PVA

Participatory Vulnerability Analysis

A step–by–step guide for field staff

actionaid
international

Acknowledgements

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Preface

"Anyone faced with the prospect of eating an elephant would be daunted. Too big! Where to start! But faced with manageable pieces the prospect appears more comprehensible. So with vulnerability – faced with such a complex concept there seems little prospect of addressing it. But if analysed as a participatory process, some specific solutions will become apparent for any particular context."

Roger Yates,
Head of International Emergencies Team

This is the message at the heart of participatory vulnerability analysis (PVA). The importance of breaking down the complexity of vulnerability into manageable components with communities is that we can jointly see what can be done to reduce their exposure to hazards and shocks. This is strongly founded on the idea that communities know their situations best and so any analysis should be built on their knowledge of local conditions. Through PVA communities should be empowered to take charge of their own efforts to address their vulnerability.

Being aware of one's own vulnerability is a big step, but the essence of a PVA is not only for the community to develop action plans, but to be motivated through the process and be able to constantly seek opportunities to enhance their resilience to difficult conditions. For the community to sustain efforts that reduce their vulnerability, they need to be encouraged to change any limiting beliefs they may have about their situation.

The PVA itself evolved from a workshop convened by ActionAid in Dorset, UK in 2000. The workshop recognised the importance of vulnerability in development and emergencies - related work. It also identified that one of the gaps was in translating the knowledge of vulnerability into practice. Specific areas included how to build community resilience to disasters; link emergencies and development; influence policy and most of all motivate the most vulnerable.

The workshop agreed to develop a guide on PVA that will be used by field staff. Thereafter a series of studies took place in conjunction with Swansea University (Centre for Development Studies) in Bangladesh, India and Ghana. A field test of PVA was conducted in The Gambia (May 2003) culminating in the formulation of this PVA guide.

As we gain more experience in using PVA and share it with other agencies, we will be reflecting on the guide as a way of constantly improving it.

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Introduction

Background

This guide is developed to assist field workers and communities to analyse people's vulnerability, draw action plans, mobilise resources and enact appropriate policies, laws and strategies to reduce their vulnerability to disaster.

There are few guidelines developed by other organisations on how communities can carry out vulnerability analysis (see www.proventionconsortium.org). This guide is specifically developed consistent with the PVA approach to:

– establish links between emergencies and development;

– recognise developments or events at national and international level and how these impact on communities' vulnerability;

– use the output of local level analysis to inform national and international level action and policies.

Structure of the PVA guide

This guide is divided into three major parts:

Part 1 (Understanding vulnerability) provides insights into key aspects of vulnerability. Different people have different levels of understanding about vulnerability – and it makes sense to reach an agreement about the concept before conducting fieldwork. This section can be used as a resource when preparing field teams and communities.

Part 2 (Conducting PVA) contains suggestions on how best to prepare for a PVA, how to conduct the analysis and how to generate action. It includes three phases for conducting PVA, namely:

Phase 1: preparation: provides insights on preparation for a PVA exercise which comprise developing terms of reference, analysing secondary data, identifying stakeholders for the PVA exercise and briefing them on the objectives. One of the key messages in this section is not to research information already known or readily available from secondary sources – unless of course it is in dispute or needs to be verified.

Phase 2: analytical framework: the framework has four analytical steps: i) situation analysis, ii) analysis of the causes of vulnerability, iii) analysis of community action and capacity and iv) drawing action from analysis.

Phase 3: multi-levelled analysis: conducting analysis and generating action at the community, district, national and international levels using the step-by-step analytical framework.

Part 3 is an appendix, which provides suggestions for compiling the data generated through PVA, ideas for advocacy work and an example of terms of reference.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for field staff working in both emergencies and development-related programmes that are conversant with Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and REFLECT tools. The guide provides suggestions for tools that can be used for the analysis, but does not provide information on details of each tool (please refer to the REFLECT mother manual or any other materials on PRA).

However, the PVA analytical framework and participatory tools alone are not enough. There is need for the process to be facilitated well. This calls for the ability to be flexible, to draw deep analysis, to investigate and to get the discussions going.

It is important to emphasise that conducting a PVA is part of a process aimed at empowering communities. PVA is not an end in itself. The process of conducting a PVA is as important as the product itself.

Our experience shows that using PVA as a methodology for analysing vulnerability brings tangible benefits. Some of these include:

– It reveals different aspects and causes of vulnerability, and at the same time offers mechanisms for follow-up programmes.

– It increases effectiveness of emergency and development activities in the long-term with vulnerability as an indicator by either categorising poor people into groups according to levels of vulnerability, thereby allowing better targeting, or being used to establish a baseline of new projects.

– It addresses cross cutting themes like HIV/AIDS, gender, etc providing an in-depth understanding of vulnerabilities which unveils the dynamics of power, inequality and discrimination between men and women, girls and boys – the analysis is a springboard for women's empowerment.

– It reduces differences in approaches of locals and outsiders, merging them to create acceptability and ownership for both the community and development facilitators.

– PVA can make future vulnerabilities predictive, based on levels of skill and analysis, as such planning and mitigation efforts are made to offset potential future vulnerabilities.

Aim

The aim of this section is to generate conceptual clarity of vulnerability. Such clarity would make it easier for PVA practitioners to translate the key concepts into their local language and streamline the PVA process.

1.1 What is vulnerability?

Vulnerability is a term used to describe exposure to hazards and shocks. People are more vulnerable if they are more likely to be badly affected by events outside their control.

The words that make up the definition of vulnerability are explained in the box.

"Vulnerability defines the characteristics of a person or group and their situation that influence their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a hazard." (Wisner et al, 2004). It involves a combination of factors that determine the degree to which someone's life, livelihood, property and other assets are put at risk by a discrete and identifiable event (or series or cascade of such events) in nature and society.

1.1.1 Dimensions of vulnerability: social, generational, geographic, economic and political processes that influence how hazards affect people in varying ways and with different intensities. Some groups are more prone to damage, loss and suffering in the context of differing hazards. Key variables explaining variations of impact include class, occupation, caste, ethnicity, gender, disability and health status, age and immigration status and the nature and extent of social networks. Changing the social, economic and political factors usually means altering the way that power operates in society.

