

Introducing the Vulnerability Assessment Framework

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As donors, you want the money you contribute to humanitarian crises to be used as effectively and productively as possible. The Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) is a process the humanitarian community can use to design and deliver assistance during crises in a more collaborative and effective way that prioritizes the most vulnerable members of a crisis-affected community. It is being developed in Jordan by an inter-agency steering group, whose members' logos are above, and who are dedicated to establishing the best possible operating procedures for assessing the vulnerability of Syrian refugees in Jordan.

This document explains how the VAF can help direct donor funds and objectives.

What is the Vulnerability Assessment Framework?

The Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) is a process with multiple components that a steering committee of humanitarian organizations and donors, is developing to help humanitarian assistance organizations in Jordan provide services as effectively as possible and prioritize refugees who are most in need of help.



Why is there a need for the VAF?

Humanitarian assistance is constantly professionalizing and evolving. The VAF is meant to enhance the delivery of assistance after the early stage of a crisis when food and other assistance are given to all newly arriving refugees. The organizations supporting the development of the VAF are dedicated to managing resources – whether funding levels are higher or lower – in a way that prioritizes refugees who are most in need of help. The VAF helps accomplish that.

How does the computer model work?

The VAF features a unique statistical model that uses information gathered from more than 9,000 Syrian refugee households outside of camps in Jordan to predict economic vulnerability of a household. The amount of data will expand as more refugees complete the VAF



questionnaire. The model uses a beneficiary profile to predict – with a high degree of reliability – the expenditure level of households. The higher the expenditure level, the stronger the household. Lower levels indicate that a household is more vulnerable and less able to meet its own needs.

Parallel to the statistical modelling, NGOs and UN agencies working in different sectors have developed sector-specific resilience rules that determine non-monetary vulnerabilities and strengths, such as whether a household has stable and safe housing, access to clean water and healthcare, and whether it faces any protection risks, especially related to children and women.

Where does the information about Syrian refugee households come from?

The VAF uses an extensive questionnaire that refugees answer during household visits from participating organizations. More than 15,000 households have been surveyed so far with more to come.



Here are some examples of VAF questions by sector:

- Does your house have access to a toilet? Is your household’s sanitary facility inside your house or outside?
- How much is your rent, did you change your residence in the last 12 months and, if so, why?
- What non-food items does your family need?
- What is your household’s source of water?

How many days did the household *not* have water in the past month? Have any of your children under 5 had diarrhea incidents in the last six months? Is solid waste removed regularly, with sufficient bins?

- How much does your household spend on infant needs, on rent and utilities, on debt repayment? What sources of income do you have?



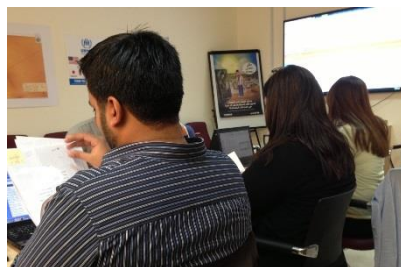
- What poverty and coping strategies has your household used in the last six months, including sending your children to work instead of to school, begging, sharing costs with a family living in the same residence, selling jewelry or a car, borrowing money?
- Do you receive WFP vouchers? How many meals were eaten yesterday by your family and from which food groups? Since coming to Jordan, have you done high risk, illegal, socially degrading or exploitative temporary jobs to earn money for basic food needs?

- How many school-age children are in your household? If they are in a private school, what is the reason, for example, because your child has a physical or mental disability, there was violence at a former school, or you sought a better quality of education for your children? If your child is in public school, did you pay school fees? How much?
- How many of your children, specify girls or boys, have missed education and how much?
- Are family members suffering from chronic diseases? Which ones for which family members (father, mother, children above and below 5 years old)? Did you receive medical treatment in the last six months? Where, were relevant services available, were you denied services without being given a clear reason why?
- Is your nuclear family (parents, children, siblings) together? If not, are they in Jordan or Syria?
- Have you had difficulties obtaining legal documents in Jordan? If divorced, do you have any documents?
- Have any of your children experienced violence or abuse in Jordan? Are any girls younger than 15 years old married? When and where did the marriage occur?

An appeals process that can be adapted

A flexible appeals process is being developed that can be tailored to meet different organizations' missions and needs. Development of the appeals process entered a pilot-project phase in October in connection with the World Food Programme's (WFP) decision to end food assistance for a limited number of refugees living outside of camps in Jordan who WFP determined were able to meet basic food needs on their own.

WFP's decisions on whose assistance to end was based on a food security study it had conducted, not on VAF findings. But WFP is using the VAF appeals process for refugees who think their food aid was ended inappropriately.



An appeals committee comprised of representatives from UNHCR, WFP and partner NGOs began meeting in October to review appeals applications from refugees, set rules for approving and denying appeals, and to make decisions. The VAF team plans to refine the appeals process based on the lessons learned from the pilot phase to ensure a fair and efficient procedure is available.

Is the VAF connected to funding cuts?

No. The VAF in Jordan is NOT connected to funding levels. The organizations supporting the VAF would like it to become a trustworthy, standard procedure for assessing vulnerability that agencies can use to inform how and to whom assistance is provided regardless of funding. But,



when funding does fluctuate, the VAF will be a valuable tool for refining decisions on who should be getting assistance.

Who are the VAF builders and steering committee members?

The VAF team is located at the UNHCR headquarters in Amman, where the project lead, a technical developer, an econometrist, UNHCR data staff, and others are developing the computer model and working with data. But this is a multiagency effort, with multiple humanitarian organizations working together to establish sector definitions and rules, designing



and refining an appeals process, and setting policies and procedures. It is a comprehensive, complex process that is being built to make VAF flexible and adaptable to the differing needs of organizations using it. Members of the steering committee are CARE, the Danish Refugee Council, Handicap International, ECHO, PU-AMI, REACH, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women, the U.S. BPRM, WFP and the World Health Organization.

What is the timeline for VAF to be ready to use?

The VAF data collection tool and data sharing agreement are ready for use and some INGOs are already piloting them. The VAF computer model and procedures, including an appeal process, are expected to be ready for use by the end of January 2015. UNHCR and several NGOs already have decided to use the VAF. Other NGOs can participate by contacting Kate Washington at washingk@unhcr.org.



The VAF team is eager to listen to suggestions and answer questions. Contact Kate Washington at washingk@unhcr.org or Harry Brown at harry@brown-source.com

