# Vulnerability assessment of refugees: Approaches to targeting humanitarian assistance

## Lecture 2 of 3 – Main concepts

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UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PERUGIA
DIPARTIMENTO DI ECCELLENZA
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LEPA legality and participation

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# Outline

- Recap
- Vulnerability
- Profiling
- Targeting
- Q & A

# Recap

# UNHCR assistance

- UNHCR strives to find durable solutions for persons of concern
- However, in most cases, refugees remain in their host countries for many years with no real prospects of durable solutions
- In such contexts, UNHCR provides different types of assistance in host countries, such as:
  - Cash assistance
  - Livelihoods assistance

# Who gets assistance?

- In emergency contexts, “blanket” assistance = everyone
- In longer term contexts, there is a need to apply some sort of eligibility criteria, for two reasons:
  - As situations change and people become more settled, not everyone needs assistance – or at least not the same types of assistance **(targeting)**
  - Funding is usually not sufficient to provide assistance to all those who require it **(prioritization)**

# Vulnerability

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# Vulnerability as a concept

- There is no agreed upon definition of what it means to be vulnerable
- We often assume the most poor, or with the most serious specific needs, are the “most vulnerable”
- But there are different kinds of vulnerabilities, which can result from a combination of factors
- Which are not always visible

# VAF definition of vulnerability

The Vulnerability Assessment Framework in Jordan, which started in 2014, agreed on this definition:

*…the risk of exposure of Syrian refugee households to harm, primarily in relation to protection threats, inability to meet basic needs, limited access to basic services, and food insecurity, and the ability of the population to cope with the consequences of this harm.*

# UNHCR's "specific needs"

UNHCR has over 100 codes to identify conditions and situations that can put a refugee at risk;

- medical conditions (including mental health);
- disabilities;
- conditions specific to children (early marriage, child labour, child exploitation) and to women;
- survivors of violence and torture, legal and physical protection needs (detention, undocumented, etc.).

# Who is a vulnerable refugee?

This family is unable to meet their basic needs

This family can meet their basic needs, but are not self-reliant enough to consistently meet these and additional needs

This person is self-reliant and can meet their own material needs, but needs support with their legal status

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# Vulnerability as a construct

- Vulnerability is multi-dimensional, not uni-dimensional
- If we think of it in terms of risks and capacities:

$$\text{RISK} = \frac{\text{THREATS} \times \text{VULNERABILITIES}}{\text{CAPACITIES}}$$

The more capacities refugees have to respond to threats and vulnerabilities, the more self-reliant they are (and vice-versa)

# Vulnerability as a spectrum

- Vulnerability is dynamic, not static
- Three main dimensions on the spectrum:
  - Basic needs
  - Coping capacity and self-reliance
  - Well-being and community inclusion

