VAF Application Guidance Note

1. Background:

The Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) and the ProGres[1] (PG) expenditure models provide a statistical formula to predict the expenditures per capita of Syrian refugee families. Both have been developed analyzing large amounts of data to identify the strongest-holding empirical correlations. The variables that best correlate with expenditures per capita are the models predictors. As their name indicates the former model was developed on VAF data, whilst the latter on ProGres data.

The PG model provides the possibility to predict the expenses of the entire registered Syrian refugee community in Jordan – as we have very comprehensive data. The VAF model permits us to predict the expenses of the refugees in the VAF sample[2]. As of today, 20th January, 2015, we have approximately 31,000 VAF records. Analysis to date suggests that the VAF model predicts more accurately than the PG model given its higher predictive power[3].

The VAF and the PG model provide a tool to assess the economic vulnerability of Syrian refugees. They can also inform our decisions on assistance provision. The VAF is a tool for vulnerability assessment, but it can also be used for vulnerability targeting.

This guidance note sets out how agencies can use the VAF and ProGres models and the VAF team to inform their targeting.

2. How to use the VAF for targeting:

The VAF is a multi-sectorial tool that can provide vulnerability scores for all sectors (sector-specific vulnerability algorithms have also been developed). The VAF (and PG) model generates expenditure estimates for Syrian refugee families. These estimates can be used to segment the population in different vulnerability strata. The segmentation can be done according to specific needs (e.g.: abject poverty line, absolute poverty, less than 100 JD, more than 19 JD, etc.). Different criteria can be added to the segmentation (e.g.: more than 50 JD, but less than 75 JD, and a female headed household). The possibilities are considerable. The VAF can be utilized according to any specific need for targeting (or assessment) purposes.

3. Vulnerability Targeting: other factors to consider:

Whilst the models predict economic vulnerability we might want to consider other factors that are not included in the statistical modeling. Some of these are re-inclusion criteria, others are family specific targeting characteristics. Examples are provided below.

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[1] The database server that includes demographic and case information on all UNHCR registered refugees.

[2] UNHCR collects data at a speed of about 5,000 families per month.

[3] A validation process is currently being undertaken. The predictive power – quantified by the r-squared indicator – of the VAF model stands at 60%, whilst that of the PG model at 50%.

Re-inclusion criteria:

Following discussions with Jordan humanitarian agencies, re-inclusion criteria (a re-inclusion criteria means that no matter what the statistical models predict, the refugee will not be excluded from assistance) have been determined. Different agencies have different mandates, areas of specialty or interest and may want to use VAF thresholds to inform targeting but also include re-inclusion rules based on their own research and assessments. When using the VAF analysis for specific targeting most agencies will want to apply re-inclusion rules specific to the types of assistance provided.

Examples:

- Widows
- Disabled PA's
- Specific disabilities/impairments/needs
- Families on the cash assistance programme
- Any other criteria as per specific agency mandates (geographical, presence of school aged children, female head of household, borderline families that risk to fall into poverty if assistance is cut, etc.).

Note: the VAF is a model and while it has a high level of confidence it will never be 100% accurate for this reason agencies may also want to look at specific re-inclusion criteria[4].

Specific Targeting:

Similarly, agencies might want to target assistance to specific cohorts. The statistical model's predictions can inform decisions on cases to provide assistance to, or cases which should be excluded from assistance packages.

Examples:

- Assistance provided to the most vulnerable on the cash assistance programme.
- Assistance provided to the most vulnerable female headed households only.
- Assistance provided to the most vulnerable families who have more than 3 children.
- Assistance provided to families with a disabled PA *and* a dependency ratio of 1.5.
- Any other group with one or more specific characteristic.

4. Conclusions:

The VAF team have already provided a number of agencies with customized analysis to support their targeting and are available to work with agencies on using VAF data to inform assistance provision.

The VAF team can support in customizing analysis for targeting. Contact Kate Washington at washingk@unhcr.org and Marco Santacroce at santacro@unhcr.org

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[4] Also see the VAF appeals guidance note – which outlines the importance of the appeals process and also the appeals procedure.