly, leading the team to rely on existing coordination platforms. Across both pilots, adaptable dissemination strategies and early engagement proved essential.

Annex 14: Dissemination Matrix: Template presents a sample to support tailoring of products and accessibility considerations for different user groups.

5. Annexes

Annex 1: Key Terms and Definitions

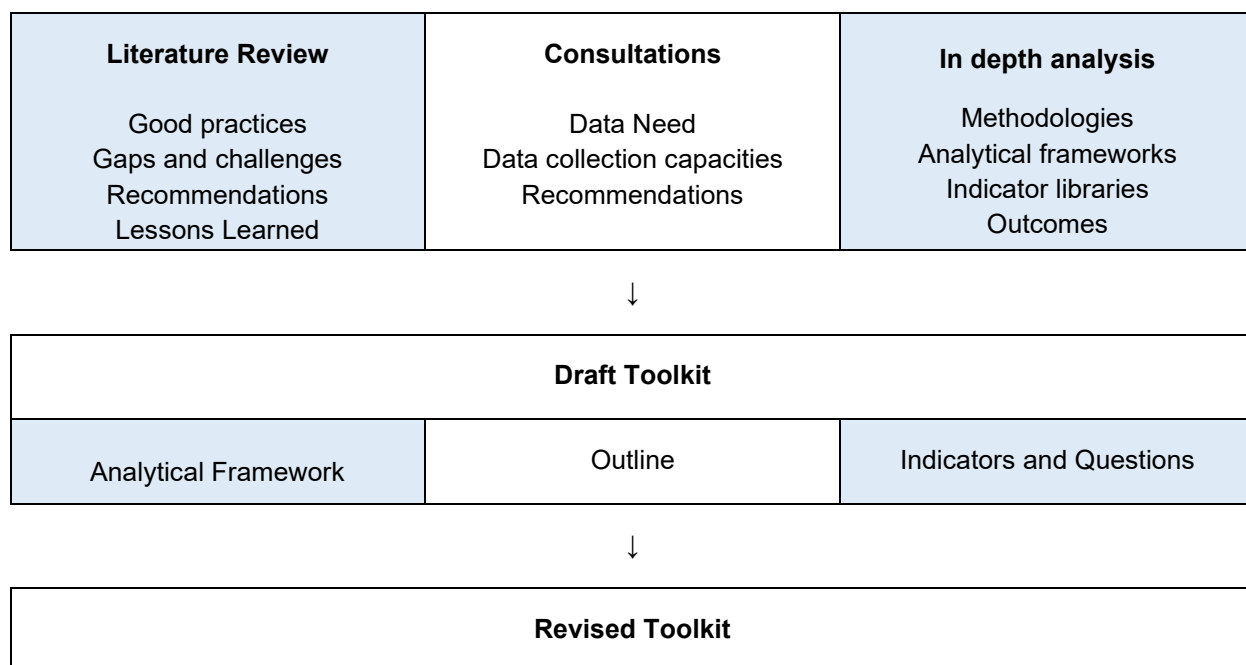
Term	Definition	Source
Area-based Approach	Tool/methodology/assessment focusing on a neighbourhood, village, town, municipality, city, collective centre and/or other delimited location using a “multisectoral, multi-stakeholder, geographically targeted” approach “and consider[ing] the whole population within that location”	Full Case Study Compendium of Area Based Approaches, Shelter Cluster
Assessment of durable solutions	<p>The phrase refers to tools and approaches designed to determine the degree of progress towards durable solutions for displaced populations within a specific context.</p> <p>These tools typically combine quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the extent to which displaced persons are able to achieve safety, access to rights, and self-reliance comparable to non-displaced populations.</p> <p>They may also serve to identify context-specific entry points for advancing durable solutions and to adapt the concept of durable solutions to local realities. Relevant examples include the ReDSS Solutions Framework, the DSP Syria Analytical Framework, and JIPS-led durable solutions analyses and area-based assessments.</p>	
Displacement-affected community (DAC)	“Anyone living in an area where internal displacement has taken place, and may include IDPs, host community members, refugees, returnees, ex-combatants or others whose living conditions are impacted by the presence of IDPs.”	UNDP and SOAS, Towards Development Solutions to Internal Displacement
Durable solution (or solution)	<p>“A durable solution is achieved when internally displaced persons no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement.”</p> <p>Note: The three commonly identified durable solution pathways based on the IASC Framework are return, local integration and relocation (called resettlement in the Guiding Principles).</p>	IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons

Global	Pertaining to the world or countries across two or more regions.	
Internally displaced person (IDP)	“Internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.”	Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement
Local	Pertaining to a sub-national area (e.g. admin level 3,4)	
Local Integration	“Sustainable integration in areas where forcibly displaced persons take refuge.”	IASC Framework on Durable Solutions
National	Pertaining to one country. The list of countries considered includes UN member and non-member states.	
Operational actor	Governmental or non-governmental agencies and organisations implementing in-country programmes, projects and/or interventions related to durable solutions.	
Refugee	Someone who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."	Article 1(A)(2) of the 1951 Convention , as amended in the 1967 Protocol
Regional	Pertaining to one of the six geographical regions used by the UN DESA Population Division: Africa; Asia; Europe; Latin America and the Caribbean; Northern America, and Oceania.	
Relocation	“Sustainable integration in another part of the country (settlement elsewhere in the country).”	IASC Framework on Durable Solutions