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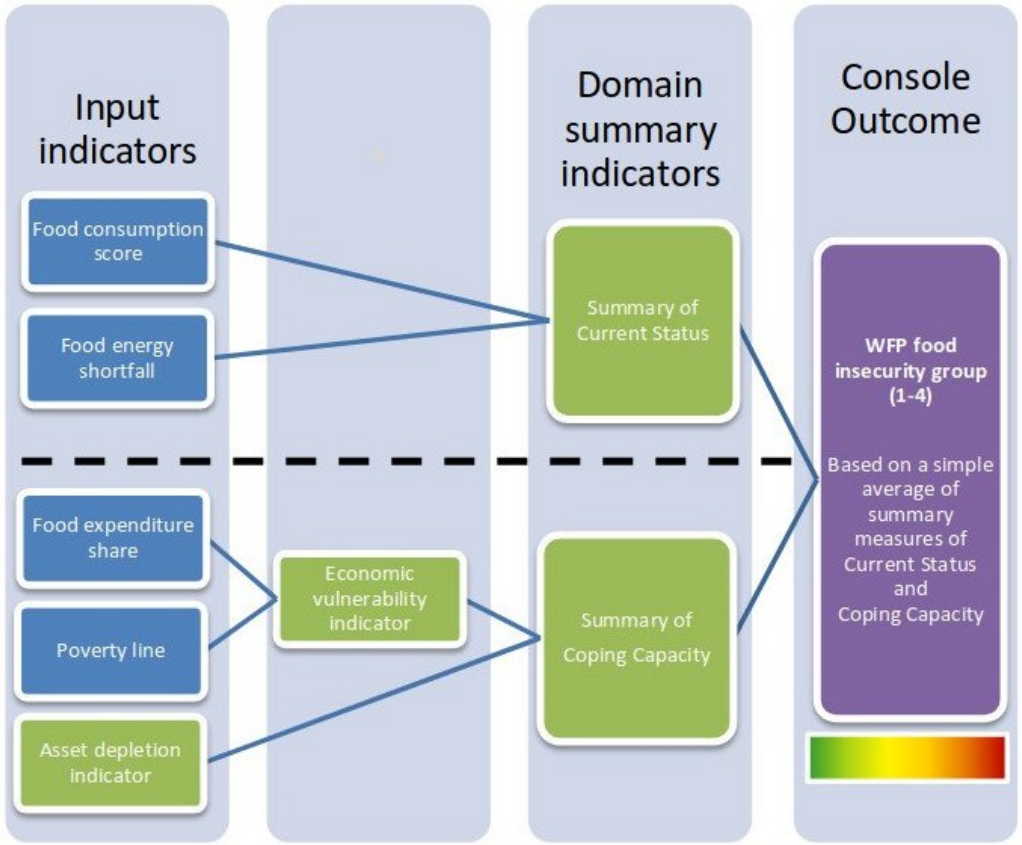
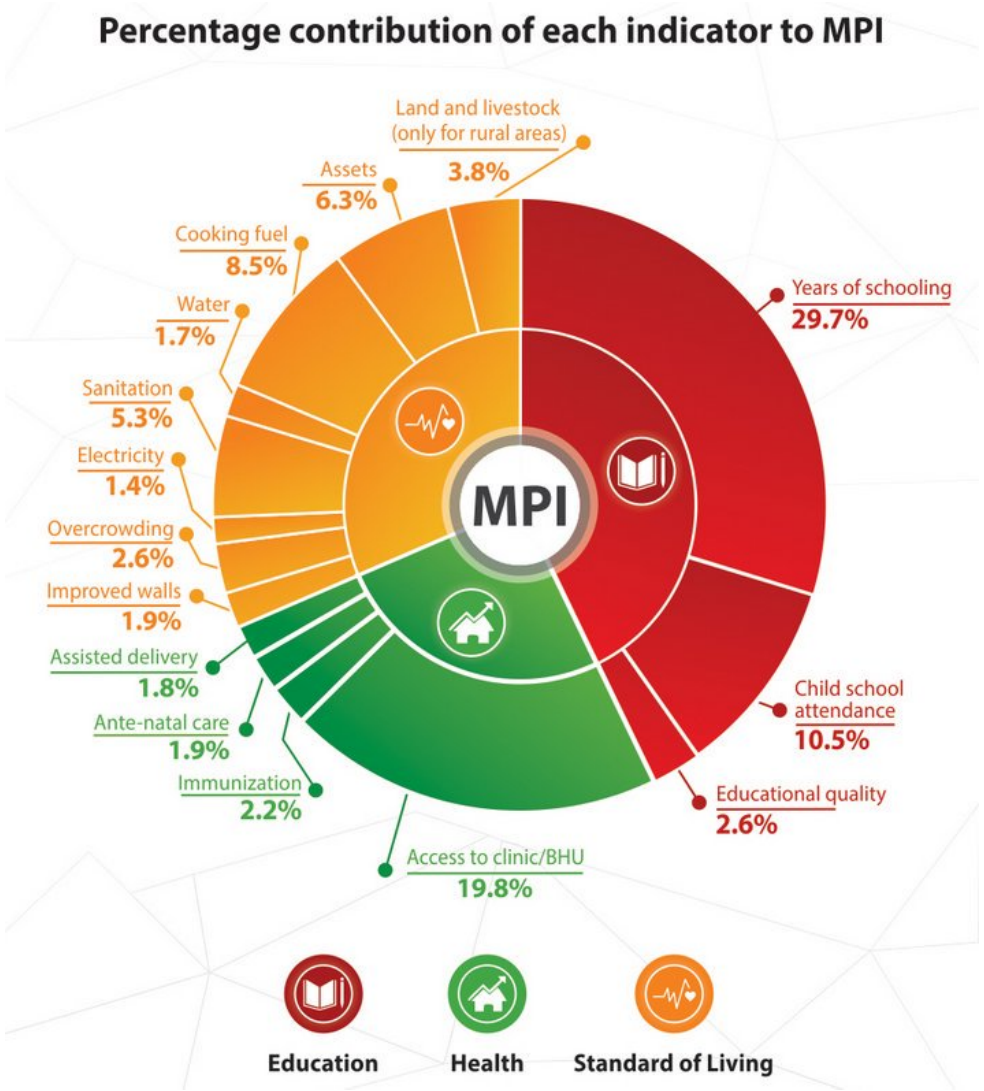
# Other agencies' tools

## WFP Food Scoring Index (FSI)

**Figure 2: Flow-graph of the CARI console components**




## UNDP Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)

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# Profiling

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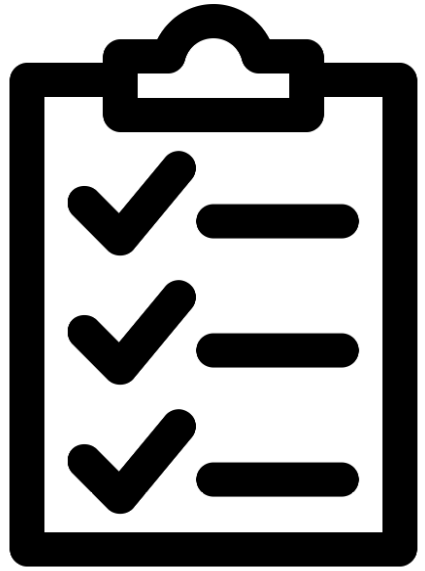
# Current regional situation

