TRAINING REPORT

UNICEF MENARO

Multi-cluster Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) and the UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCC) Training

Jordan

MENARO EMERGENCY UNIT
2013

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MIRA and the CCC's Training Report
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Amman

March 2013

The Multi-Cluster Initial Rapid Assessment is an inter-agency coordinated assessment designed to obtain immediate situation analysis after a disaster. UNICEF leads areas under the cluster approach and will require strong assessment capacities to engage on an interagency level to contribute to such coordinated assessment.

This training was jointly designed and facilitated by Jeff Klenk (consultant and global advisor on the MIRA guidelines) and Mark Choonoo at the UNICEF's MENA regional office in Amman.

The purpose of the report is to provide suggestions for future training events as well as to raise some key issues related to UNICEF's role in coordinated assessments.

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PREFACE

The significant increase in conflicts and disasters that has affected the Middle East and North Africa region over the past 5 years has made it imperative for UNICEF to better plan for its capacity to meet the needs of children and women. In 2013 UNICEF expects that 2.85 million children will be internally displaced or seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Given the continuing instability and escalating humanitarian needs throughout the region, the regional office (MENARO) will reinforce preparedness and response capacities in order to address the myriad emergencies currently affecting nine of the 19 countries in the region. Large-scale displacement and continued violence in many countries also mean that children will be exposed to highly stressful situations, requiring psychosocial support at different levels. Collecting, analysing and utilising relevant and valid data to design appropriate integrated programmes are key challenges to UNICEF in the region.

In the immediate aftermath of a sudden-onset disaster, humanitarian actors often begin gathering information independently and with little consolidation, resulting in an incomplete and sometimes conflicting picture of humanitarian needs. The Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) seeks to address this lack of coordination by enabling humanitarian actors to reach a common understanding of the needs of affected populations and to agree immediately on strategic humanitarian priorities. It is consistent with the *IASC Operational Guidance for Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises,* which calls for the implementation of a joint assessment during the first two phases of an emergency and, thereafter, for the coordination of in-depth agency and cluster assessments

In December 2011, the IASC Principals endorsed the development of the Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment as one of the interagency Consolidated Assessment processes. UNICEF therefore holds an interagency accountability to provide sector experts to lead this process in times of disaster and this workshop report suggests guidance on how to carry out this task.

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MIRA and the CCCs Training

Jordan

Final Workshop Report

March 2013

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MIRA and the CCCs Training

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Background and Objectives

A UNICEF-sponsored training in the IAASC/NATF approach to multi-cluster initial rapid assessment (or "MIRA") was held in Jordan from 3–6 February 2013. The purpose of the training was to enhance staff capacity to carry out coordinated assessments in major emergencies based on the MIRA approach while ensuring that children are an important focus of the assessment.

The main objectives of the training were to increase participant capacity to use the MIRA approach in a major emergency to enhance work with partners, identify the priority needs of the affected, and produce a joint statement of strategic humanitarian priorities for decision-makers ; and to link UNICEF's MIRA obligations to Humanitarian Performance Monitoring (HPM) and with the agency's Core Commitments to Children (CCCs) in Humanitarian Action.

The training included most of the standard sessions offered in the IASC/NATF MIRA trainings, and included as well a focus on how UNICEF's focus on the CCCs impacts – and is impacted by – the MIRA inter-agency approach.

Participants and Facilitation

UNICEF staff from Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, State of Palestine, Libya, Yemen, and Djibouti were joined by representatives from WFP, OCHA, and from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC).

The workshop was facilitated by Mark Choonoo, an Emergency Specialist with UNICEF/MENARO, and by Jeff Klenk, an independent consultant engaged by UNICEF.

Overall Impressions

Purpose

Training UNICEF and partner staff to be more effective in coordinated, inter-agency assessment is a critically important activity, given the aims of the IASC and the UN's transformative humanitarian agenda. Efforts to enhance the capacities of UNICEF and partner staff to conduct secondary and primary data collection and analysis are also clearly needed.