Hazard is a natural or manmade phenomenon that may cause physical damage, economic loss and threaten human life and wellbeing, for example, earthquake, living on a hill, a drought or conflict. Such phenomena may affect different places singularly or in combination at different times. The hazard has varying degrees of intensity and severity.

Exposure is the likelihood of individuals, household, community or nation experiencing the hazard

Risk is the expected damage or loss due to the combination of vulnerability and hazards. People are considered at 'risk' when they are unable to cope with a hazard. A disaster occurs when a significant number of vulnerable people experience a hazard and suffer from severe damage and/or disruption of their livelihood system in such a way that recovery is unlikely without external assistance.

Disaster = vulnerability (internal susceptibility or defencelessness) + hazard (an external event). A disaster cannot occur if there are hazards with little or no vulnerability, or if vulnerability is high but there are zero hazards.

Disaster/risk analysis therefore involves understanding (i) the types of hazards that might affect people and also (ii) the different levels of vulnerability of different groups of people.

The relative contribution of geophysical and biological processes on the one hand and social, economic and political processes on the other to vulnerability varies from disaster to disaster, as well as from one community to another and from one place to another. The highlighted paragraph illustrates some of the dimensions of vulnerability. Vulnerability can be increased through entitlements, political powerlessness or

social exploitation and discrimination. The interactions of the different factors of vulnerability will determine people's capacities, access to resources and ability to realise their rights.

In the face of a particular hazard, it is important to determine how each hazard interacts with each and every dimension of vulnerability. Response planning should be based on the manifestation of vulnerability affecting communities in a particular context.

> Coastal communities in Mozambique are more likely to experience cyclone induced flooding than communities in other countries in southern Africa. However, amongst the same communities in Mozambique, some families have strong houses that can withstand the impact of floods better or are aware of upcoming floods so they can relocate. Others, after having their houses destroyed by floods, are able to rebuild more quickly because of their savings, innovations, family or other external support. The poorest tend to live in the most exposed places, have the weakest houses, and have least assets to rebuild. They are likely to be the most vulnerable.

1.1.2 People and vulnerability

Our concern is the most affected: who these people are; what it is that makes them more vulnerable (i.e.more likely to be badly affected); and what can be done to reduce their vulnerability.

Vulnerability is gender differentiated. The way women experience vulnerability is many times different to men due to socially constructed gender roles and power relations. Factors, such as lack of access to and control over basic resources and lack of entitlements, amplify women's vulnerability and undermine their ability to cope with effects of disasters.

Some groups of people tend to be more vulnerable than others: children, the elderly and people with disabilities are more vulnerable because of physical difficulties. For other groups, their identity (dalits, ethnic minorities) leads them to exclusion, including people with HIV/AIDS, for a combination of these reasons (physical, financial, stigma, generation).

Therefore a study of vulnerability is a study of what might happen to people or communities. While it is not certain that a crisis will happen, it is certain that some people are more likely to be severely affected if a crisis does happen.

1.1.3 Vulnerability and poverty. What is the difference?

Poverty is not the same as vulnerability, but they are strongly linked. They are mutually re-enforcing and brought about by similar processes. All poor people are vulnerable but not all vulnerable people are poor. Poverty is a core dimension of vulnerability.

Poverty is not the only factor that leads to vulnerability; other factors like geographical location, communal conflict or social and ethnic association can make people vulnerable. Vulnerability pushes people into poverty, keeps them in poverty and stops them from coming out of poverty.

Poverty is the state of deprivation (lack of access) to key resources necessary for full participation in economic and social life. It is thus thought about as current status, and often heavily associated with material/social status. Increasingly poverty is seen as a multi-dimensional issue, involving lack of access to a wide range of natural social, economic, and political resources and capacities. Vulnerability, on the other hand, is more

about defencelessness, insecurity, exposure to hazards or shocks and the ability to cope with them than it is about current status.

1.1.4 Vulnerability and human security: a rights' perspective

Enquiring about the conditions (e.g. a hazardous physical environment, or severe economic deprivation) that make some people more vulnerable than others is central to PVA. But we need to probe further. We need to probe further. Understanding vulnerability requires a closer scrutiny of the power relations that determine, for instance, who in any given society gets what, who makes decisions and who is excluded. In this respect, PVA draws heavily on our evolving rights- based analysis.

The notion of human security provides us with a useful framework to analyse the links between vulnerability, power and rights. Let us concentrate on the following examples

Example 1: About 20,000 people (perhaps several thousand more) died in Orissa in 1999. Hit by a super-cyclone, entire communities were wiped out, two million houses were reduced to rubble, thousands of heads of livestock were killed, and 1.3 million hectares of paddy crops were destroyed. The disaster took the majority of the inhabitants of area by surprise. Yet the fact is that meteorologists had warned that a super-cyclone was brewing in the Bay of Bengal four days before it hit Orissa. Informed about the impending disaster, the Chief Minister of the State took action and consulted three astrologers, who assured him that the cyclone would weaken or be deflected. Unfortunately, the cyclone struck the coastal areas of the state. By the way, cyclones hit Orissa every year. (R. Banerjee).

The link between poverty and vulnerability: case Brazil.
Heavy rainfall may wash away the homes in wealthy hillside residential areas such as Topanga Canyon (near Los Angeles, US) as well as those of the poor in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). There are however, three important differences in the effects.

If we compare the number of victims of landslides in various cities around the world we see that it is rarely rich people who are affected. Money buys design and engineering that minimizes the severity of such events for the rich. Telecommunications and transport infrastructure facilitate warning and rescue.

Secondly, living in a hazardous environment is voluntary for the rich in California, but much less so for poor Brazilians.

Thirdly, the consequences of landslides for the rich are far less than for the surviving poor. Homes and possessions of the rich are usually insured, while those of the poor tend not to be. The rich are more easily able to find alternative shelter and to continue with their income-earning activities after the disaster. They have reserves and credit available as well as insurance. The poor, by contrast, have their entire stock of capital (home, clothing, tools, etc.) assembled at the site of the disaster. They have few if any cash reserves.

(Blaikie et al, At Risk: natural hazards, people's vulnerability and disasters, Routledge, 2001, page 10).