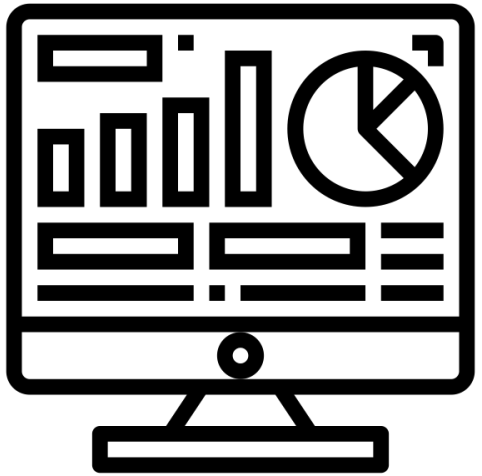
- Different country operations have different approaches to measure “vulnerability” in order to prioritize and target assistance:
  - Proxy means targeting (using predicted expenditure)
  - Scorecard
  - Categorical (looking at specific needs)

**How can we do better?…**

# Available data

- Registration database (proGres) contains biographical data (sex, age, address, etc.)
- Household surveys containing socioeconomic data (income and expenditure; food security; living conditions; education, etc.)
- Combining both types of data, we can use statistical methods to profile the population into different groups





# Household surveys

- Lebanon VASyr
- Jordan VAF
- Egypt EVAR
- Iraq JVA

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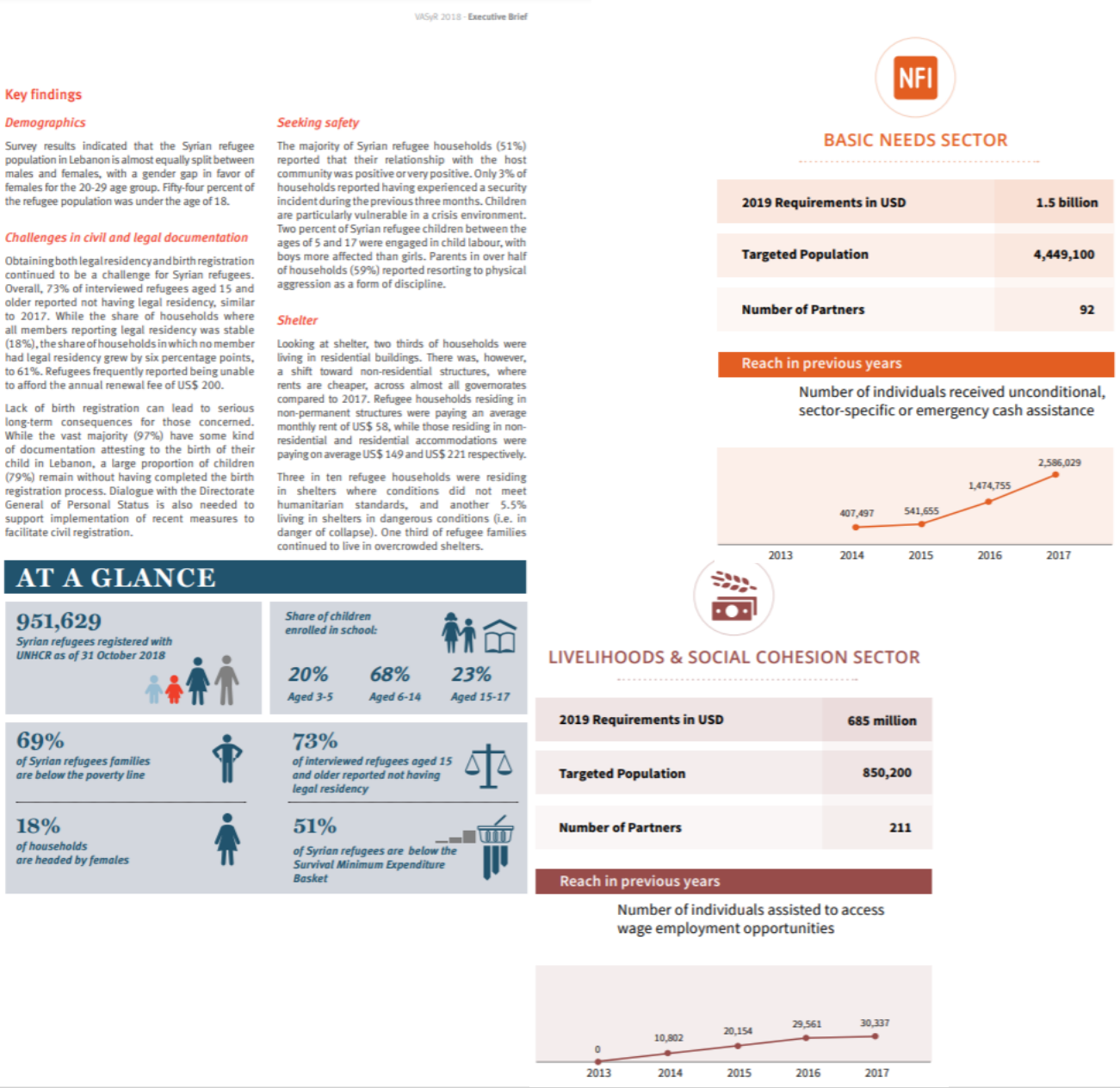
# Findings

- Household surveys give us an overview of the situation of refugee households in their host country
- The resulting figures and reports are used for planning, programming and advocacy
- What else can we do with this data?