The Jordan training highlighted the importance of both aims: serving inter-agency coordinated assessment and UNICEF's own sectoral assessment needs.

Design Approach

The training design took an approach that presented key aspects of IASC/NATF agency coordination assessment guidance, followed by examination of that guidance through the lens of UNICEF's mandate and specific sector focus. It should be noted that in trying to present both the IASC's and UNICEF's guidance on assessment needs, the Jordan training took on an admittedly ambitious agenda for a workshop of only four days.

In future such trainings, organisers should make concerted efforts to distinguish clearly between those sessions and activities conducted to clarify IASC/NATF guidance and those intended to present UNICEF's own assessment and follow-on programming needs. While these distinctions were in fact planned into the design of the training, the necessary distinctions may not have been sufficiently clear to all participants. Indeed, in post-workshop evaluations – and in discussions with one participant – it became clear that the training needs to define more concretely (at least for that one participant) how UNICEF sector-specific assessments relate to the two phases of MIRA as an OCHA-led, inter-agency process. That particular participant's confusion may have been due in part to his short tenure with UNICEF - i.e. only two months. It may have also, however, been partly due to the rather challenging task of training staff in inter-agency coordination assessment guidance and

simultaneously focusing on one agency's sector focus. Trying to do both apparently created some degree of confusion concerning UNICEF's role and procedures – for at least one participant and possibly for others as well.

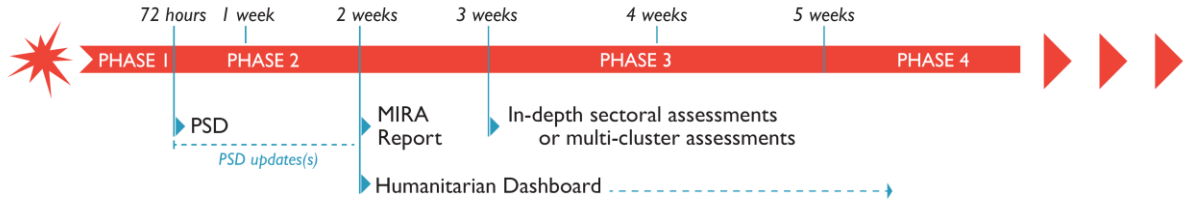
This is certainly not to say that the training cannot seek to accomplish both objectives. The point is highlighted here simply to emphasize that greater effort needs to be taken to distinguish between presentation of IASC/NATF guidance and UNICEF's own assessment training needs. The approach taken in Jordan – presenting one aspect of IASC guidance and then immediatley focusing on the impact of UNICEF's CCCs on that aspect – may have confused rather than enlightened participants about UNICEF's role in MIRA.

Recommendation: In future such trainings, it would be advisable to distinguish clearly between those parts of the training that are intended to enlighten participants about IASC coordination policies and procedures, and those parts that are clearly intended to help participants become more skilled in UNICEF's own technical sector assessment needs. It may be helpful to divide the training into two clearly distinct parts – e.g. a day or two devoted strictly to IASC/NATF guidance to be followed by a day or two devoted strictly to UNICEF assessment and follow-on programming.

The Need to Focus on *Harmonised* Assessment

The Jordan training highlighted one clear and significant difference between the IASC/NATF's coordinated assessment guidance and UNICEF's own assessment procedures. The IASC guidance notes that single-sector assessments conducted in Phases 3 and 4 follow the inter-agency assessments conducted in Phases 1 an 2 (as noted in Figure 1 in the MIRA Manual and shown here):

Figure 1. MIRA phases and products[3]



UNICEF staff noted, however, that it would be neither likely nor desirable for its sector specialists to wait two or three weeks after a crisis to begin their sector assessments; rather, they would, if feasible logistically, begin their sector-specific (e.g. WASH, shelter, nutrition) needs assessments on Day 2 or 3, that is, *during Phase 1* when, according to the IASC guidance inter-agency efforts are still focussing largely on secondary data collection and analysis.

