

VAF – Vulnerability - Models and Thresholds

The VAF defines vulnerability as:

“the risk of exposure of Syrian refugee households to harm, primarily in relation to protection threats, inability to meet basic needs, limited access basic services, and food insecurity, and the ability of the population to cope with the consequences of this harm”.

November 2014

Background:

In January 2014, the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) process was launched with the primary objective of developing a robust model that could be applied across the Syrian non-camp based population to assess multiple vulnerabilities and provide the humanitarian community specific information at Kingdom wide, district and household levels. The VAF is a combination of a number of components all of which build on the development of the Vulnerability Assessment Model.

Objectives:

To put in place a system that, using a mixture of static and dynamic indicators, supports the Humanitarian community to:

- Establish a profile of vulnerability among Syrian refugee households and enables monitoring of changes in vulnerability over time;
- Target assistance in a more efficient and equitable manner, based on the application of common vulnerability criteria;
- Strengthen coordination and decision-making of the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Outcomes:

- VAF indicators/data are collected at the registration stage by UNHCR and during home Visits by UN agencies and NGOs, and are uploaded into a central database. With the data regularly updated, the database will generate a ‘vulnerability profile’ for each Refugee household, based on thresholds of ‘extremely vulnerable, very vulnerable etc’.
- Partners are able to access the database and conduct queries, while ensuring that confidentiality and protection rules are respected.
- Partners will be able to conduct sector-specific queries, to help them to better target their assistance by geographical area and household level, prompting further technical assessments.
- Partners who have identified beneficiaries for individual household assistance are able to check the ‘vulnerability profile’ of that household. They may then be able to modify their decision of whom to assist, based on the vulnerability profile.
- Periodic reports, allow the humanitarian community will be able to monitor trends in vulnerability by geographical area, informing broader strategic processes, such as the RRP.

Vulnerability Assessment Model Objective: To develop a methodology that is robust to sample bias and non-randomness.

Work So Far:



In 2014 the World Bank supported UNHCR Jordan by analyzing home visit data to investigate the potential for an econometric model to assess vulnerability and help inform UNHCR's cash targeting. The World Bank analysis used predicted expenditure at the case level as a proxy for welfare i.e. vulnerability¹. Based on the work of the World Bank and an in-depth analysis of the datasets of the VAF data collection tool² two estimations of the *Vulnerability Assessment Model* (or Welfare Model) have been conducted, and a third estimation is currently being developed.

The two initial estimations were distinguished by non-random and non-representative sample sizes of, initially, 700 cases, and subsequently 5,000 cases. Although non-random and non-representative samples were analyzed, the identified characteristics (i.e. the best predictors of expenditures) were unaltered across econometric estimations, and these were:

- House crowding,
- Coping strategies to meet basic food needs,
- Savings, debt, income, and family size.

This has provided a validation of the econometric model. The third estimation that is currently being developed will differ from the previous for three reasons:

1. A first Welfare model is developed using a VAF sample of 9,000 cases.
2. A second Welfare model is developed using a Governorate representative sample.
3. A third Welfare model is developed using a Registration date representative sample.

The Models:

1. The Welfare model 9,000 is estimated on a VAF sample of 9,000 cases. This estimation will be analogous to the previous, in that, the estimation is not based on random and representative sampling, but will provide confidence in the validity, precision and accuracy of all the estimations and of their identified characteristics.

2. The Governorate representative model is estimated on a sample that is aligned with the presence of refugees across Governorates (i.e. 33% of Syrian refugees reside in Amman, therefore 33% of the sample records will be from Amman, etc...).

3. The Registration representative model is estimated on a sample that is aligned with the proportion of registrations that occurred across time (i.e. 53% of registrations occurred in 2013, therefore 53% of the sample records will have registered in 2013, etc...).

In both representative models, the records analyzed from each Governorate and from each year of Registration are randomly selecting in the sample of 9,000 cases.

¹ Following extensive research, expenditure, rather than income, is commonly used by the World Bank as a better proxy of welfare.

² Which was developed during a multi sectorial workshop on vulnerability analysis and then validated by sector working groups (see Annex 1).

Latest Estimations:

Welfare model: The results of the Welfare model 9,000 and the Governorate representative model are identical amongst each other and to those of the Welfare model 700 and 5,000. The identified characteristics, their directional effect and the explanatory power of the model in its entirety have remained the same.

Sector based rules model: In addition to the Welfare model the different Sector Working Groups have developed Sector Based Rules models based on the VAF data collection tool and the home visit form. Sectors were supported by the VAF team to develop rules based models that build on work done in Lebanon. Six sectors have developed rules based scoring (Health, Education, Food Security, WASH, Shelter and Basic Needs). The sector based rules were developed based on the pre-identified sector priorities, experience and needs analysis. The sectors were supported by the VAF team to develop their sector scores on the basis of the data points available. In some cases some sectors were able to develop more comprehensive rules than others due to the limitations of the data sets available.

Datasets available: Currently all VAF data and modelling is being conducted on the VAF data set which is based on the VAF questionnaire form developed from an interagency workshop on sector based vulnerability and indicators held in February 2014.

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



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