VASyR 2018 - Executive Brief

Key findings

*Demographics*

Survey results indicated that the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon is almost equally split between males and females, with a gender gap in favor of females for the 20-29 age group. Fifty-four percent of the refugee population was under the age of 18.

*Challenges in civil and legal documentation*

Obtaining both legal residency and birth registration continued to be a challenge for Syrian refugees. Overall, 73% of interviewed refugees aged 15 and older reported not having legal residency, similar to 2017. While the share of households where all members reporting legal residency was stable (18%), the share of households in which no member had legal residency grew by six percentage points, to 61%. Refugees frequently reported being unable to afford the annual renewal fee of US$ 200.

Lack of birth registration can lead to serious long-term consequences for those concerned. While the vast majority (97%) have some kind of documentation attesting to the birth of their child in Lebanon, a large proportion of children (79%) remain without having completed the birth registration process. Dialogue with the Directorate General of Personal Status is also needed to support implementation of recent measures to facilitate civil registration.

*Seeking safety*

The majority of Syrian refugee households (51%) reported that their relationship with the host community was positive or very positive. Only 3% of households reported having experienced a security incident during the previous three months. Children are particularly vulnerable in a crisis environment. Two percent of Syrian refugee children between the ages of 5 and 17 were engaged in child labour, with boys more affected than girls. Parents in over half of households (59%) reported resorting to physical aggression as a form of discipline.

*Shelter*

Looking at shelter, two thirds of households were living in residential buildings. There was, however, a shift toward non-residential structures, where rents are cheaper, across almost all governorates compared to 2017. Refugee households residing in non-permanent structures were paying an average monthly rent of US$ 58, while those residing in non-residential and residential accommodations were paying on average US$ 149 and US$ 221 respectively.

Three in ten refugee households were residing in shelters where conditions did not meet humanitarian standards, and another 5.5% living in shelters in dangerous conditions (i.e. in danger of collapse). One third of refugee families continued to live in overcrowded shelters.

AT A GLANCE

951,629
*Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR as of 31 October 2018*

*Share of children enrolled in school:*
20% Aged 3-5
68% Aged 6-14
23% Aged 15-17

69%
*of Syrian refugees families are below the poverty line*

73%
*of interviewed refugees aged 15 and older reported not having legal residency*

18%
*of households are headed by females*

51%
*of Syrian refugees are below the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket*

NFI

BASIC NEEDS SECTOR

| | |
|---|---|
| 2019 Requirements in USD | 1.5 billion |
| Targeted Population | 4,449,100 |
| Number of Partners | 92 |

Reach in previous years

Number of individuals received unconditional, sector-specific or emergency cash assistance




LIVELIHOODS & SOCIAL COHESION SECTOR

| | |
|---|---|
| 2019 Requirements in USD | 685 million |
| Targeted Population | 850,200 |
| Number of Partners | 211 |