This discrepancy raised questions in the minds of several staff as to the role that UNICEF sector specialists would play, if any, on a MIRA team conducting *Phase 2* community-level assessments (i.e. MIRA primary data collection). As it is quite possible, that UNICEF sector assessment specialists would already be deployed to the field before MIRA Phase 2 field teams, then it appears that the most likely coordination scenario for UNICEF would be – in IASC/NATF parlance – "harmonised" assessment in which agencies produce separate assessments that are sufficiently comparable to be collated, rather than engage in actual joint assessment.[1]

[1] The IASC/NATF coordinated assessment operational guidance notes that "harmonised" assessments attempt to ensure complete data sets for a set of locations, use a consistent set of Common Operational Datasets (CODs) to facilitate interpretation and comparison, and use a consistent set of agreed qualitative and qualitative sectoral indicators. Actual data-gathering and report production, however, may be agency specific

Recommendation: Given the greater likelihood that UNICEF specialists will be engaged in conducting "harmonised" rather than actual "joint" needs assessments, future UNICEF needs assessment trainings should be designed to focus on the key actions that need to be taken to prepare for and conduct harmonised assessment. This includes identification of key indicators along with other assessment teams to enable shared analysis.

Participation & Engagement

All participants appeared to be highly engaged throughout the four days of training. Discussions were lively and on the final day, participants enthusiastically took on the heavy workload of the emergency simulation. It should be highlighted that the workshop benefitted greatly from inclusion of UNICEF's partner staff from SARC; any future such coordination trainings should be sure to invite the partners who are likely to be engaged in assessment fieldwork.

Recommendation: It is highly likely that UNICEF's partners will be involved in most coordinated inter-agency assessment efforts and, as such, should be well-trained to do so. Organisers should always make a concerted effort to ensure those partners are able to attend future such trainings.

Simulation Exercise

A number of participants noted to the lead facililitator – and in their evaluation comments – the real value of the simulation, its role in clarifying MIRA processes and outputs, and its engaging style. Some told the lead facilitator that they learned the most from this exercise. While the information injects were many, the workload was heavy, and the demand for MIRA outputs constant throughout the exercise, the participants remained focused and engaged, and managed to produce very high-quality presentations of their results.

Recommendation: The simulation and debriefing are well worth running again – provided that organisers take time to adapt the particular emergency scenario and the many information injects to the country (or region) hosting the training. It is this attention to detail that adds realism to the simulation and makes the entire exercise credible to participants.

Session-Specific Comments

1.2 IASC/NATF Coordinated Assessment Operational Guidance

Objectives:

- To explain the importance and use of the IASC/NATF coordinated assessment framework
- To identify the roles and responsibilities of key actors and stakeholders in coordinated needs assessments
- To explain key IASC/NATF terminology and definitions

Comments: The standard MIRA training session was conducted. Participants in small groups analysed the likely challenges they would confront in implementing key IASC/NATF coordinated assessment principles.

Recommendation: Maintain the session as is in future trainings.

(as opposed to "joint" assessments where only one assessment report is produced by the inter-agency process.

1.3 UNICEF & the IASC/NATF Coordinated Assessment Operational Guidance

Objectives:

- To describe how a focus on the CCCs may impact – and be impacted by – coordinated assessment
- To identify the key emergency indicators to be considered when planning and conducting a coordinated assessment

Comments: The session presented an overview of the the UNICEF CCCs and then focused on how assessors might ensure a focus on the CCCs in coordinated emeregncy assessments. At the last moment, the small group exercise was changed to focus in on emergency indicators by sector: participants self-selected into small groups organized by UNICEF cluster type and were asked to develop sets of indicators that inter-agency assessment teams should consider in order to ensure the CCCs are incorporated into the MIRA data collection and analysis.

Recommendation: Maintain the session with the new, revised indicators exercise in future trainings.

1.4 MIRA Process and Outputs

Objectives:

- To identify the 5 stages of the MIRA process, and the key role they play in assessment coordination
- To identify the purpose, schedule and data sources of the two key MIRA outputs

Comments: The standard MIRA training session was conducted, with a small group exercise focused on the Five Step MIRA Process and the importance of each step in ensuring a high quality MIRA.