Return	“Sustainable reintegration at the place of origin.”	IASC Framework on Durable Solutions
Returnee (IDP)	<p>“The term returnee carries a broader meaning outside the refugee context, and may include, for example, internally displaced persons who return to their previous place of residence.”</p> <p>As for the UNHCR definition of refugee returnees, IDP returnees or simply returnees in this report are those with the intention of remaining permanently in their previous place of residence and who are yet to be fully integrated.</p>	UNHCR's Master Glossary of Terms
Tool	<p>In this report, it refers to a product with a distinct research design and methodology that other actors could either partially or fully use for the measurement and assessment of durable solutions.</p> <p>A paper or report without methods and steps, which could be followed and implemented by others is not considered a tool but rather an approach.</p>	

Annex 2: Toolkit Design Process

The diagram below illustrates the iterative process used to develop the Toolkit, combining literature review, expert consultations, and in-depth analysis to produce a draft tool with an analytical framework, outline, and set of indicators and questions.



Annex 3: Prioritising IASC Criteria and Implementing a Light-Touch Version

This annex provides a practical, manual method for practitioners to narrow the focus of the Toolkit when applying it under significant time, access or resource constraints. It enables teams to prioritise a limited number of IASC criteria and question modules without recoding the tools, preserving analytical consistency with the full version.

The preferred approach remains full implementation of the Toolkit; a light-touch version should only be used when external constraints make this necessary. When applied, the light-touch approach must still adhere to the same analytical principles to maintain rigour and comparability.

Step 1. Clarify the Purpose of the Assessment

Reconfirm the objective and intended use of findings before reducing scope. Typical objectives fall into three categories:

- **Strategy and Planning:** informing area-based action plans or strategies.
- **Programmatic and Design:** adapting programmes or targeting investments.
- **Advocacy:** highlighting barriers and entry points for durable solutions.

Step 2. Score Each IASC Criterion

Each IASC criterion should be reviewed by the assessment team (and, where possible, key partners) against three filters: **relevance**, **feasibility**, and **existing data**. The aim is for a rapid, transparent judgement to help decide which domains to retain for a light-touch assessment. After scoring, select three to four domains rated highest overall for both relevance and feasibility. These will form the focus of the light-touch assessment.

How to Score Each Criterion

Use a 1–3 scale, or the corresponding qualitative labels *Low / Medium / High*:

Score	Meaning	Guiding Questions
3 (High)	Strong justification to include	Is the criterion directly linked to the assessment objectives or a priority barrier? Can reliable data be collected easily and safely?
2 (Medium)	Potentially relevant but secondary	Does the criterion relate indirectly to objectives or depend on partner data? Are there moderate constraints to data collection?
1 (Low)	Low priority for this round	Is the topic outside the current scope or already well covered by existing datasets? Would collecting new data require disproportionate effort or risk?

Example of a Completed Scoring Table

IASC Criterion	Relevance	Feasibility	Existing Data	Total (max 9)	Priority Level	Decision / Rationale
Safety, Security, and Freedom of Movement (Criterion 1)	3	3	2	8	High	Include — Core concern and feasible to assess qualitatively.
Adequate Standard of Living (Criterion 2)	2	2	3	7	Medium–High	Include — Secondary data sufficient for some indicators.
Livelihoods and Employment (Criterion 3)	2	2	2	6	Medium	Optional — Include qualitatively if capacity allows.
Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) Rights (Criterion 4)	3	2	2	7	High	Include — Central barrier to solutions in this area.
Documentation (Criterion 5)	2	3	2	7	Medium–High	Include — Feasible through KIs and secondary sources.
Family Unity (Criterion 6)	1	1	1	3	Low	Exclude — Low relevance to current objective.
Participation in Public Affairs (Criterion 7)	2	1	1	4	Low	Exclude — Limited feasibility under current conditions.
Access to Justice and Remedies (Criterion 8)	2	1	2	5	Medium	Optional — Include qualitatively if capacity allows.

Scoring Process

1. Rate each criterion individually for relevance, feasibility, and existing data availability using the 1-3 scale.
2. Sum the three scores to produce a total out of 9, then rank the criteria from highest to lowest.
3. Discuss the results as a team, ideally with key partners, to agree on which domains are essential to include.
4. Select the top three or four criteria for inclusion in the light-touch assessment.
5. Record short justifications for inclusion, exclusion, or partial inclusion in the “Decision / Rationale” column to ensure transparency and comparability.

Interpreting the Scores

Total Score	Interpretation	Recommended Use
7–9	High Priority	Include as core domains for assessment.
5–6	Medium Priority	Include qualitatively only, or through secondary data if time allows.
≤4	Low Priority	Exclude from this round; cover through partner data or secondary review.

Note: This scoring exercise is intended to support transparent, team-based prioritisation rather than precision measurement. When resources or time are particularly limited, teams may conduct scoring through a short facilitated discussion instead of a formal matrix.

Step 3. Map Selected Criteria to Existing Tools

1. Identify which questions in Tool A (and, if relevant, Tool B) relate to the retained criteria.
2. Highlight or mark those questions for use.
3. Omit sections linked to unselected criteria.

It is recommended to retain at least one question per selected domain that addresses systems and institutions, service delivery and access, and community perceptions or agency, to ensure a balanced analysis across structural, operational, and experiential dimensions. See **Annex 4: Question Set for Light-Touch Application - HLP (Urban Self-Settled Populations)** for an example of a light-touch mapping using HLP criteria in an urban setting.