Example 2: The 2002 food crisis in Malawi resulted in several hundred hunger-related deaths – perhaps several thousand. Following two good production years, localised floods

reduced the maize harvest. Surprisingly the government had already sold much of the strategic grain reserve. As a result, maize prices escalated to unaffordable levels, meaning that when people's crops failed they could not obtain maize, the major staple. This increased their susceptibility to risk. The deepening crisis mostly affected poor rural dwellers, and amongst these people the elderly, young children and the sick .

Example 3: Throughout the nine-year Sierra Leonean conflict there was wide spread and systematic sexual violence against women and girls including individual and gang rape and sexual slavery. In thousands of cases, sexual violence was followed by the abduction of women and girls and forced bondage to male combatants, often accompanied by forced labour. While members of the rebel groups were the most common perpetrators, members of the civil defence forces and the loyal Sierra Leonean Army were also implicated (Human Rights Watch).

Many are the lessons one can draw from examples cited above. Yet there are questions one cannot avoid asking. How many lives would have been spared if those with power and public authority (i.e. the Chief Minister, the Government of Malawi, the Sierra Leonean Army) had had the will and the capacity to fulfil their responsibilities to protect the lives and livelihoods of their citizens?

Of course, the reality is far more complex than this. Poor and marginalised people are often exposed to events largely beyond their control (natural hazards, economic crises, violent conflicts, chronic destitution, HIV/AIDS). Incapable of protecting themselves, their security becomes dependent on the protection strategies and mechanisms set up by states,

international agencies, NGOs and increasingly the private sector.

PVA helps us identify critical gaps in people's infrastructure of protection. It may be lack of co-ordination, or the doings or neglect of unaccountable and corrupted governments, or the absence of effective enforcement instruments to protect people from violence and aggression, or a combination of all of them. The fact is that human insecurity is often linked to the denial of rights and freedoms and the lack of adequate protection mechanisms (or the failure of existing ones).

PVA also invites us to explore ways to strengthen or improve people's infrastructure of protection. Involved in the process of formulation and implementation of protection strategies, communities may decide to adopt a variety of actions and strategies. For instance, their organisation and mobilisation to put pressure on their government to set up early warning systems; or to claim their right to return to the (safer) land from which they were unlawfully evicted; or link with others at wider levels to urge the international community to stop gross violations of human rights against civilians, particularly women. They may also decide to initiate judicial actions to access their entitlements (e.g. compensation packages). Different contexts will require different strategies and actions.

These examples, however, show that protection is essential, but not enough. A PVA approach promotes empowerment, that is, the active participation of people and communities in determining their wellbeing and building their infrastructure of protection. We know that for poor people to be able to cope, they must have the possibility of developing their individual and collective capabilities to make informed choices and to act on behalf of themselves and others. It

may happen through collective action and engagement in public debates and decision-making processes (e.g. social audits, legitimate representation in local and national government). It may also result in communities reaffirming their rights and challenging discrimination and exclusion, or taking charge of mediation and peace-building efforts.

By assisting practitioners and communities to enhance people's protection and promote empowerment, PVA offers a valuable contribution to our efforts to reduce vulnerability and attain human security.

To sum up, PVA builds on the recognition that everybody has fundamental rights established in different legal and policy instruments as well as cultural codes (e.g. to life and health; to humanitarian assistance; freedom from slavery and sexual violence). It also considers who in particular has what obligations, and who is in a position to help reduce insecurities in human lives.

1.2 Analysing vulnerability

The nature of vulnerability is dynamic and complex and therefore cannot be analysed directly. Hence any assessment or analysis of vulnerability is a predictive judgement – it predicts what's likely to happen and why. The analysis breaks down the detail to the point that it can be understood and addressed. The analogy on the right gives some insights on the complexities of vulnerability.

Various approaches to analysing vulnerability exist: quantitative (measuring vulnerability using quantifiable characteristics, for example 50 people are likely to be affected by landslides in Bundibugyo) and qualitative (analysing vulnerability using characteristics, for example 50 people who are likely to be affected by landslides in Bundibugyo are

households who lost their land during the war and who were resettled on the river banks).

Eating the elephant

Anyone faced with the prospect of eating an elephant would be daunted. Too big! Where to start! But faced with manageable pieces the prospect appears more comprehensible.

So with vulnerability. Faced with such a complex concept there seems little prospect of addressing it. But if analysed as a participatory process, some specific solutions will become apparent for any particular context.

Certain vulnerabilities for some groups of people may be reduced, either through people's own actions (reaching a cyclone shelter in time), or through the actions of governments and local authorities (keeping storm drains clear), or through the interventions of aid agencies (building cyclone shelters).

People can use the process of vulnerability analysis to reflect on what they want to do about their situations. This may lead them to begin to assert their rights and lobby local authorities to perform better. The process itself will help to build advocacy skills among poor communities.

A result of the process can be the design of development programmes to increase resilience, building on the strengths that people identify. Reductions in vulnerability may be used as indicators of development progress. People are acutely aware of the extent of their vulnerability and can monitor changes over time.

If an emergency does occur, an analysis of vulnerability will help to target relief efforts more effectively to address the most significant problems faced by the people concerned.

(cont...)

Vulnerability analysis has been tried by some aid organisations, but mostly to inform the organisations on what risks occur where, or on the extent of food insecurity. Very little has been done to use it to help poor people recognise and assert their rights in relation to emergencies. Even less has been done to relate vulnerability to the risks and causes of conflict.

1.3 What exactly is participatory vulnerability analysis?

PVA is a systematic process that involves communities and other stakeholders in an in-depth examination of their vulnerability, and at the same time empowers or motivates them to take appropriate actions. The overall aim of PVA is to link disaster preparedness and response to long-term development.

PVA is a qualitative way of analysing vulnerability, which involves participation of vulnerable people themselves. The analysis helps us to understand vulnerability, its root causes and most vulnerable groups, and agree on actions by, with and to people to reduce their vulnerability. By analysis we mean the process of breaking down something into component parts, which can then be addressed. PVA has its own principles, which are outlined below.

