***Volunteers National Organization for Development and Humanitarian Services***

## Functional Assessment System document:

A **functional assessment system** in MEAL is more than a one-off snapshot like RNA; it's a **continuous, systematic process** that feeds multiple MEAL components for adaptive program management.

## How It Works:

1. **On-going Monitoring Tool:**
   - Functional assessments track *progress and changes* in the functioning of individuals, households, or systems over time.
   - They generate **routine data points** for MEAL, rather than just initial baselines or needs.
   - Examples: tracking disability inclusion progress, livelihood functionality, or child development milestones during project implementation.
2. **Evaluation Component:**
   - Provides detailed **qualitative and quantitative data** on how interventions improve or hinder functional outcomes.
   - Helps determine **effectiveness and impact** in key functional areas — health, mobility, social participation, economic activity.
   - Feeds into mid-term and final evaluations, moving beyond rapid snapshots to deeper impact insights.
3. **Accountability Mechanism:**
   - Functional assessments can reflect beneficiary feedback on what is working or not in real time.
   - This data is used to **adapt programming responsively**, ensuring services meet client needs effectively.
   - Supports accountability to affected populations by demonstrating transparency in outcomes and adjustments.
4. **Learning and Adaptation:**
   - Captures longitudinal data that helps identify **trends, bottlenecks, or success factors**.
   - Facilitates learning loops within the program and across the organization.
   - Enables evidence-based adaptations, improving program design and targeting.

## Key Features of a Functional Assessment System in MEAL

| Feature | Purpose within MEAL | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| Standardized Tools | Consistent measurement across time/space | WHO Disability Assessment Schedule |
| Digital Data Collection | Real-time data upload and analysis | Mobile apps for longitudinal data |
| Multi-Domain Coverage | Holistic assessment of functioning | Physical, psychological, social |
| Integration with MEAL | Feeding data into dashboards, reports | Visualization tools, dashboards |
| Feedback Loops | Ensuring data informs program adjustments | Regular learning workshops, reports |

## Beyond RNA — Other Functional Assessment Applications in MEAL

- **Baseline and Endline Assessments:** Establish initial functional status and measure progress or impact.
- **Ongoing Case Management Monitoring:** Track individual client outcomes over time.
- **Sector-Specific Functional Assessments:** For example, education functional assessments to monitor learning outcomes or inclusion.
- **Vulnerability and Resilience Monitoring:** Assess how functional status relates to coping capacity and risks.

## Summary

A **functional assessment system** within MEAL provides **dynamic, continuous, actionable data** on how populations or individuals function in relation to program goals, far beyond the one-time rapid needs snapshot. It supports adaptive management, accountability to beneficiaries, and evidence-based learning throughout the program cycle.