Reach in previous years

Number of individuals assisted to access wage employment opportunities

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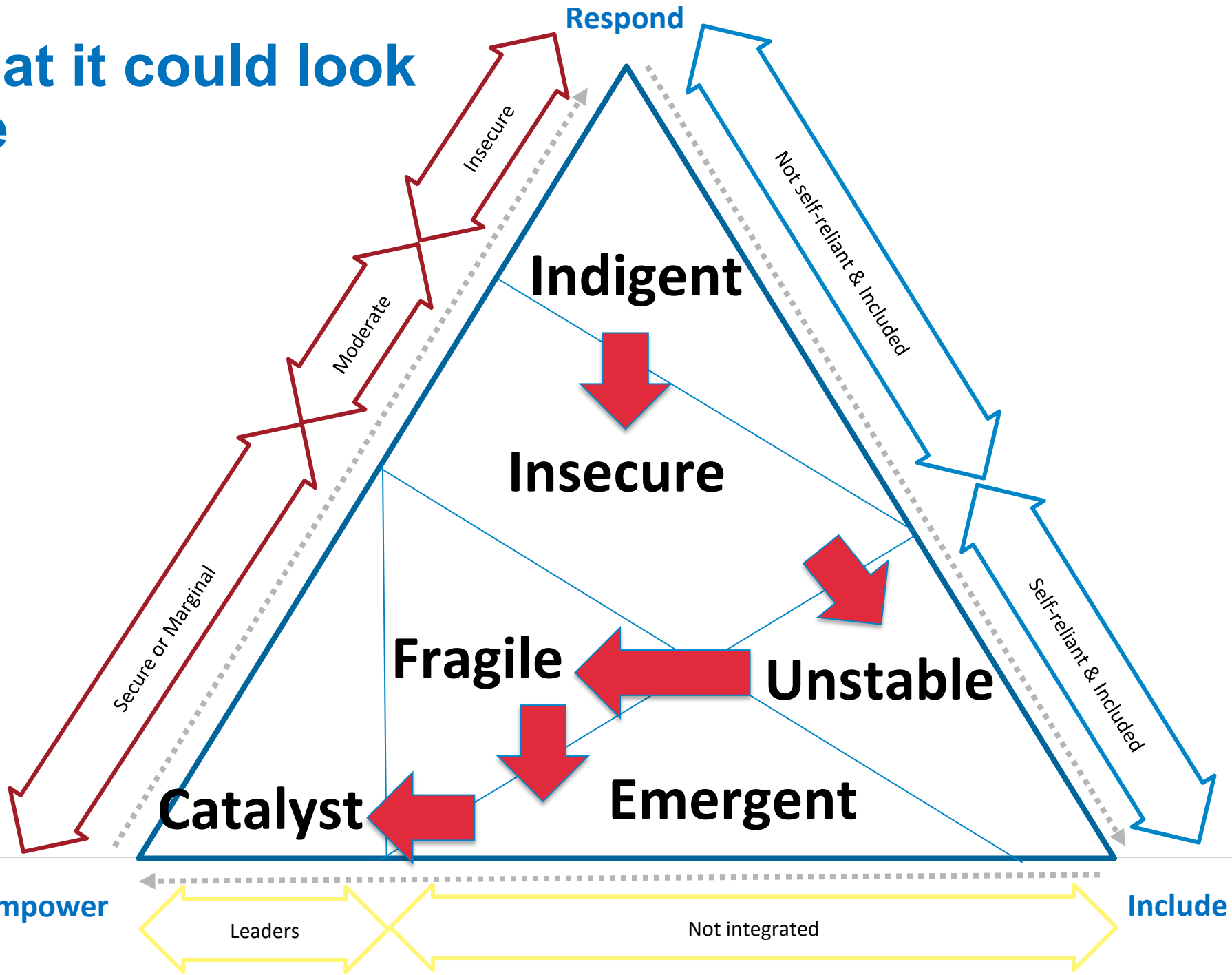
# Population profiling

- Using exploratory analysis for the data we have collected and clustering people into different profiles
- Those in a certain profile will share a number of important characteristics
- The analysis and clustering is undertaken by statisticians, with the support of experts familiar with the situation in order to interpret and validate the results

# What it could look like

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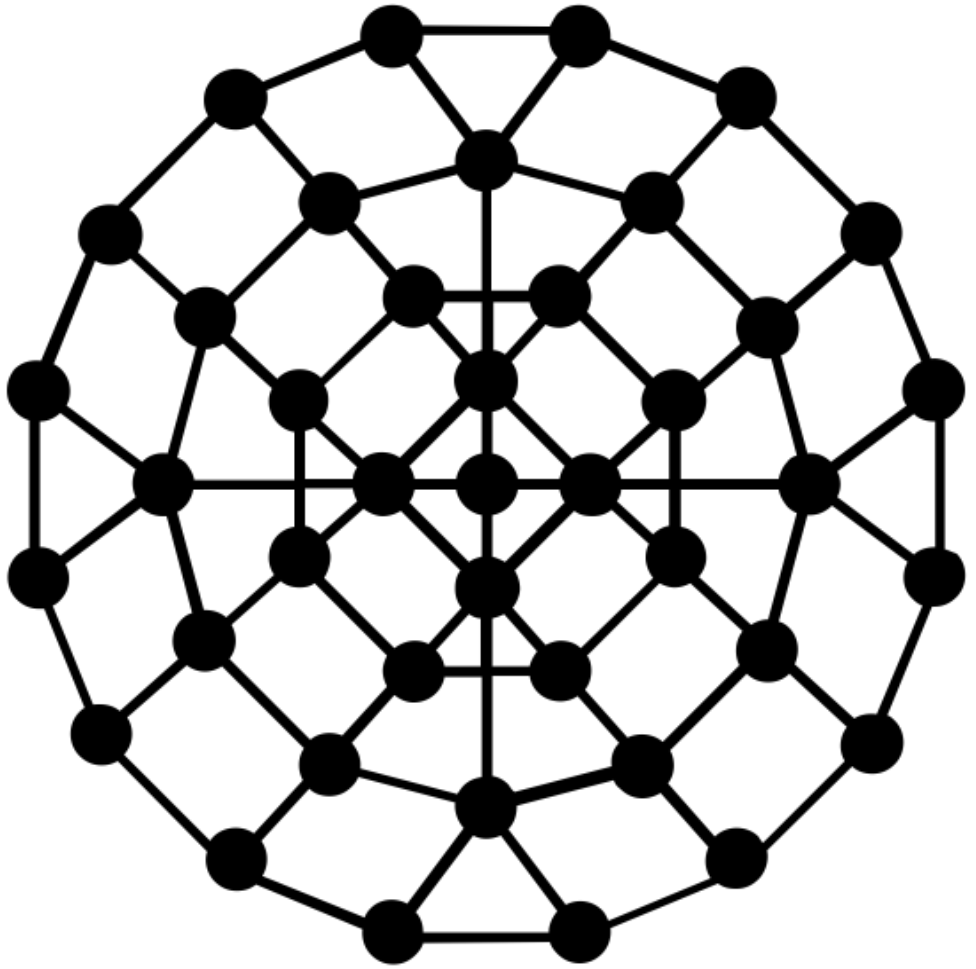
# Item Response Theory (IRT)