Recommendation: Maintain the session as is in future trainings.

1.5 MIRA and the CCCs

Objectives:

- To explain how UNICEF's assessment procedures (or those of the participant's relevant agency) impact – and are impacted by – the five key MIRA steps

Comments: The session focused on comparing MIRA guidance with UNICEF's own needs assessment guidance and procedures.

The participants each then self-selected into a small group – WASH, Nutrition, Child Protection, Health or Education – and were asked to identify key indicators that a needs assessment team should consider for each sector. The activity was engaging and the participants generated useful outputs. This session may have created some confusion as noted above in the section on "Overall Impressions". (In discussions with one participant after the workshop, it was clear that the session did not adquately define the relationship between MIRA (as an OCHA-led, inter-agency process) and UNICEF's focus on the CCCs. This lack of clarity may have been due in part to the fact that this particular participant was new to UNICEF (i.e. only two months with the agency). It may also have been due in part to the rather challenging task of training staff about an inter-agency coordination process while examining that process through the lens of one agency's mandate and sector focus.

Recommendation: In future trainings, it would be advisable to distinguish clearly between those parts of the training that are about coordination (and the various policies, procedures, knowledge and skills of coordination) and those parts that are clearly UNICEF-focused (i.e. the CCCs). Mixing the two together apparently can create confusion (for at least one participant , and possibly others as well).

2.1 Secondary Data: Quality and Analysis

Objectives

Comments: The usual MIRA session on secondary analysis was conducted with some adaptation to the region: an activity was added in which participants analysed tables of refugee data which highlighted the importance of disaggregating the affected population by sex and age.

Recommendation: Maintain the session in future trainings (including the disaggregation analysis activity – which should if feasible be adapted to local conditions).

2.2 Community level assessment

Objectives:

- To explain the importance, value and role of secondary data in the MIRA process
- To describe what data are needed and where to find them
- To explain how to judge the quality of secondary data
- To analyse secondary data

Comments: The usual MIRA session on secondary analysis was conducted but again with some adaptation in order to focus on the UNICEF realities in the region (i.e. the key informant/bias analysis activity was adapted to the Syrian context; and a plenary activity focused on identifying structured observation needs in Zataari Camp was added).

To acquaint participants with one of the tools for identifying an affected population's own perceived priorities, they were also asked to interview a partner using the simple HESPER scale questionnaire. Afterwards, they were asked to note their impressions of the tool. Several participants noted that the HESPER categories seemed to be comprehensive and covered most of their areas of assessment concern. Others, however, questioned whether it was truly necessary to go through the entire HESPER interview process to get at a community's priorities, and suggested that simply asking refugees to state their priority needs would have much the same result. Several expressed their concern about how questions are to be asked according to the HESPER guidance; they noted that did not seem appropriate to ask what they considered "leading questions" to identify an affected populations own perceptions.

Recommendation: Maintain the session as is but replace the HESPER interviewing activity with one based on whatever CLA tool is eventually added to the MIRA guidance.

2.3 Preliminary Scenario Definition

Objectives:

- To explain the goal, value and process of generating the PSD

- To apply key MIRA operational guidance to an assessment-focused case study
- To identify a number of solutions to several coordination challenges

Comments: The usual MIRA training "Tropical Storm Washi" case study used as a context for the development of PSD by the participants in teams.

Recommendation: Maintain the session as is in future trainings.

3.1 Inter-Sectoral Analysis

Objectives:

- To describe the analysis process recommended for MIRA missions
- To explain the importance of identifying linkages between and among problems in various emergency sectors
- To use a number of key Sphere standards in assessing and analysing emergency conditions

Comments: The usual MIRA training Tropical Storm Washi Community-level Assessment exercise was adapted to include more of a focus on UNICEF's specific sectors of interest in the exercise findings. The exercise helps to solidify participant understanding of the process of thinking "inter-sectorally" in their analyses, and to consider the linkages between and among the various sectoral needs. Worked well.