Step 4. Document the Prioritisation

Record in the ToR or assessment plan which criteria were included or excluded, and why. This ensures transparency and enables comparison with other Toolkit applications. To enhance accessibility, a summary of the prioritisation table should also be presented in the final assessment report, either within the introduction or as an annex.

The table below provides an example

IASC Criterion	Included?	Rationale
Safety, Security, and Freedom of Movement (Criterion 1)	Yes	<i>Central to area plan, high community concern</i>
Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) Rights (Criterion 4)	Yes	<i>Critical barrier to solutions</i>
Livelihoods and Employment (Criterion 3)	Yes	<i>Priority for recovery planning</i>
Documentation (Criterion 5)	Yes	<i>Feasible and under-assessed</i>
Others	No	<i>Covered by partner datasets / low feasibility</i>

Step 5. Implement the Light-Touch Version

A light-touch assessment generally involves a reduced timeline, approximately 12 weeks from design to reporting, while maintaining core methodological steps.

Phase	Adjusted Process
Phase 1: Planning (≈ 6 weeks)	Complete Steps 1–4 of the Toolkit (context, area, objectives, feasibility). The Decision Tree can be used to confirm Tool A only.
Phase 2: Data Collection (≈ 3 weeks)	Conduct KIs as appropriate to the scale and diversity of the assessment area, and around 3–4 FGDs to ensure inclusion and minimum disaggregation. When well facilitated, this provides sufficient qualitative depth without overburdening teams. Supplement with existing quantitative or secondary data where available.
Phase 3: Analysis and Validation (≈ 3 weeks)	Synthesize findings against the Step 1 context review; validate through a single stakeholder workshop or remote consultation; produce a short summary brief.

All dissemination materials should specify that the exercise represents a light-touch application of the Toolkit. For example, this assessment applied the Toolkit in a light-touch form, focusing on selected IASC criteria identified through a manual prioritisation process, using qualitative methods and secondary data review.

Step 6. Expanding Later

If new funding or access allows, the remaining IASC criteria can be reintroduced and data collection extended. The prioritisation record created in Step 4 ensures full methodological continuity.

Outcome

This approach provides an entry point for practitioners with limited resources to apply the Toolkit while ensuring analytical rigour and policy relevance. Following this walkthrough should provide a version of the Toolkit that is:

- **Proportionate:** scaled to available resources and time;
- **Comparable:** maintains the same analytical framework;
- **Action-oriented:** focuses on barriers and opportunities most relevant to the local durable solutions context.

Annex 4: Question Set for Light-Touch Application - HLP (Urban Self-Settled Populations)

This annex provides a practical illustration of how the Toolkit can be applied proportionally when operating under significant time, access, or resource constraints. It presents an example question set derived from Tool A – HLP: Availability and Regulation on Land and Housing, adapted for an urban context where displaced populations are self-settled in rented or informally occupied accommodation.

The example demonstrates how an assessment team can retain the Toolkit’s analytical structure—covering Systems and Institutions, Service Access and Delivery, and Community Perceptions and Agency, while limiting the number of questions to those that are most relevant and feasible.

Practitioners can use this as a model when developing similar light-touch versions for other IASC criteria or domains. This approach ensures that even in constrained environments, evidence generation remains systematic and comparable across areas.

Main Question (Tool A)	Example Sub-questions / Probes (Urban Context)	Analytical Lens	Use in KII / FGD	Purpose / Use
[SENSITIVE] For those displaced people who are self-settled in urban neighbourhoods, how has the occupancy been arranged?	Who owns the buildings or plots being occupied (private landlords, municipality)? What type of agreement exists – rental, informal arrangement, caretaking? Is any written or verbal contract in place, and how is rent set or paid? Do displaced tenants face eviction threats or rent hikes? How secure do people feel about staying in their current accommodation compared with hosts?	Service Access and Community Perceptions	KII / FGD	Reveals informal rental arrangements, security of tenure, and perceived stability for displaced tenants in urban settings.
What are the policies or strategies in place to manage accommodation and land use for recently arrived populations in this area?	Are there municipal plans addressing rental housing or informal settlements? Which authorities oversee implementation (planning department, housing authority)? Do these plans include or affect displaced populations? Are there restrictions on building materials or upgrading structures?	Systems and Institutions	KII only	Identifies urban governance structures and policy frameworks relevant to self-settled housing and tenure security.

What legal and policy frameworks exist to regulate the rights and protections of displaced persons in this urban area?	<p>Are displaced persons recognised in law or municipal policy?</p> <p>Do they have the same rights to rent or own property as citizens?</p> <p>Are local by-laws consistent with national regulations?</p> <p>Who monitors compliance and handles disputes or evictions?</p>	Systems and Institutions	KII primarily / FGD optional awareness check	Clarifies formal protections and implementation gaps between law and urban practice.
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Annex 5: Master Flow Chart

This annex presents a visual overview of the Toolkit’s full 12-step process. The chart shows how the Toolkit is structured across three sequential phases — Planning & Research Design, Data Collection, and Analysis, Validation & Dissemination — and highlights the position of the Decision Tree within Phase 1. The Decision Tree is not a separate phase, but a methodological checkpoint that finalises which tool(s) will be used before implementation proceeds.