- Statistical tool for inferring an unobservable phenomenon from a set of variables
  - In this case, the unobservable phenomenon is vulnerability, and the variables are the existing data on refugees
- Multi-dimensional: several, interrelated, dimensions contribute to define the general latent construct (vulnerability)



# Targeting

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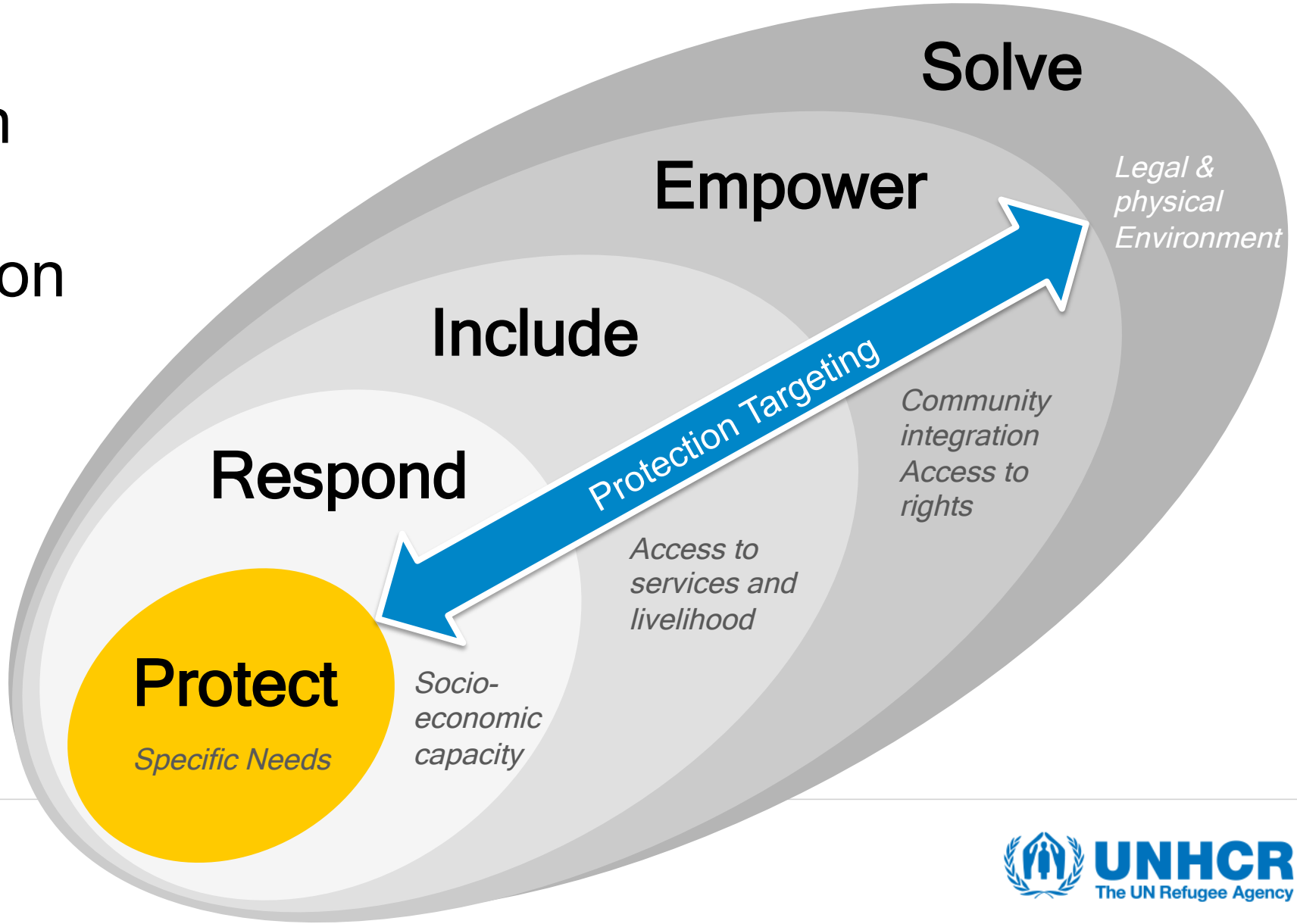
# UNHCR Strategic Directions 2017–2021

- Outlines five main directions for UNHCR to focus on
- Each direction addresses a different type of vulnerability