Recommendation: Maintain the session as is in future trainings.

3.2 Joint Strategic Response Priorities & Introduction to UNICEF's Integrated Approach to Emergency Programmes

Objectives:

- To introduce examples of UNICEF integrated programmes.
- To provde participants with the space to develop an integrated programme

Comments: Sessions 3.2. and 3.3. (UNICEF and Identifying Join Strategic Response Priorities) were combined into one session that focused on UNICEF emergency programming response concerns. Mr. Choonoo led the participants through a session that reviewed an integrated programme developed as part of a UNICEF emergency response simulation as well an online presentation from WCARO on their programme in the Sahel. Participants were also exposed to UNICEF's guideline on integrated programmeas for emergencies and were asked to design an innovative and integrated programme around the Tropical Storm Washi scenario. It was interesting how a team with a strong IM capacity focussed on integrated IM products and a team with a strong planner focussed on a strong programme structure. Presentations were left to the imagination of the teams and this lead to innovative and engaging products.

***Recommendation*: This is an important exercise for emergency staff to go through even though it moves out of the realm of assessment and into programme design. In reality it was only an introdution to a skill that requires much more time and effort. This session should be kept in future training and should remain at an introductory level. Discussion of the programme structure (UNICEF's PCRs and IRs) led to confusion and distracted the innovative thinking of participants and instead had some participants focussed on UNICEF's internal system. Therefore this session should not refer to this internal structure of UNICEF. There is also a need to link integrated programme design with information needs at the start of an assessment. More thinking is required around this to help UNICEF staff with simple tools.**

4.1 MIRA Simulation & Debriefing

Objectives

Comments: The simulation focused on a fictional – although realistic – sudden massive influx of Syrian refugees into northern Jordan. Participants worked in three small teams for half a day on a number of assigned assessment planning tasks: preparing a PSD, identifying likely key informants for community-level assessment interview, selection sites for visits, determining strategic humanitarian priorities, and ascertaining how those priorities changed from Phase 1 (first 72 hours) to Phase 2 (first 1-2 weeks) in the simulation.

The exercise culminated in team presentations of their comments to the workshop facilitators who provided feedback to the teams on their adherence to MIRA guidance and principles, on incorporation of UNICEF CCCs in the development of strategic priorities, and on the various graphic images and techniques used to present their key messages.

Several participants noted afterwards that the simulation was the most valuable learning exercise of the week and enabled them to understand the range of information management tasks that they will be expected to carry out as MIRA team members.

Recommendation: Maintain the simulation exercise as conducted in future trainings. (This, of course, assumes adequate adaptation of the simulation scenario and information injects to correspond to local assessment needs and conditions.)

Participant Evaluation Scores and Comments

Achievement of Training Objectives

Participants were asked to note the degree of their agreement with statements about achievement of training objectives using the following scale:

1 = Strongly disagree (that a particular objective was achieved)

2 = Disagree (that a particular objective was achieved)

3 = Agree (that a particular objective was achieved)

4 = Strongly agree (that a particular objective was achieved)

Participant scores were averaged with the following results:

Objective	Average Score
The purpose of this training - to enhance staff capacity to carry out joint assessments in major emergencies based on the MIRA approach while ensuring that children are an important focus of the assessment – was achieved.	3.56
This training has increased my capacity to use the MIRA approach in a major emergency to work with partners, identify the priority needs of the affected, and produce a joint statement of strategic humanitarian priorities for decision-makers	3.56
This training has increased my capacity to link UNICEF's MIRA obligations to with HPM and CCCs in Humanitarian Action.	3.22
The training met my own personal objectives.	3.17

Quality and Value

Participants were asked to note the degree of their agreement with statements about training quality and value using the following scale:

1 = Strongly disagree (with the statement)

2 = Disagree (with the statement)

3 = Agree (with the statement)

4 = Strongly agree (with the statement)

Participant scores were averaged with the following results:

Objective	Average Score
Facilitation of the workshop sessions was of high quality:	3.61
Workshop sessions were presented at a level appropriate to participant capacities.	3.33
The workshop materials complemented the training objectives.	3.17
I would recommend this training to my colleagues.	3.50

Participants were then asked to rank their agreement with a statement that a particular session was "of high quality" using the following scale:

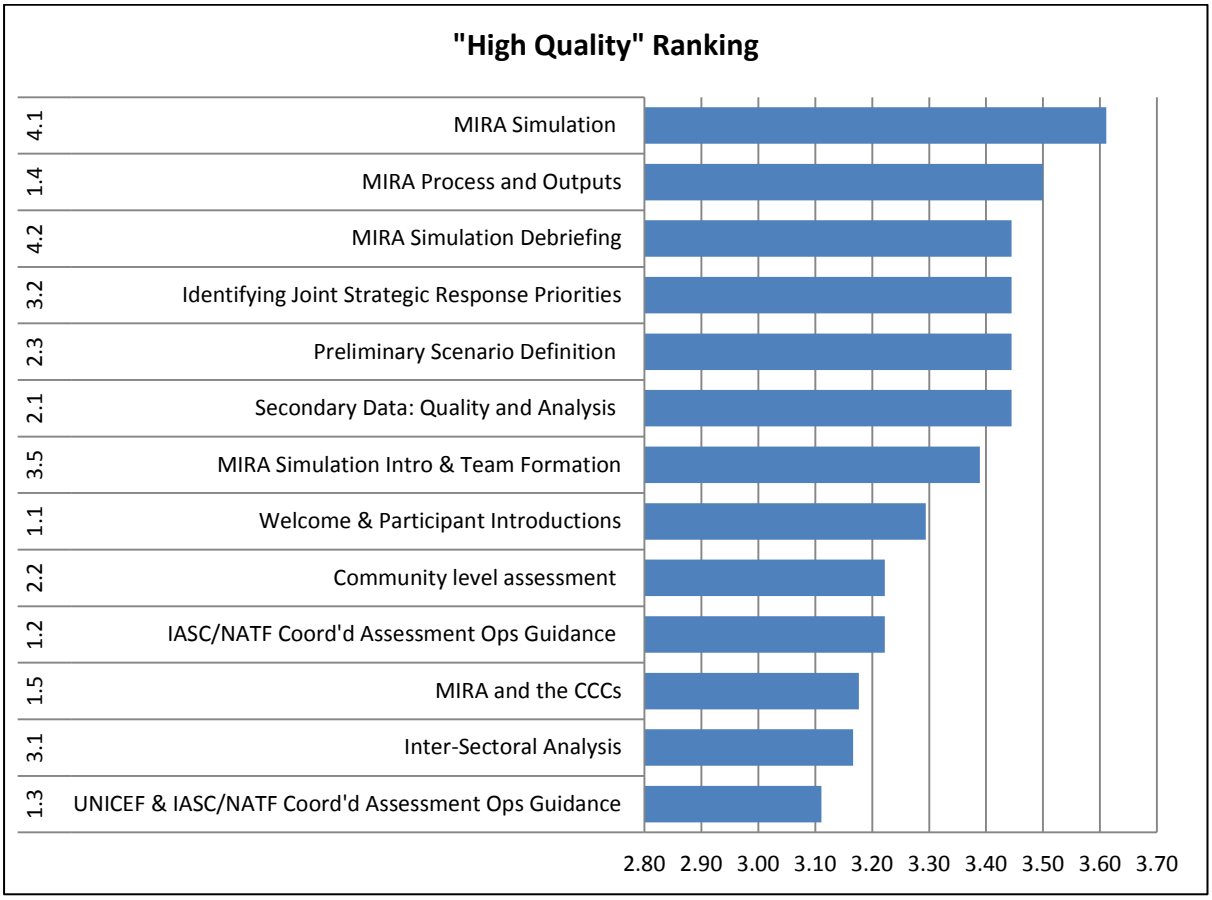
1 = Strongly disagree (that a particular session was of high quality)

2 = Disagree(that a particular session was of high quality)

3 = Agree (that a particular session was of high quality)

4 = Strongly agree (that a particular session was of high quality)

Participant scores were averaged with the following results:



All session averages indicated that participants “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that sessions were of high quality. What one might highlight from the above chart is the higher scores accorded to the simulation, the UNICEF programming exercise (“Identifying Joint Strategic Resp.Priorities”), and the development of the Preliminary Scenario Definition. All of these sessions were highly interactive with participants asked to produce key assessment or response outputs in response to a given scenario.