Phase 1: Planning and Research Design (Steps 1–6)

Step 1 – Understanding the Context
Step 2 – Defining the Area
Step 3 – Defining Objectives
Step 4 – Feasibility & Risk Check
Step 5 – Decision Tree (TOOL SELECTION)
Step 6 – ToR Development



Phase 2: Data Collection (Steps 7–9)

Step 7 – Operational Preparation
Step 8 – Data Collection
Step 9 – Adaptation (as needed)



Phase 3: Analysis, Validation & Dissemination (Steps 10–12)

Step 10 – Data Analysis
Step 11 – Validation & Interpretation
Step 12 – Dissemination & Uptake

Annex 6: Phase Completion Checklist

This checklist provides a quick way for practitioners to confirm they have completed the essential activities in each phase before progressing to the next one.

Phase 1: Planning and Research Design (Steps 1–6)

- ☐ Context reviewed (legal, policy, institutional and evidence landscape)
- ☐ Assessment area clearly defined and agreed
- ☐ Objectives clarified and fit-for-purpose
- ☐ Feasibility and risk considerations addressed
- ☐ Tool selection finalised through the Decision Tree
- ☐ Terms of Reference (ToR) endorsed

Completion Check: *A validated ToR is in place before moving to Phase 2*

Phase 2: Data Collection (Steps 7–9)

- ☐ Operational preparation completed (training, adaptation, roles clarified)
- ☐ Data collected using agreed methodology
- ☐ Field-level adaptations documented and validated

Completion Check: *Primary data is validated and ready for analysis before moving to Phase 3*

Phase 3: Analysis, Validation & Dissemination (Steps 10–12)

- ☐ Data analysed and interpreted against the context review
- ☐ Findings validated with relevant stakeholders
- ☐ Dissemination completed in line with objectives and audience

Completion Check: *Evidence is being used to inform programming, planning or policy*

Annex 7: Colombia Pilot: Human Resources and Team Structure

The table below outlines the human resources structure applied during the Colombia pilot of the Toolkit. It reflects the configuration used by IMPACT, a research-specialised organisation with dedicated assessment staff.

For wider use, this structure should be adapted to the capacity of implementing partners. The roles listed represent core functions, not fixed staffing requirements.

- Essential positions include a coordination focal point, a research or assessment lead, a field coordinator, and data collection teams (enumerators and facilitators).
- Support roles such as GIS, data processing, or quality assurance can be filled part-time or shared across projects depending on available expertise and operational scale.

In the Colombia pilot, senior research and GIS staff provided periodic technical input rather than full-time engagement, while field teams were deployed full-time during data collection.

The following table summarises the key roles and responsibilities during the Colombia pilot.

Position	Role / Responsibilities
HQ: Focal Point Durable Solutions and Research Officer	Supervises implementation of the project in the pilot countries.
Research Manager	Supervises the project, ensuring quality and compliance with standards.
Senior Evaluation Officer	Leads the durable solutions research project; coordinates spaces and activities.
Senior GIS Officer	Supports sampling design, GIS processing, and mapping.
Officer	Sampling design concept, kobo, data lead.
Senior Field Coordinator	Operational coordination of the assessment.
Field Coordinator	Coordination of field data collection for the assessment.
Enumerators, Enumerator Team Leader, Rapporteur/Facilitator	Collect qualitative and quantitative data.

Annex 8: Barrier-Focused Legal, Policy, and Institutional Framework Review: Guidance and Matrix

This Annex supports Step 1: Understanding the Context by outlining a structured approach for analysing the legal, policy, and institutional frameworks that shape displaced persons' rights and their ability to achieve progress towards durable solutions.

The guidance is designed to help practitioners assess how laws, policies, durable solutions strategies, and action plans define entitlements in principle, and how these commitments are realised (or not) in practice. It draws on the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons (2010) and highlights the importance of identifying barriers that prevent rights from being realised.

The thematic areas below are aligned with the eight IASC criteria, with additional cross-cutting domains included where relevant. Depending on the objectives and scope of the intended assessment, some themes may be prioritised, included, or excluded to tailor the analysis to context, resources, and available expertise.

A necessary component of this review is identifying where policy commitments made on paper diverge from their implementation in practice. Many of these gaps can be identified through desk reviews of laws, policies, strategies, and existing studies, complemented by early consultations. This provides a foundation for the data collection phase, where evidence from KIIs, FGDs, and other primary sources can further validate or challenge the initial findings.

Note on scope: This guidance is not intended to replace a comprehensive legal review. Instead, it provides a structured appraisal to highlight how legal and policy commitments — and their related frameworks — operate in practice, where gaps exist, and where entry points for reform or advocacy may be found.

Framework - Thematic Areas and Key Questions

Thematic Area (IASC Criterion)	Key Question(s)	Why it matters	Barriers to note
Overarching Legal, Policy, and Framework Environment	What international, regional, and national instruments apply to displaced persons? Have they been ratified, domesticated, and harmonised in national law and policy? What durable solutions policies, strategies, or action plans exist? To what extent are these integrated into development strategies? How	International commitments and national policies set the foundation for rights protection and durable solutions. Their integration into development strategies, and the degree of political will and stakeholder alignment, determine whether commitments translate into action.	Non-ratification; lack of harmonisation with domestic law; contradictory/overlapping policies; absence of a displacement-specific framework; weak or non-implemented DS strategies/action plans; political resistance; fragmented stakeholder positions.