Core principles of PVA
- **Active agency – that poor people can and must be involved in finding the solutions to the problems they face.**
- **PVA is not an end in itself, it should result in action and change for the better.**
- **The sources of vulnerability and solutions to vulnerability are located or controlled outside the community, so you need a multi-level process.**
- **It is based on ActionAid's rights based principles.**

PVA uses a step-by-step approach (see Part 2) to systematically analyse the causes of vulnerability by:

1. Tracking hazards to determine the level of exposure to risk, causes and effects.

2. Examining unsafe conditions (factors that make people susceptible to risk at a specific point in time).

3. Tracking systems and factors (dynamic pressures) that determine vulnerability, resilience and root causes.

4. Analysing capacities and their impact on reducing vulnerability.

The factors and conditions that cause vulnerability are always changing and progressing, if they are not stopped. From the example on the next page, PVA tracks how vulnerability is progressing over time using the step-by-step approach. On the basis of these changes, provisions can be made when developing policies or programmes to protect people and build their resilience.

1.4 Multi-levelled approach

As discussed above, there are multiple determinants/causes of vulnerability. Some of these fall outside individuals or community. It follows that analysis of vulnerability should go beyond the individual to micro and macro level political processes. This highlights the need for a multi-levelled approach. Much as community perceptions are vital for developing policies that reduce vulnerability, existing policies will change and protect the most vulnerable if policy makers hear the analysis of those who are vulnerable.

The levels are:

1) Community level: PVA enables communities to play a dual role, as **informants,** but also **analysts,** by breaking down vulnerability to a point where they can begin to take action to reduce their own vulnerability. The analysis itself has no value unless it is followed by action: **people can take action themselves or get support.** Right solutions to vulnerability cannot be imposed externally but require people who are vulnerable to be involved. Reasons behind vulnerability are seldom as straightforward as they may appear to others. Therefore the community's analysis needs to inform policies and actions. **This is a unique way of allowing poor and marginalised people to have a say in policies that affect them.**

2) District level: to analyse causes of vulnerability which may not fall within the community setting (as described above). It requires district actors and officials to be involved in analysing patterns of vulnerability, and to consider what they should do about it. They can do this better if informed by the analysis from the community. However information channelled through involvement of district actors should not be allowed to dominate communities' own analysis. PVA provides a holistic system to take voices of marginalised people to other levels e.g. during disasters for the release of national and/or international funds.

3) National/international level: a holistic analysis of vulnerability requires national actors to see the implications of their policies on the vulnerability of poor people. Risk management is not reducing one person's vulnerability and creating vulnerability for others. The diagram opposite explains the multi-levelled approach of PVA.

The progression of vulnerability in Chiredzi, Zimbabawe. The community in Sangwe area in Chiredzi, Zimbabwe, has been affected by droughts for the past two years. The effects were especially harsh on the poor. However, some of the households that had been coping with the situation could not cope anymore in the aftermath of the drought, and so started declining. Because of the effects of the drought, some of the people temporarily migrated to nearby towns in Zimbabwe or even South Africa. The migrants became more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS because some were involved in risky behaviours for survival. Such individuals are now vulnerable to killer diseases like tuberculosis, malaria etc. So a hazard like drought can make many more people vulnerable. If there were government measures to protect people in drought situations, and if people had access to these measures, their vulnerability to both drought and HIV/AIDS may have been reduced.

Summary of the PVA multi-levelled approach: what is involved at each level?

Vulnerability analysis model Activities

Participatory

Community meetings
Discussion sessions and analysis
Training of local facilitators
Participatory and *Reflect* approaches

Community level analysis

Stakeholders and focal group meetings
Local level advocacy and lobbying
Documentation and liaison

District/project level analysis

Studies on selected issues
National level advocacy and lobbying
Exchange visits and monitoring
National level workshops

Regional/country level analysis

Co-ordination and documentation
Technical support to countries involved
Policy and advocacy work
International workshops

International level analysis
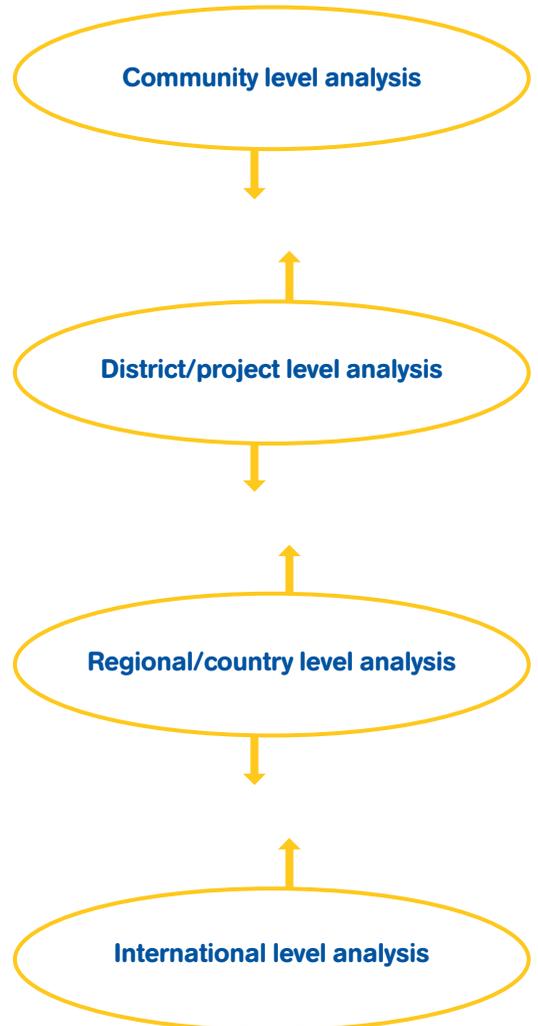
Part 2: Conducting participatory vulnerability analysis

In this section, we will look at three distinct phases for PVA.

– Preparation
– Analytical framework
– Multi-levelled analysis

The PVA process starts with preparation. Actually, the success of the PVA exercise depends on the depth of preparation.

The flow diagram shows the PVA phases and what is involved in each phase. Note that the process is continuous – issues and actions from the international level feed back to the national/country level and back to the community.

Phase 1:
Preparation

> – **Country level awareness-raising**
>
> – **Defining purpose (TORs)**
>
> – **Stakeholder analysis**
>
> – **PVA team preparation**

Phase 2:
Understanding the Analytical Framework

> **Step-by-step guide**
> – **Step1: situation analysis**
>
> – **Step 2: analysing causes**
>
> – **Step 3: analysing community action**
>
> – **Step 4: drawing action from analysis**

Phase 3:
Multi-levelled analysis

> 1. **Community level analysis – conducting PVA in the selected areas using the step-by-step framework**
>
> 2. **District level analysis – analysing vulnerability at district level using the Step-by-Step framework**
>
> 3. **National level analysis – analysing vulnerability at national level using the step-by-step framework**
>
> 4. **International level analysis – feedback from national level analysis and action planning**

Preparation

The preparation phase comprises awareness-raising at the country level, defining the purpose (TOR), stakeholder analysis and team preparation.