Participants were then asked to rank their agreement with a statement that a particular session was “of value to their work” using the following scale:

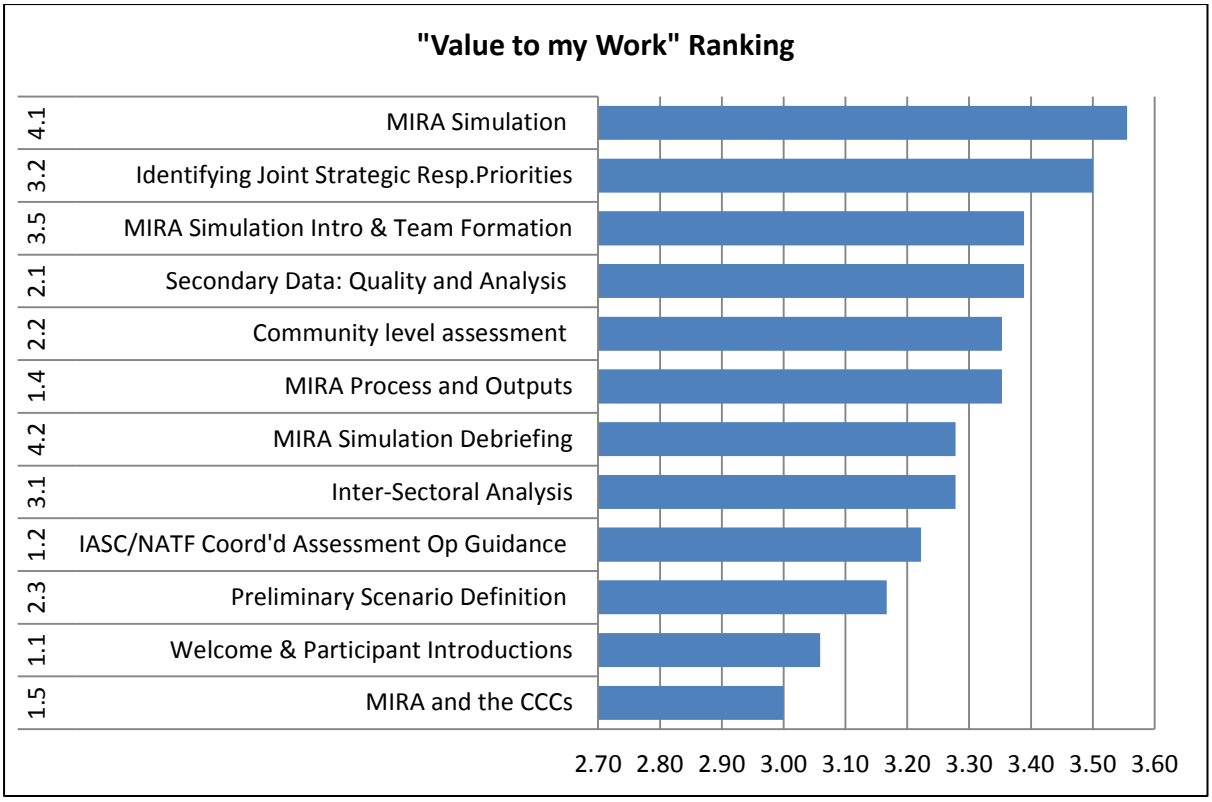
1 = Strongly disagree (that a particular session was of value to their work)

2 = Disagree(that a particular session was of value to their work)

3 = Agree (that a particular session was of value to their work)

4 = Strongly agree (that a particular session was of value to their work)

Participant scores were averaged with the following results:



All session averages indicated that participants "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that sessions were of value to their work. What one might highlight from the above chart is the higher scores accorded to the simulation, the UNICEF programming exercise ("Identifying Joint Strategic Resp.Priorities"), Secondary Data, Community Level Assessment and MIRA Process and Outputs. It would appear that participants recognize the importance of assessment in their work and were engaged in learning about the prevailing policies, procedures, tool and techniques.