	politically sensitive is displacement, and what positions do key stakeholders take?		
Recognition and Legal Status (Criteria 5, 7, 3)	Which categories of displaced persons are recognised in law? What procedures exist for recognition and documentation, and how accessible are they?	Legal recognition and documentation are gateways to protection, services, livelihoods, and participation in public life. Without status, displaced persons may remain invisible.	Exclusion of groups; complex or costly procedures; politicised decision-making; limited legal aid; lack of appeal processes.
Safety, Security, and Freedom of Movement (Criterion 1)	Do laws and policies guarantee safety and protection from harassment, eviction, or violence? Are there legal restrictions on movement or residence?	Safety, security, and mobility are preconditions for achieving durable solutions. Without them, displaced persons remain at risk and unable to rebuild their lives.	Encampment policies; police harassment; checkpoints or curfews; gender-based violence; weak accountability.
Adequate Standard of Living (Criterion 2)	Are displaced persons legally entitled to access housing, food, water, healthcare, education, and social protection through national systems?	Displaced persons must enjoy an adequate standard of living on par with the non-displaced population.	Exclusion from national schemes; reliance on parallel humanitarian services; discrimination; lack of provision for vulnerable groups (children, older persons, persons with disabilities).
Livelihoods and Employment (Criterion 3)	Do laws and policies allow displaced persons to work, own businesses, access markets, and use land or financial services?	The ability to work and sustain livelihoods underpins self-reliance and reduces dependence on humanitarian aid.	Restrictions on work permits or sectors; exclusion from land or financial services; lack of recognition of qualifications; discriminatory practices.

Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) Rights (Criterion 4)	Do laws and policies provide for restitution, compensation, or secure tenure for displaced persons? Are these mechanisms accessible and enforceable?	Secure tenure, restitution, or compensation for housing, land, and property are central to sustainable return, reintegration, or local integration.	Lack of restitution systems; weak enforcement; overlapping claims; corruption; gender discrimination.
Documentation (Criterion 5)	Are displaced persons legally entitled to obtain or replace identity documents, civil registration, and property records?	Access to identity and civil status documentation is essential for freedom of movement, accessing services, and exercising rights.	High costs; bureaucratic hurdles; inaccessible offices; discriminatory practices; lack of recognition for children born in displacement.
Family Unity (Criterion 6)	Do laws and policies protect family unity and provide for family reunification, including recognition of different family forms?	Family unity and reunification are essential for wellbeing, protection, and social stability.	Restrictive migration policies; lengthy procedures; non-recognition of unions; discriminatory rules affecting women, youth, or minorities.
Participation in Public Affairs (Criterion 7)	Do legal and policy frameworks allow displaced persons to participate in governance, community decision-making, and civic processes?	Participation in governance and decision-making strengthens accountability, social cohesion, and the sustainability of solutions.	Exclusion from elections or councils; superficial consultation; restrictions on associations; cultural/gender barriers.
Access to Justice and Remedies (Criterion 8)	Do displaced persons have legal avenues to access courts, administrative bodies, or customary dispute resolution? Are these mechanisms enforceable?	Effective access to justice allows displaced persons to claim rights, seek remedies, and resolve disputes lawfully and fairly.	High legal fees; language barriers; discrimination; weak enforcement; limited rights awareness.

Institutional Framework and Implementation	Which institutions hold formal responsibility for displaced persons and durable solutions? How clear and resourced are their mandates?	Coherent institutional arrangements and accountability mechanisms are necessary to translate commitments into practice.	Fragmented mandates; poor coordination; under-resourced agencies; politicisation; weak oversight.
Gaps and Entry Points	Where do current legal and policy frameworks fall short? What opportunities exist for reform or advocacy?	Identifying where commitments fail, and opportunities for reform, helps prioritise realistic advocacy and programming.	Political resistance; competing priorities; lack of donor engagement; ongoing insecurity.

Barrier Mapping Matrix

The Barrier Mapping Matrix is a suggested template to support Step 1: Understanding the Context. It is not mandatory, but it can provide a structured way to capture findings from the desk-based legal, policy, and framework review and secondary data analysis, supplemented where possible and relevant by early consultations with stakeholders.

Its purpose is to document what the law, policy, and frameworks state, highlight potential barriers to their implementation, and note initial entry points for solutions.

The matrix can serve as a working document during the Planning and Research Design phase and can later be revisited or refined in the Analysis and Dissemination phase when primary data becomes available. Some examples are included in the matrix below.

IASC Criteria / Thematic Area	What the law/policy says	Barriers identified (desk/early consultations)	Impact on DAC	Entry Points for Solutions
<i>Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Rights</i>	<i>National law recognises the right to restitution and compensation for loss of property in displacement contexts; local by laws provide</i>	<i>Implementation mechanisms are weak; restitution procedures are unclear; women often excluded from formal tenure systems; informal settlements not</i>	<i>Displaced households remain without secure tenure, discouraging investment in housing and limiting eligibility for services linked to address</i>	<i>Strengthen administrative pathways for tenure recognition; support legal aid and mediation; integrate informal tenure documentation into local housing policy frameworks.</i>

<i>Safety, Security & Freedom of Movement</i>	<i>National legislation guarantees personal security and protection against unlawful eviction or harassment.</i>	<i>Informal security actors, weak enforcement, and checkpoints limit movement; women face harassment and GBV risks.</i>	<i>Restricted mobility impedes livelihoods, access to services, and participation in public life.</i>	<i>Strengthen oversight/accountability; safe access arrangements; improve reporting/referral mechanisms.</i>
(...)				