2.1.1 Country programme level awareness raising

This stage involves liaison with departments and projects at country level to raise awareness and discussions about whether there is need for external support and where this support will be sought. In every region or sub-region there will be people who have received training on PVA. So you may want to contact them to learn from experiences of other country programmes, or to ask for their support for your PVA exercise if it is necessary.

2.1.2 Purpose of conducting PVA (terms of reference)

This stage involves defining the terms of reference for the PVA exercise, i.e. why is PVA being conducted? It also involves analysing background information.

a) Developing TORs: The information you will need to collect, the depth of the analysis, the time you need to conduct the PVA and the amount of funds necessary will largely depend on the reasons for conducting a PVA exercise. This will have to be agreed with all parties, including the community. You can find an example of a TOR on page 22.

There are many reasons why PVA may be conducted. There is no one defined purpose; it is context specific. However a PVA may be conducted:
1) to diagnose vulnerability as well as its causes (this may be done as a baseline that takes a broad view of vulnerable situations)

2) to focus on specific vulnerable groups, hazards or locations or
3) to inform better emergency preparedness, mitigation and response as well as better development work (this may be for a new or existing programme or overall strategy).

b) Analysing secondary data/background information: analysis of existing information relevant to the objective and study area is part of the process of defining the purpose. This is necessary to avoid researching information that is readily available. It is however important to make a judgement on the validity of existing secondary information – in many developing countries such information may be outdated or may not exist at the lower administrative levels. This activity gives ideas for information gaps and finding ways of bridging those gaps.

A simple information gap analysis can assist in identifying the information you require to research.

– identify the information already available
– analyse the information available based on steps for analysing vulnerability
– identify the information required but not yet available.

The matrix (page 16) allows you to cluster the information against the PVA analytical framework.

PVA information needs analysis

Steps in the analysis	Information needed	Available information	Information gap
Vulnerable situation	– prevalence/extent of vulnerability – how different people are able to cope – analyse present threats/ vulnerabilities – characteristics of vulnerability.		
Causes of vulnerability	– unsafe conditions – dynamic pressures – root causes.		
Community action and capacity	– establish the sources, assets and entitlements used to reduce vulnerability – external assistance used to reduce vulnerability.		

2.1.3 Stakeholder analysis

This activity will help you identify the range of stakeholders that may be involved in the PVA process. It also suggests methods for working out how to involve them, at what stage etc.

– **Identification of stakeholders** to be involved in the PVA exercise depends on the purpose. The success of the PVA is partly in the diversity of stakeholders involved. This includes the communities in areas where PVA will be conducted. Communities would need to feel ownership, otherwise they may feel that the exercise is externally driven.

– Agree with stakeholders on the aims and objectives of the exercise, as stipulated in TORs.

– Make logistical arrangements. Think of what will happen and when.

– Plan district/national level feedbacks: venue, facilitation, who will be invited, what outputs will be required.

2.1.4 Team preparation:

The aim of team preparation is to ensure common understanding of both the field exercise and the PVA process among team members. A preparatory workshop will assist the team to prepare well. This workshop may take 2-3 days. Possible topics to be covered may include the following:

– Reaffirming the purpose of the PVA being planned.

– Finding out more about the geographical area of study.

– De-brief of information needs as established in section 2.1.2 above.

– Understanding vulnerability and PVA – this may include translating key words into local language. It helps the team also to understand the difference between poverty and vulnerability.

– Simulation exercise for PVA step-by-step analytical framework.

– Developing a plan of action for the fieldwork.

– Assigning roles and responsibilities.

– Logistical arrangements.

– Ensuring that communities are informed well in advance.

> **TIP:**
> **Although you may want to ensure that you have covered everything during your planning, it is important to be flexible in your approach so as to accommodate any unforeseen changes in the field.**

2.2 Phase 2: The analytical framework

The analytical framework uses a step-by-step guide. The steps include:

Step 1 – situation analysis of vulnerability

Step 2 – analysis of causes of vulnerability

Step 3 – analysis of community action

Step 4 – drawing action from analysis.

The table (page 18) explains what is involved in each step and suggested tools that can be used. The tools are selected from PRA and *Reflect*. The assumption is that the PVA team is conversant with such tools. When analysing vulnerability it is important to note that it is a predictive analysis: in other words, it is an analysis of people's conditions and how these may predispose them to harm. The analysis breaks down vulnerability into detail to the point that it can be understood by both communities and the actors who support them.

PVA analytical steps

Step 1: Situation analysis of vulnerability

- Prevalence/extent of vulnerability
- How different people are able to cope
- Analyse present threats/vulnerabilities

Tools

- Focus group discussions.
- Historical profile/time line.
- Vulnerability map.
- Seasonal calendar to map out when most vulnerabilities occur during the year.
- Livelihood analysis.

Required information

- In-depth understanding of vulnerability.
- Who is more exposed to each hazard. (identify vulnerable/levels/location)?
- Identify hazards/time they occurred/frequency
- Trends/changes over time.
- Differences in vulnerabilities i.e. gender, age, ethnicity etc.
- Agree on characteristics of the vulnerable e.g. those that are coping, declining or improving.
- Classification – this includes analysis of exposure and resilience and analysing livelihoods and what vulnerabilities the livelihood options bring.

Tips

- Introduce concept of vulnerability.
- Using a focus group discussion, get the community to discuss and give examples.
- For this step, sometimes what works well is to divide the community into different groups, for example men only, women only and youths, to get case studies. The groups can use different tools to generate information for step 1, e.g. one group can use timeline, another focus group discussion, another can use vulnerability map. The groups can present to each other the main points of their discussions.
- It is easier to start with a timeline of disasters that the community has faced, and then move on to what they understand by vulnerability
- The timeline will provide information on who was most affected and why. Find out how they coped and then move on to present vulnerabilities and prioritise.