Overall Training Evaluation

Participants were asked to rank the quality of the overall training, using the following scale:

1 = lowest quality and 4 = highest quality

The overall quality scores were averaged, producing a score of ***3.28***.

Participants' Written Comments on Improving the Training

Participants were asked to comment on training strengths, weaknesses and how the training might be improved. Their written comments wre compiled and are presented below:

Strengths

Statement	# of participants making comment
Bringing people from different country offices, different agencies, different clusters together to discuss common issues in relation to the training; developing team skills	8
Good facilitation of workshop; practical knowledge of facilitators; time management	8
Good practical exercises and group work	7
Simulation – most important part of the training	4
Relevance of the training to our work as emergency staff	4
Clarity of presentations	3
Reference to the current emergency (Syria)	2
Well-organized content; good introduction to the MIRA approach	2
Well-prepared course materials	2
Training well-adapted to level of knolwedge in the room	1
Knowledge of how a rapid response team begins an operation	1
The location of the training	1
Similar level of experience among participants	1
The focus on integrated rather than sectoral-specific planning	1

Weaknesses

Statement	# of participants making comment
Integration of CCCs in MIRA insufficently planned; link to UNICEF not so strong; need more on UNICEF response planning; need mor on how MIRA adds value to our own assessments	4
Lack of practice in the field (particularly with regard to CLA)	3
Need more practical examples – particularly of PSD and MIRA report	2
No coffee after lunch!	2
Insufficient case studies	1

Different levels of participant capacities	1
A bit too long given that MIRA is a way to organize data collection, analysis, and dissemination in a phased process	1
It's almost perfect, maybe more exercises would help	1

Recommendations for improvement

Statement	# of participants making comment
Program a short practice in the field mainly for CLS	3
More practical examples from emergency-affected countries; need more info on previous MIRAs and lessons learnt; need presentations from field staff who have conducted MIRA	3
Consider focusing more on a few key aspects of the MIRA process (such as initiating a MIRA; presenting priorities to a donor in a media-friendly way	2
Condense into 3 days	2
More diversity in the case studies	1
Design the training according to specific technical backgrounds	1
Follow-up training is needed, particularly in IM, data analysis, messaging, etc.	1
Online follow-up & dates on new developments related to MIRA	1
Share reading materials with participants in advance	1
Provide coffee after lunch!	1

List of participants

Title	First	Last	Org	Country
Mr	Baher	Al Kayal	SARC	Syria
Ms	Reem	Alnablsi	SARC	Syria
Mr	Mouaz	Al Takouri	UNICEF	JCO
Dr.	AbdulAziz	Dada	UNICEF	Yemen
Ms	Yosi	Echeverry Burckhardt	UNICEF	Libya
Ms.	Shorouq	Fakhani	UNICEF	JCO
Mr.	Juan	Frechilla	UNICEF	JCO
Ms.	Subha	Ghannam	UNICEF	State of Palestine
Mr	Clemens	Gros	UNICEF	JCO
Ms.	Safa	Nasr	UNICEF	State of Palestine
Mr.	Jonathan	Perry	UNICEF	JCO
Mr	Mohamad	Kanawati	UNICEF	Syria
Mr	Aristide	Sagbohan	UNICEF	Djibouti
Ms	Zainab	Suliman	UNICEF	SCO
Mr	Hrayr	Wannis	UNICEF	Lebanon
Ms	Helen	Wood	UNICEF	JCO
Ms.	Rawia	Al-Taweel	OCHA	Syria
Mr.	Hani	Al Homsh	WFP	Syria