Annex 9: Sampling Design and Methodological Approach: Colombia Pilot

This Annex summarises the sampling design and methodological approach applied during the Colombia pilot of the Toolkit

Sampling Design³

The assessment was designed to use a stratified random sampling approach targeting 824 households across Bella Flor Sur and Bella Flor (Norte), aiming for a 95 per cent confidence level and 3 per cent margin of error. Stratification sought to ensure proportional representation of displaced and host-community households. Planned qualitative components included five FGDs and fourteen KIIs with affected communities, local authorities, and organisations.

Implementation⁴

Due to security, access, and logistical constraints, a purposive sampling approach was adopted during fieldwork. Following validation, 408 household surveys were retained for analysis. Qualitative activities were adjusted to three FGDs and nine KIIs, completed with displaced and host-community members, authorities, and partners. Areas classified as unsafe or non-residential were excluded from the sampling frame.

Parameter	Intended	Implemented
Sampling approach	Stratified random	Purposive (adaptive)
Sample size	824 households	408 validated households
Confidence level	95%	Indicative only
Margin of error	3%	N/A
Geographic scope	Bella Flor Sur & Bella Flor (Norte)	Same, with restricted areas excluded
Qualitative methods	5 FGDs + 14 KIIs	3 FGDs + 9 KIIs

Limitations and Lessons

Because the sampling approach was adapted, results are indicative rather than statistically representative. Nonetheless, the pilot produced valuable area-based evidence and confirmed that adaptive sampling can generate credible, policy-relevant insights where fully representative designs are not feasible.

³ REACH Initiative (2025) *Propuesta metodológica EBA Soluciones Duraderas para Población Desplazada Interna*. Internal presentation, 12 February. REACH Initiative, Bogotá.

⁴ REACH Initiative (2025) *Durable Solutions Area-Based Assessment – Colombia Pilot Report*. REACH Initiative, Geneva.

Annex 10: Applying the Decision Tree: Operational Guidance

This Annex supplements Step 5 of the Operational Guidelines by illustrating how the Decision Tree is applied in practice to move from the four sequential checks to a final tool choice. It clarifies how practitioners reconcile competing factors and explains when Tool A, Tool B, or the concurrent use of both tools is recommended.

How to use the Decision Tree in Practice

The Decision Tree is a structured thinking aid rather than an automated tool. Practitioners work through the questions in each step manually, noting which direction the answers point towards (Tool A, Tool B, or a combination). These are treated as indicative signals rather than final decisions. The final tool choice is made only after completing all four checks and interpreting the overall pattern of results. Where different steps point towards different tools, the selection is reconciled using the strongest binding constraint (ethical and political feasibility first, then operational feasibility, followed by research objectives and information gaps). The tree therefore supports judgement rather than replacing it, helping practitioners arrive at a defensible and context-sensitive choice.

Applying the four sequential checks

The logic is structured around four sequential checks that are informed by practitioner knowledge and complemented by the previous steps of the Operational Guidelines. These checks narrow the assessment to the most appropriate tool family.

Policy and Stakeholders (from Step 1)

This first check ensures that methodological choices align with the legal, ethical and political environment in which the assessment will operate. It identifies potential sensitivities, required permissions, and coordination needs. If engagement or data collection may pose ethical or political risks, methods that rely on qualitative, relationship-based approaches (Tool A) will be most appropriate.

Research Objectives (from Step 3)

The second check clarifies what type and depth of evidence the assessment must deliver. If the objective is to generate statistically representative evidence or to compare population groups, Tool B – the quantitative household survey – is generally most appropriate. Where the focus is on understanding perceptions, barriers, or complex social dynamics, Tool A – the qualitative tool – may be sufficient.

Information Landscape (from Steps 1–2)

This check reviews existing data and identifies evidence gaps. Where reliable quantitative data already exist, new household surveys may add little value. In such cases, qualitative approaches (Tool A) can explore questions of perception or causality that existing statistics cannot answer. Conversely, if secondary data are weak or inconsistent, quantitative data collection (Tool B) can fill critical gaps.

Feasibility and Capacities (from Step 4)

The final check tests whether proposed methods are realistic in operational terms – considering access, security, time, budget, ethics, and technical expertise. Where constraints are significant, feasibility should guide the choice of the lighter or safer option rather than the most ambitious one.

Reconciling the checks

When the four checks point in different directions, the final tool choice is determined by the strongest binding constraint. Ethical and political feasibility always take precedence, followed by operational feasibility, before research ambition or methodological preference. This prevents the use of methods that are technically desirable but not appropriate for the context.

Step 2 often produces mixed indications because objectives and audiences can *in principle* justify a mixed-methods approach. However, reconciliation does not work by ‘counting’ how many rows indicate each tool. Instead, it works by eliminating any option that no longer has a justified basis once information needs and feasibility are assessed. When a tool no longer has a defensible justification, it is dropped and the decision proceeds with the remaining option(s).

In Somalia, for example, several Step 2 responses could have suggested a mixed-methods approach in principle. However, the information landscape check (Step 3) showed that strong quantitative datasets already existed, meaning that a new household survey would duplicate existing evidence. The feasibility check (Step 4) confirmed that KIs and FGDs were proportionate and realistic. The Decision Tree therefore pointed towards Tool A only — not because quantitative methods were invalid in principle, but because they were not justified in practice. This ensured the assessment added value without duplication.

Tool selection overview

The Decision Tree logic is summarised in the table below, which outlines when each tool is most appropriate, together with their respective advantages and limitations.