Step 2: Analysing causes of vulnerability

– **Identification of causes and root causes**
– **Prioritisation**

Tools
– **Problem tree/objective analysis**
– **Concept mapping**

Required information
– **Classification of severity of the vulnerabilities and their causes**
– **Identification of unsafe conditions**
– **Identification of dynamic pressures or determinants of vulnerability**
– **Identification of underlying causes of vulnerability**
– **Prioritise the list of causes**

Tips
– **Start with a summary of what has been discussed in Step 1 (Present vulnerabilities) and then move on to causes of these vulnerabilities**

– **If using a cause-effect tree, you need to link each cause to its own effect. If there is more than one effect, show the links, e.g. using lines.**
– **The information can be generated through focus group discussion or 'concept mapping'**
– **Unsafe conditions, some of the causes could relate to factors that make people more susceptible to risk e.g. physical environment, social relations (e.g. groups excluded from development assistance), discrimination and exclusion, lack of protection and security (e.g. from public actions and institutions).**
– **Dynamic pressures, causes may relate to lack of access and control over resources, ability to claim rights and entitlements, capacity to engage in decision-making.**
– **Underlying causes – these are the root causes, and they could be issues related to policy environment, inadequacy (or failure) of protection mechanisms, changing livelihood etc.**

Step 3: Analysis of community action

- Establish the existing strategies, resources and assets used to reduce vulnerability
- External assistance used to reduce vulnerability

Tools
- Matrix highlighting communities' ability to cope (refer to section 3.2 in the appendix)
- Venn diagrams
- Problem tree/objective analysis
- Concept mapping

Required information
- Objective is to determine actions taken to reduce their vulnerabilities
- Their perceptions of vulnerability and how far it affects decision-making
- Their capacities
- What has worked and what hasn't?
- What support have they received externally?
- How have these reduced their vulnerability?

Tips
- Start with a summary of what their vulnerabilities are, and causes. What is the community doing about their vulnerabilities (identified above?)
- List the coping mechanisms discussed in Step 1 and add more if some have been missed out!

Your questions could be:
- How are their own actions (coping mechanisms) reducing or not reducing own vulnerability and why (list the information on the matrix)?
- How are externally supported actions reducing or not reducing their vulnerability (list the actions/programmes for each stake holder on a matrix)?
- Are there any other issues that need to be dealt with amongst stakeholders?
- How do programmes/projects/policies protect people?

Step 4: Drawing action from analysis

- **Prioritise broad interventions**
- **Action plans including dates and responsibilities**
- **Scenario planning**

Tools

- **Overall vulnerability matrix (see diagram 2 on 3.2 appendix)**
- **Community action plan – scenario planning**

Required information

- **How will the proposed actions bring the desired reduction of vulnerability?**
- **How will resilience be improved?**
- **Prediction of what vulnerability to disasters is likely to be in future**
- **Look at new threats and how people may be affected or cope**
- **Contingencies in future changes to vulnerability**

Tips

- **It may be useful to think in terms of protection and empowerment strategies and actions.**
- **Summarise existing vulnerabilities, hazards, causes, capacities or community action.**
- **Challenge myths and educate people on issues of rights, access or roles of different development actors e.g government. Remember that the difference between PVA and other approaches is that you can draw action from the analysis. You don't have to go to the office to analyse the data and agree on action!**

Key outputs:

1) **Actions to be done at the community level. How these actions will reduce their vulnerability. How will they know that the actions are reducing their vulnerability?**
2) **Actions to be done at the district level. How these actions will reduce their vulnerability. How will they know that these actions are reducing their vulnerability?**
3) **Actions to be done at the national level. How these actions will reduce their vulnerability. How will they know that the actions are reducing their vulnerability?**

2.3 Phase 3: The multi-levelled analytical approach

Using the step-by-step framework explained in section 2.2, analysis of vulnerability is conducted at three levels: community level analysis, district level analysis and national level analysis (as explained in the PVA model in Part 1, see page 13).

2.3.1 Community level analysis

The aim of this section is to outline activities to be done at the community level for methodically analysing information relating to vulnerability, hazards, risks and capacities. The field level analysis involves:
1) Conducting community level analysis – using the step-by-step analytical framework (outlined above), conduct discussions with communities in the areas you have selected. Community discussions may take 3-4 days.
2) Ask the community to select representatives for district level analysis and feedback processes.
3) Compile the data sourced out from the discussions into meaningful matrices. See Reporting format checklist, page 26 as an example of a matrix you can use for compiling your data.
4) Prepare for district level analysis and feedback, as a team. You can do this by:

– isolating key issues relating to causes of vulnerability, coping mechanisms, external support used to reduce vulnerability

– pulling out community level actions, district level actions and national level actions developed by the community

– agreeing on roles and responsibilities e.g. assign someone to make a presentation, another to take notes, another to facilitate the discussions

– assigning some roles to the community members who will be attending the feedback process.

TIPS/MAKING THE MOST OF THE FIELD:
– If you are conducting PVA in an area where *Reflect* circles are functional, it will be easier to start with *Reflect* groups for continuity purposes.
– Be aware of power dynamics (remember a community is not homogenous). This means being sensitive to the way inequalities of power and social status influence what is said. A good example may be the differences in opinion that emerge from a group of women when talking in public about violence in the household compared to when talking about the same subject in private. The field team needs to be capable of detecting and correcting any aspects of action that might undermine mutual trust and respect between themselves and the community.

– Data compilation does not mean analysis, it means drawing information together so that it's accessible to other audiences. The emphasis in PVA is to help communities carry out their own vulnerability analysis – which is to build knowledge and understanding.

– While considering what actions to take, it is useful to divide action plans into community level actions, district level actions and national level actions. Please refer to Step 4 in the step-by-step framework above.

– Manage people's expectations. Do not give communities false hopes for interventions but give them information on where they can get support.

– PVA is a continuous process, not a one-off activity. It is recommended that you begin to put in place plans for follow up on 1) how people's vulnerabilities are changing, and 2) progress on agreed actions.

