



Guidance Note on Targeting, Prioritization and Vulnerability

Shelter, Land & Site Coordination Sector

This Guidance Note outlines the agreed vulnerability criteria to support harmonized targeting and prioritisation of Shelter, Land & Site Coordination Sector (SLSC) interventions in Sri Lanka. It aims to ensure that available humanitarian resources are directed to households with the highest levels of vulnerability, while promoting transparency, protection mainstreaming, and accountability to affected populations.

This guidance is intended for use by all SLSC partners when designing assessments, selecting beneficiaries, and implementing targeted assistance.

1. Targeting Approach

SLSC partners are encouraged to apply a **targeted approach** wherever feasible. Blanket assistance may be adopted in sudden-onset emergencies where a rapid response is required such as new or secondary displacement affecting a significant number of people.

Targeting and prioritization should be informed by:

- Geographical prioritization
- Household socio-economic vulnerabilities
- SLSC-related vulnerabilities

Partners are strongly encouraged to combine multiple targeting methods (geographic, community-based, categorical and/or scorecard approaches) and to coordinate closely with local authorities and community representatives.

2. Geographical prioritization

Assistance is prioritized in areas directly affected by Cyclone Ditwah, particularly locations hosting high concentrations of displaced people, damaged housing, and households residing in Safety Centres or other temporary displacement solutions, notably in Central, Uva and Sabaragamuwa Districts.

Assistance in areas not directly affected by the cyclone may be considered where there is a significant concentration of displaced or hosted populations exceeding local coping capacities.

3. Household Socio-Economic Vulnerabilities

The following vulnerabilities apply across all SLSC activities and should be assessed regardless of the type of assistance provided. These criteria should be applied using a protection-sensitive approach, without requiring disclosure of sensitive information.

Households may be prioritized where one or more of the following conditions are present:

- People with disabilities
- Pregnant women and households with children under three years of age
- Older people (60+), particularly those living alone or without adequate support
- Members of minority groups excluded from government assistance, including *Malaiyaha* communities
- Households unable to meet basic needs, including shelter
- People with chronic illnesses or serious medical conditions
- Households without access to livelihoods, particularly where loss of income is directly linked to displacement or disaster impact

Gender, age, and diversity considerations should be integrated throughout the assessment and prioritisation process.



4. SLSC-Related Vulnerabilities

These vulnerabilities are **activity-specific** and directly linked to Shelter, NFI, HLP or CCCM needs. They should be applied depending on the type of intervention being implemented.

Households may be prioritised where they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Households living in damaged or unsafe structures, exposed to rain, wind, or slope instability
- Households lacking the technical and/or financial capacity to safely undertake shelter repairs
- Households residing in identified risk areas, or locations requiring risk-reduction measures prior to safe return
- Households required to relocate due to officially declared no-build zones or high-risk areas (NBRO or DMC)
- Households lacking essential household items following displacement or disaster
- Households residing in Safety Centres or Temporary Sites
- Households lacking secure land or house tenure

These criteria should be applied in conjunction with government hazard classifications (NBRO), technical assessments, and coordination with relevant authorities.

5. Methodology and Community Engagement

SLSC partners are encouraged to:

- Engage affected communities and local authorities (DS and GN level) in identifying vulnerabilities and validating beneficiary lists
- Clearly communicate selection criteria and processes to communities and Safety Centers committees (translated to Sinhala and Tamil if both groups are affected)
- Conduct household-level verification where feasible
- Apply *do no harm principles* and manage expectations throughout the process

Where scorecards are used, partners should ensure that:

- Indicators are context-appropriate and transparent
- Communities are involved where possible
- Results are triangulated with qualitative information

Assistance must be **needs-based** and informed by assessed vulnerabilities rather than by event-based entitlement alone. The same shock or hazard may result in different levels and types of impact across households, depending on pre-existing vulnerabilities, coping capacities, and living conditions.

Host communities should be considered within targeting and assistance strategies in order to promote social cohesion and mitigate potential tensions. Where displaced or affected populations are assisted in isolation, there is a risk of negative perceptions among host communities, particularly when hosts share similar levels of need or vulnerability but are excluded from support. Ensure that assistance is guided by vulnerability and needs rather than displacement status alone.

Limiting assistance exclusively to Safety Centres or temporary camps may create unintended pull factors, potentially encouraging movement towards these sites, delaying voluntary return or adoption of durable solutions, and contributing to unnecessary displacement in future events. Partners are therefore encouraged to ensure that assistance strategies are balanced and context-appropriate, taking into account the needs of affected households both within and outside displacement sites.



6. Protection, AAP, and Risk Mitigation

Targeting processes may create risks, including community tension, exclusion errors, or unmet expectations. To mitigate these risks, SLSC strongly recommends:

- Integration of Protection mainstreaming throughout all stages of the response
- Functioning Accountability to Affected People (AAP) mechanisms, including feedback and complaints channels
- Regular review and adjustment of vulnerability criteria to reflect evolving needs
- Close coordination with the Protection Sector for cases requiring specialised referral

7. Applicability and Review

This guidance note serves as a **minimum common standard** for SLSC partners. Partners may adapt or expand vulnerability criteria to reflect specific operational contexts, if adaptations are clearly documented and coordinated through the SLSC.

The SLSC will review and update this guidance as required, in line with evolving needs and operational realities.