Tool	When to Use	Advantages	Limitations
Tool A (Qualitative)	To explore perceptions, barriers, or systemic issues; where reliable quantitative data already exists.	Rich contextual insights; participatory; lighter and faster to implement.	Not statistically representative; findings harder to generalise.
Tool B (Quantitative)	To generate statistically representative comparisons across groups; where no reliable quantitative data exists.	Robust, comparable data; supports planning, advocacy, and investment decisions.	Requires higher resources, technical skills, and access; more sensitive in insecure contexts.
Both Tools	To provide comprehensive evidence for planning, coordination, or policy; where both systemic and household-level insights are needed.	Holistic view; triangulates data types; supports multi-sectoral programming.	Most resource-intensive; requires strong coordination and technical capacity.

Annex 11: Applying the Decision Tree: Somalia Worked Example

This Annex provides a worked example from the Somalia pilot context, illustrating how the Decision Tree works in practice and how the four sequential checks lead to the selection of a Tool A. It shows how the signals from each check were interpreted and reconciled to reach a defensible and context-sensitive methodological choice.

Step 1: Policy and Stakeholders - establishing permissibility

Theme	Question from Decision Tree	Somalia selected option	Signal (and why)
Policy landscape	Are there policies, strategies, or governmental plans on durable solutions at the national level?	Yes – national DS policy/strategy exists	A – Permissive policy environment; no requirement for representativity
Policy landscape	Are there specific policies, strategies, or governmental plans on durable solutions at the subnational level?	Yes – subnational DS structures in place	A – Local policy environment supports qualitative engagement
Stakeholders landscape	Besides the primary audience, which of these actors are (potentially) interested in this research?	Local authorities, coordination platforms, INGOs	A – Stakeholders are accessible and supportive of KII/FGD-based approaches

*Interim read: Step 1 leans A, with **Both** still possible in principle.*

Step 2: Objective check - where signals are often mixed

Theme	Question from Decision Tree	Somalia selected option	Signal (and why)
Objective	What is the primary objective of the research?	Inform project or programme development	A – Contextual understanding and barriers (qualitative fit).
Audience	What is the primary audience (information user)?	A mix of governmental and/or non-governmental actors	Both – Mixed audiences often prefer triangulation.
Audience	Does the audience need statistically representative results?	No	A – No representativity requirement.
Area type	Where the research will take place?	Current area where displaced population are	Both – Operational coordination context often benefits from dual evidence streams.
Stage of displacement	At what stage of displacement is the area?	Protracted	A – Representative needs usually already covered; qualitative deep-dive is proportionate.

Interim read: Step 2 is mixed by design (Objectives & Stage = A; Audience & Area Type = Both). This is normal and not the decision point.

Step 3: Information Landscape - narrowing to what is justified

Theme	Question from Decision Tree	Somalia selected option	Signal (and why)
Identification of information need	Do you need data on needs and vulnerabilities of the population affected by displacement?	Yes – existing quant data available	A – Gap relates to interpretation rather than new measurement
Identification of information need	Around what sector or thematics?	Yes – existing quant data available	A – Sectoral trends already captured; qualitative methods add explanation
Identification of information need	Do you need such data to be disaggregated or representative of specific population groups?	No – representativity not required	A – No new HH survey needed; disaggregation not a gap
Identification of information need	Do you need any specific analysis?	Yes – barriers / perceptions	A – Better captured through qualitative inquiry
Identification of information need	Do you need information on the availability and capacity of services and the existing stakeholder landscape, regulatory frameworks and local perceptions?	Yes – existing quant data complemented by qualitative insight	A – Qualitative methods appropriate to explore institutional performance
Identification of information need	What type of information or sector you need to assess?	Qualitative / interpretive	A – Reinforces appropriateness of Tool A
Identification of information need	Is any of this subcomponent politically sensitive?	No – low political sensitivity	A – Safe and proportionate to use KIIs/FGDs
Availability of secondary data	Are there available information on the same area?	Yes – existing quant data available	A – Household survey would duplicate existing evidence
Availability of secondary data	Is there data from governmental or non-governmental actors, including people's needs and vulnerabilities?	Yes – through coordination and government sources	A – Sufficient baseline already exists
Availability of secondary data	If there have been changes in the context, is the data still reliable?	Yes – recent enough to remain valid	A – No justification for new representative data

Availability of secondary data	Is there data to understand the overall context, including the capacities of local services, actors and policies?	Yes – existing quant + qualitative system mapping	A – Strong contextual foundation; Tool A adds depth
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Interim read: Step 3 eliminates the justification for Tool B (new quantitative data collection). Tool A provides added value through interpretation, context, and barrier analysis.

Step 4: Feasibility and Capacities - confirming what is proportionate

Theme	Question from Decision Tree	Somalia selected option	Signal (and why)
Technical skills and capacities	Does your organisation have staff with knowledge of statistical principles and data analysis?	Yes – qualitative skills available; quantitative survey capacity not required	A – Technical profile sufficient for Tool A; Tool B unnecessary
Technical skills and capacities	Does your organization have experience with sampling techniques for quantitative surveys?	No – not required for qualitative approach	A – No need to deploy Tool B
Technical skills and capacities	Can your organization design and code survey questionnaires?	No – not required for qualitative approach	A – No justification for HH survey methodology
Technical skills and capacities	Does your organisation have the capacity to analyse numerical data using software like SPSS, R, or Excel?	Yes – existing quant data already analysed	A – No need to produce new datasets
Technical skills and capacities	Can your organisation plan, coordinate, and manage resources effectively for large data collection activities?	Yes – proportionate for KIIs/FGDs	A – Large-scale HH surveys not needed
Technical skills and capacities	Are your staff skilled in leading discussions and managing group dynamics?	Yes – qualitative facilitation expertise available	A – Strong fit with Tool A
Technical skills and capacities	Are your staff able to communicate clearly and effectively with stakeholders?	Yes – existing relationships support access	A – Enables qualitative engagement
Technical skills and capacities	Is your organisation flexible and responsive to changing conditions during data collection?	Yes – appropriate for adaptive qualitative work	A – Supports safe implementation of Tool A