2.3.2 District level analysis

District level analysis is about using the PVA findings to make change. It ensures that further action systematically applies the research data to build on already established processes. It is at this level that sharing knowledge with all stakeholders (particularly secondary stakeholders who may not have been directly involved in the research) is very important. This is an opportunity to track down information flows and begin to challenge the decision-making process. This can take the form of a one-day workshop following the pointers below:

1) Start the discussion by asking for their perceptions (on vulnerability) using the step-by-step analytical framework. Participants can work in groups. Explore existing measures to protect people or reduce vulnerability to various shocks and hazards.

2) Make presentations of key issues emerging from the field and action plans (from the community analysis).

3) Plenary – get feedback on the community level analysis

4) Discuss policies in place, and how well they are implemented; how does vulnerability (as presented from the community analysis) relate to these policies, people's rights and legal frameworks? For example, what provisions are made in the district to reduce vulnerability of rich people and property while neglecting or exacerbating the vulnerability of poor people? (e.g. embankments/fence protecting rich people's land/animals; drains moving water out of developed areas).

5) Ask the participants to agree on actions!

6) Inform them about next steps – for example the national level feedback process.

7) At this stage, by recording the deliberations on audio or video, make your best report!

8) Prepare for the national level analysis and feedback.

> **TIPS:**
> – Have your presentation and all reference materials you need from the field ready in a user-friendly format e.g. PowerPoint presentation/ flipcharts.
>
> – Presentations should be made by a team (community members, stakeholders and AA staff).
>
> – At the district level it is good to look at the timing of likely hazards and the mechanisms for releasing money and making decisions. Thus money for flood preparedness needs to be released well before the flood season, so it may need to be on the agenda of the council finance committee in a particular month. Examples on this subject can be sought from internationalemergenciesteam @actionaid.org.
>
> – Give community representatives opportunities to speak for themselves and ensure that they communicate both the deliberations and agreed actions back to the community

2.3.3 National level analysis: is similar to the district level analysis but the difference is that at the district level, you are dealing with policy practice and at the national level you will be dealing with policy makers. This process can be used to crosscheck with government departments and other players on how they are reducing poor people's

risks/vulnerability. This stage could take the form of a one-day meeting or workshop.

1) Start the discussion using the step-by-step analytical framework to get the participants' perception about vulnerability.

2) Present key issues emerging from the community and district level analysis.

3) Agree on how to feed the information into other national level processes of analysing vulnerabilities e.g. Vulnerability Assessment Committees (VAC).

4) Agree on next steps.

5) Document the proceedings by video or report.

6) You may want to write a report for the process (see Reporting format checklist, page 26, as an outline for the report).

2.3.4 International level feedback: involves linking issues on vulnerability reduction from the community, district and national level to the international level. This may involve:

1) sharing reports through networks e.g. prevention, Southern Africa Vulnerability Initiative (SAVI)

2) working with ActionAid International's emergencies team or other ActionAid International advocacy groups on particular advocacy themes

3) using the process to inform vulnerability analysis at the international level.

TIP:
A repeated issue raised at the national level is the lack of coordination between ministries. The policies of one ministry may inadvertently increase vulnerability. For example in Malawi the policies for the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) had consequences on the food crisis. So ensure that during the discussions there are discussions regarding ministerial policies and their impact on people's vulnerabilities.

TIP:
Case studies are really powerful at this level. A well presented case study will re-enforce a policy message. Systematic recognition of international conventions and treaties is very important at this level because we may unveil obligations that are not being met.

Phew! You have done one cycle of PVA. However, this is just the beginning. The real work lies ahead, because PVA is a continuous process. Issues from international level have to feed back to the national level, similarly issues from national level have to feed back to the district level, and back to the community level. Hopefully the community is motivated and empowered to take its own actions…

This section provides more detailed information referenced in Part 1 and Part 2.

3.1 Ideas for developing Terms of Reference (TORs)

Sometimes when faced with an assignment for the first time, one may find it challenging to think of a good starting point. Below is an example of terms of reference for a PVA exercise that was conducted in October 2004 in Chiredzi by ActionAid Zimbabwe in partnership with FACT Chiredzi and other stakeholders. The TORs were developed in liaison with stakeholders focusing on HIV/AIDS. These TORs are in line with ActionAid Zimbabwe's strategy, programmes and activities in Chiredzi.

ActionAid (SAPP – Zimbabwe) TERMS OF REFERENCE

Participatory vulnerability analysis in the context of HIV/AIDS and food insecurity for FACT Chiredzi

1. Background

Zimbabwe is one of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with the worst HIV/AIDS scenario, with statistics revealing that 24.6% of the Zimbabwean population might be infected. The country is also recovering from a food crisis that has affected it over the past two seasons.

ActionAid has supported several communities affected by HIV/AIDS in the country to respond to the food security crisis through the distribution of agricultural inputs and promotion of household nutrition gardens. As it expands its programme that supports national responses to HIV and AIDS, and as it changes the focus of its work around food security from relief to recovery and development, ActionAid intends to work with its partner organisations and beneficiary communities to better understand the causes of vulnerability, and design appropriate interventions.

2. Rationale

ActionAid is finalising negotiations with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) for a grant to establish nutrition gardens for households affected by HIV and AIDS in Chiredzi district, one of the districts in the country most prone to food insecurity due to low and erratic rainfall patterns. It is proposed to use this opportunity to work with the communities that will benefit from the project to analyse the causes of their vulnerability to HIV infection and food insecurity.

ActionAid has provided training on participatory vulnerability analysis and disaster management to programme officers from eight of its partner AIDS service organisations in the country. A field PVA was subsequently carried out in a district covered by one of our partners. Chiredzi is the second district to be covered in roll out of PVA in Zimbabwe. An evaluation of ActionAid's emergency response programme raised the need for greater community involvement in needs assessment during project design, and also continuous vulnerability assessment and social mapping. In addition, ActionAid is also interested in assessing the usefulness of PVA as a participatory tool vis-à-vis others like *Reflect, Stepping stones* and STAR, which are also being promoted by the organisation in HIV/AIDS affected settings. It is against this background this HIV/AIDS PVA is being organised.

3. Objectives

The objectives of the proposed PVA exercise are to:
Support communities that will benefit from the FAO supported household nutrition garden project to assess the causes of their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and food insecurity.
Provide a baseline for the evaluation of the FAO supported project.
Transfer additional skills to partner organisations to strengthen the design of their programmes.
Test the PVA tool in assessing vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and food insecurity.