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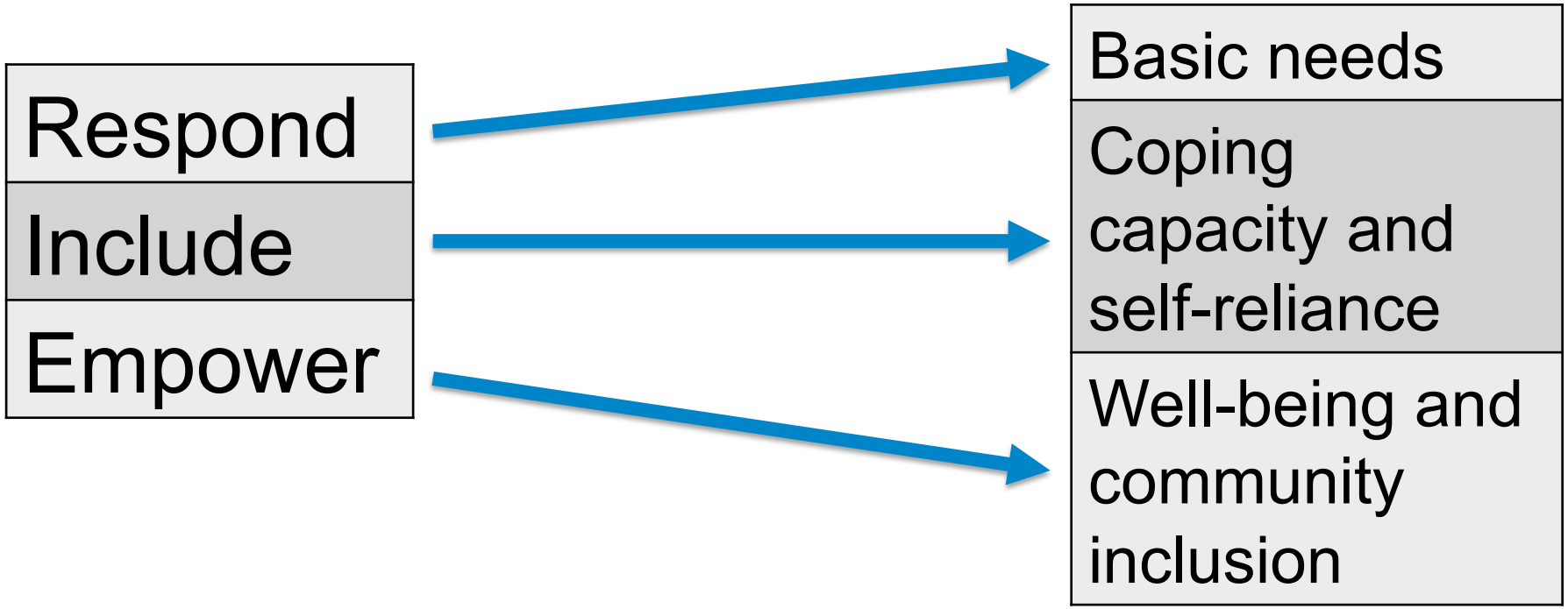
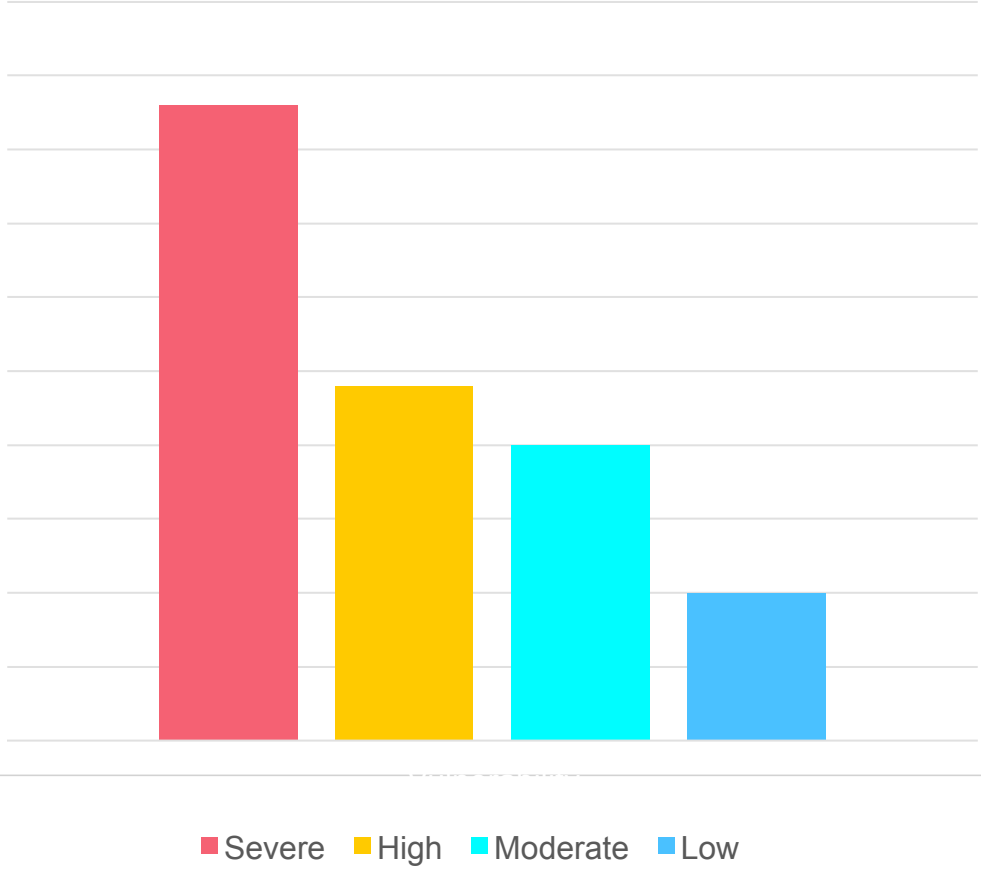
# Aligning with the strategic directions