Resources	Does your organisation have sufficient time to conduct a large household survey?	No – timeline not compatible with HH survey	A – Confirms proportionality of qualitative approach
Resources	Does your organisation have the budget to conduct a large household survey?	No – disproportionate cost for limited added value	A – Tool A is cost-appropriate
Resources to deliver	Does the primary, or secondary audience have the capacity to respond to the needs and challenges that will be identified through data collection?	Yes – audience can act on qualitative findings	A – Qualitative outputs are actionable
Accessibility – area and actors	Is the area accessible, and are there local actors available to support data collection?	Yes – actors accessible for KIIs/FGDs	A – Operational conditions favour Tool A

Interim read: Step 4 confirms Tool A as feasible and proportionate; Tool B would be unnecessary and resource-intensive.

Reconciliation - how the decision is made

- The decision is not made by counting how many A/Both signals appear.
- Instead, options that cannot be justified after Step 3 (evidence landscape) or Step 4 (feasibility) are removed.
- In Somalia, Both was still possible in Step 2 (in principle), but Step 3 showed no quantitative evidence gap, and Step 4 showed a household survey would be disproportionate.

Final selection: Tool A.

Annex 12: Example of Organisational Alignment

This Annex provides a practical example of how an organisation's internal analytical framework can be mapped onto the Toolkit domains, as described in Box 4. It illustrates how thematic dimensions used by an organisation (e.g., safety, wellbeing, or inclusion) can be aligned with the Toolkit's IASC-based domains while preserving consistency in evidence generation and analysis.

Organisational Dimension	Corresponding Toolkit Domains	Example Indicators or Topics
Safety and Security	Security, Freedom of Movement	Perceived safety, exposure to violence, access to protection mechanisms
Material Wellbeing	Livelihoods, Adequate Standard of Living	Access to housing, income stability, essential services
Legal and Institutional Inclusion	Documentation, HLP, Access to Justice	Civil registration, tenure security, access to legal remedies
Social and Psychosocial Wellbeing	Participation, Social Cohesion	Belonging, community participation, trust in local governance

Annex 13: Key Informant Interviews: Somalia Pilot

This Annex summarises the key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted during the Somalia pilot of the Toolkit in Baidoa. The KIIs were selected using a purposive and stratified approach, with a snowball technique applied to identify individuals with relevant institutional, sectoral, and community expertise. Interviews engaged representatives of government institutions, UN agencies, international and national NGOs, private actors, and community structures. 18 KIIs were conducted.

Category / Institution	Role or Type of Informant	Number of KIIs	Type of Actor
Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development (MoPIED)	Director General	1	Government
Baidoa Municipality	Urban Land Planning Director; Director of Public Works (HLP); Municipal Officer	3	Local Government
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	Durable Solutions Focal Point	1	INGO
Concern Worldwide	Livelihoods Field Staff	1	INGO
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	National Programme Officer (Durable Solutions)	1	UN Agency
ACTED	CCCM Specialist	1	INGO
Danwadaag Consortium	Programme Manager	1	Consortium / Coordination Platform
Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW)	Programme Staff	1	INGO
Community Committees	Representatives (women's and youth committees)	4	Community Structure
Market Committees	Representatives	2	Community Structure
Self-Help Groups	Representatives (including women-led groups)	2	Community Structure

Annex 14: Dissemination Matrix: Template

This Annex provides a dissemination matrix to support Step 12, outlining how findings can be tailored for different audiences through appropriate formats and delivery channels. It serves as a practical template to guide planning of post-assessment communication, ensuring accessibility, relevance, and uptake across policy, coordination, and community-facing stakeholders.

Audience	Format / Product	Accessibility / Tailoring	Responsible Actor
National authorities	Policy brief, summary note, or high-level presentation (and full report where required)	Tailored to decision-making needs and institutional protocol (e.g., endorsement processes, cabinet/ministerial briefings). Alignment with terminology and translation where relevant.	Assessment lead + government focal point
Local authorities	Presentation, short written brief, or slide deck	Format selected based on the preference of the authority (written summary, in-person presentation, or technical deck). May be shared through existing coordination forums.	Field team / local coordination mechanism
Coordination platforms (DSWG, cluster, NGO fora)	Dataset summary / dashboard / slides	Structured for planning use; allows extraction or integration into inter-agency systems	Technical lead (IM/assessment focal point)
Donors	Executive summary / thematic brief	Highlights strategic implications, funding relevance, comparability across geographies	Assessment lead / senior management
Affected communities	Community-facing outputs such as: Public briefing / townhall-style presentation / Poster / infographic / Short summary brief / Radio/ audio format where appropriate	Tailored to preferred communication modes of the community. May include visual, oral or written formats depending on context, literacy levels, language needs, and existing information channels. Used to support feedback, transparency, and dialogue rather than one-way dissemination.	Implementing partners / community facilitators



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