Vulnerability Assessment Framework

Household Indicators Workshop
Wednesday, Feb. 5, 2014

Facilitator's Summary

Workshop Overview and Impressions

The inter-agency workshop was organized with the explicit objective of developing the 10-15 draft indicators that will form the basis of the vulnerability assessment for households located outside of formal camps. The over 35 participants -- representing five UN agencies, 15 NGOs and two donors -- included Chairs and members of each of the main sector and sub-sector working groups. Following a presentation on the Vulnerability Assessment Framework initiative, an update on the WFP/ACTED Comprehensive Food Security Monitoring Exercise and a discussion on the development of vulnerability indicators, participants divided into groups to develop indicators based on the components of vulnerability previously identified by the Steering Committee. In the last session of the day, participants reviewed an integrated list of draft indicators in plenary giving everyone an opportunity to evaluate each component's approach and discuss the nexus between indicators.

Although the seriousness with which all the participants approached the work was impressive, the groups achieved varying degrees of success in fleshing out indicators. Some groups were able to reach a more detailed articulation while others struggled to move beyond the discussion phase. Although most participants felt the task was a challenging one, comments from several participants indicated appreciation for the consultative approach chosen. The exercise, in addition to providing an important first step in the development of indicators, also helped to solidify the image of the project as an inter-agency initiative and one that will provide useful tools and information for a broad range of humanitarian actors

Indicators

By the end of the day the groups were able to identify a solid group of indicators from which to build on. Most participants found the limited time available a significant constraint given the inherent complex nature of vulnerability itself and the difficulty of trying measure it. Among other challenges the groups faced were moving from a specific needs assessment approach to more general indicators of vulnerability, the broad nature of some components, (i.e. health), dealing with overlaps between components, and developing qualitative measurements that could be linked to levels of vulnerability. In the end however, most groups were able to identify a core set of indictors to take forward.

Plenary discussion identified a number of general issues to be factored into the next round of indicator development. Among these were:

- A number of crucial issues exist which are difficult to ask about directly (i.e. GBV, psychosocial disorders) and/or are difficult to measure (i.e. economic status). proxy indicators may need to be considered in some circumstances;
- Further consideration needs to be given to the appropriateness of questions asked, the nature of enumeration and what is done with the information;
- Further work is needed in mainstreaming cross-cutting issues such as disability, gender and age;
- The environment in which households are based (i.e. urban vs. rural) needs to be given further consideration for its impact on vulnerability;

A detailed list of comments was recorded for integration into the next stages of indicator elaboration and review. Also identified was a need to look at look at the list from an inter-sectoral perspective in order to identify critical factors that are missing or only partially captured.

Recommended Next Steps

Following the workshop the suggestion was made to assemble a small group of staff from steering committee member agencies to 'polish' the indicator list based on feedback from the workshop plenary and further consultation with Sector Chairs. With the agreement of the Steering Committee, the revised indicator list should be sent back to Sector Chairs for review by sector working groups. It should be noted that some of the Sector Chairs attending the workshop expressed concern about this review and managing this process in a large working group. Review instructions need to be carefully constructed to ensure the process continues to move forward without significant delays.

Once the indicators have been reviewed by sectors, a small technical team should be assembled to develop a recommended weighting and scoring methodology. As a final step, the indicators with weighting and scoring recommendations should be approved by the ISWG and endorsed by VAF Steering Committee.