Three strategic directions can be said to correspond to the dimensions we established earlier



# Current methodologies

- Some operations have used poverty as a single factor for categorisation
- Everybody under a certain threshold receives cash assistance

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# Needs versus funding

- Over 30% of those found eligible for cash in Syria and Iraq situation countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey) were **not** assisted

| | |
|---|---|
| Total number assessed in 2018[3] | >2 million |
| Individuals assessed by household visit in 2018 | 473,103 |
| # found eligible for cash assistance in 2018 | >1.4 million |

| | |
|---|---|
| Assisted with MPCA in 2018 | 964,843 |
| Assisted with MPCA in Dec 2018 | 604,560 |
| USD disbursed in 2018 | USD 232 million |
| USD disbursed in Dec 2018 | USD 33 million |

**Is cash really the most appropriate response for all of them?**

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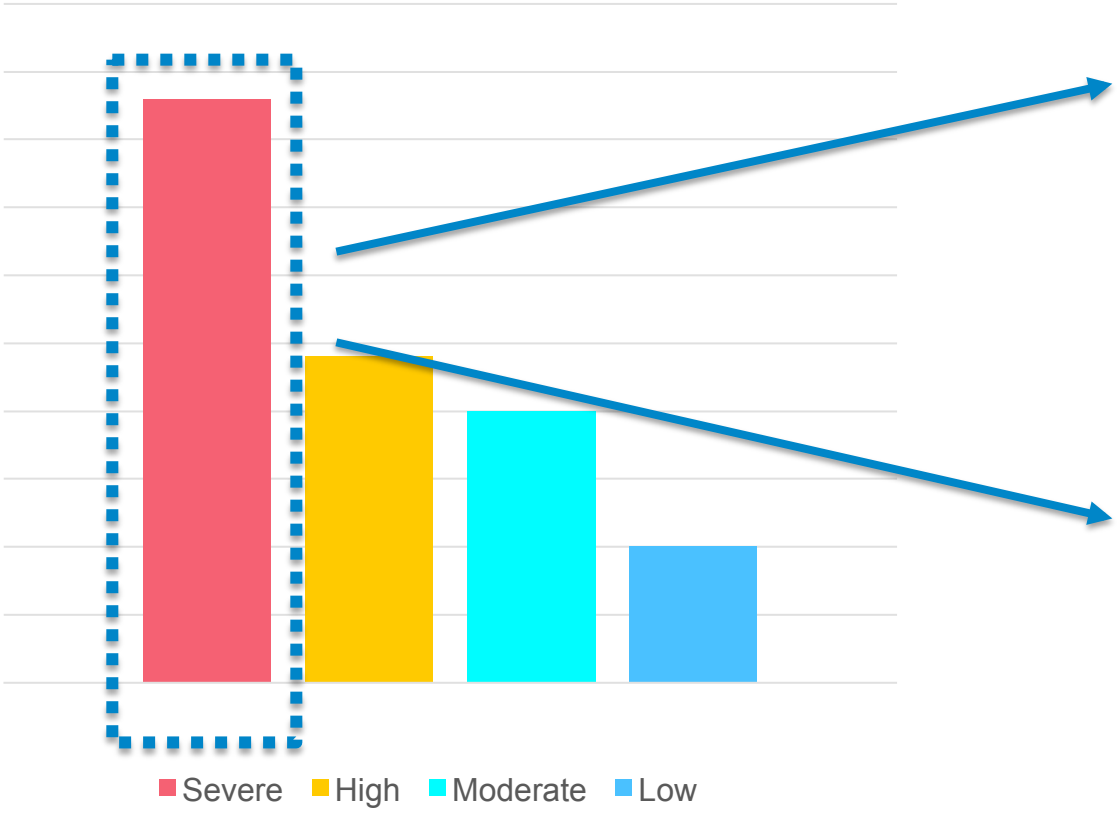
# How profiling can help

- What if, within the larger group of “severely poor”, we find different groups, or profiles?




**Group 1**
Single parents with young children, no child care option and a certain set of skills

**Group 2**
Elderly couples unable to work due to poor health, no other family members

# Customized assistance

**Group 1**
Single parents with young children, no child care option and a certain set of skills

→ **Improve coping capacity and self-reliance**

**Livelihoods support, such as microcredit for a home-based business**

**Group 2**
Elderly couples unable to work due to poor health, no other family members

→ **Respond to basic needs**

**Cash assistance to meet needs such as shelter and food**

# Improved efficiency and effectiveness

- In this example, customizing assistance according to profiles and needs will result in two main and very important outcomes:
  - Cash assistance for those who truly need it = unable to respond to their basic needs on their own
  - Other types of assistance for those who have different needs
- Refugees receive what they need, and we maximise our resources

# Q & A

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