4. Methodology

The process will be carried out in two stages. The first consists of a two-day preparatory workshop by the team to plan for the PVA exercise. At this stage, those not very familiar with PVA and disaster management will be given an overview. Comparisons will be made between PVA and other participatory approaches such as PRA, *Reflect*, *Stepping stones* and STAR.

This will be followed by three days' field work where different groups in Sangwe communal area and Chiredzi urban will be engaged in the PVA process. A day will be set aside for synthesing findings by the team from the field, and to lay the foundation for the report.

3.2 Examples of tools used for vulnerability analysis

In the process of conducting vulnerability analysis, whether at the community or district or national level, it is good practice to summarise each step by compiling the information generated into matrixes. On the next page is an example, which can be used in step 3 of the analytical framework.

3.3 Developing an advocacy plan

From our experience, PVA will generate a variety of actions at the community, district and national levels. However, as an agency, you may want to carry out specific advocacy work or support the community to carry out some advocacy work. There are some ideas on how you can get started if you follow the links below:

http://www.bond.org.uk/pubs/index.html#uk
http://www.wpas-rights.org/

ActionAid International has over the past 10 years been carrying out advocacy work. There are a lot of success stories that could be shared but the case study below has particular links with the subject under discussion and so could give you some ideas. For a copy of this case study please email the author, Khurshid Alam at: KhurshidA@actionaid.org. Or the international emergencies team at: InternationalEmergenciesTeam@actionaid.org.uk

3.4 Data compilation (reporting format/checklist)

In Part 2, we made a suggestion that it is good practice to map your data for every area where PVA will be conducted onto a matrix, which can be widely shared but can also be used for report writing. The Reporting format checklist on page 26 gives you some idea of the things you may want to consider in your report. Column one shows the outline and possible questions to ask while documenting results of context specific analysis. Columns two, three and four provide space for documenting the analysis at each level.

Example of a matrix, which can be used in step 3 of the analytical framework.

Hazard or disaster	Resources	How resources have been used to reduce disasters/hazards	Past community actions and perceptions
HIV/AIDS	village garden trained community carers	– provide better nutrition – gardens are too small – can attend to the sick – carers are not motivated	– HIV/AIDS affected will die soon – community care – AIDS awareness
fires	wells	– wells are dry during the dry season – this is when fires are more common	– attempts made by local government to provide more wells

Reporting format/checklist:

Each of these sets of data to be recorded at a community, district and national level

Data to be documented

Who are the most vulnerable and were they involved in the analysis?

What are they vulnerable to?

What are the changes in vulnerabilities over time?

What are the underlying causes of vulnerabilities?

Unsafe conditions (e.g. flow of information, coping mechanisms, level of assets etc).

Differential levels of vulnerability (geographical location, access and control over resources, power, gender, economic etc).

Underlying factors and trends (e.g. trade policies, land rights etc).

What are the characteristics of the categories of vulnerable poor: improving, coping and declining?

What assets do they have access to and control?

Why are they vulnerable now?

Why will they be vulnerable in future?

What strategies do they use to reduce vulnerability and cope?

How are assets used and what assets are used?

What strategies do they use during crisis?

What are their long-term livelihood strategies?

What aspects of vulnerabilities can be used as indicators in programme reviews and impact assessments?

Method/process

Stakeholders who participated in the analysis?
Does the community understand this analysis as their own motive?
Was the analysis empowering?
What are the indicators of empowerment?
Does vulnerability analysis of all levels reflect communities' perception of vulnerabilities?
What aspects of vulnerabilities can be used as indicators in programme reviews and impact assessments?
Does the holistic analysis contain aspects drawn from different levels of analysis?

What are the capacities of the communities? How are communities using their assets to reduce vulnerability? What strategies do they have in place at the household and community levels?

What livelihood options and protection measures have been put in place for the improving poor, coping poor and declining poor?

What policies affect the vulnerability of poor people, and how?

Which issues (sources of risk) came from the community and which issues were introduced by outsiders?

What are the changes in vulnerability over time? How are/will these changes be recorded over time? How will the trends be picked up? How do they see their future vulnerability? How will they know that their vulnerability is reducing?

What actions have been generated to reduce vulnerability (livelihood improvement actions, social protection measures for improving poor, coping poor and declining poor)?

What action was taken/recommended after analysis? Which actions will be done at the community level, district level, national level and international level?

How will the outcomes of analysis be incorporated into future community strategies, programmes for organisations and policies for governments and multilateral organisations?

What progress against *Fighting poverty together*/other strategy objectives was generated by PVA?

1. Maskrey, A. (1989)
   Disaster mitigation: a community-based approach. Oxfam.

2. Archer, D. and Cottingham, S. (1996)
   The *Reflect* mother manual. ActionAid.

3. UNDP/UNDHA/SPDRP. (1998)
   Guidelines for community vulnerability analysis: an approach for Pacific Island countries.

4. IFRC. (1999)
   Vulnerability and capacity analysis. Geneva.

5. Brocklesby, A. and Fisher, E. (2002)
   PVA draft guide (unpublished): Swansea University.

6. Devereux, S. (2002) State of disaster: causes, consequences and policy lessons from Malawi. ActionAid Malawi.

7. Mavunduse, D. et al (2002)
   Participatory vulnerability analysis step-by-step field guide (draft). ActionAid.

8. Vaux, T. (2003)
   Conflict and human security: a paper produced for ActionAid.

9. Ziervogel, G. and du Toit, A. (2004)
   Vulnerability and food insecurity – background concepts for informing the development of a national FIVIMS for South Africa.

10. ActionAid's briefing papers on rights-based approach to emergencies and rights-based analysis (available at http://www.actionaid.org.uk/788/emergencies.html)

11. ActionAid's training modules: learning about rights (good overview of rights concept, principles and relevant international law) available at http://www.actionaid.org.uk/788/emergencies.html

12. Commission on Human Security (2003)
    Protecting and Empowering People available at http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/

14. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2002)
    Growing the sheltering tree: protecting rights through humanitarian action pdf version available at http://www.icva.ch/files/shelteringtree.pdf

15. Blaikie et al (2001),
    At Risk: natural hazards, people's vulnerability and disasters, Routledge

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Participatory Vulnerability Analysis

Fighting Poverty Together

ActionAid International is a unique partnership of people who are fighting for a better world – a world without poverty