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The Role of Targeting in Service Delivery to Vulnerable Populations - The FANRPAN Household Vulnerability Index (HVI)

A synthesis of three country reports

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Effective targeting of interventions is a challenge in development programmes. However, the need to be accountable and demonstrate impact has become critical, and is gradually forcing development practitioners implementing livelihood security programmes to change their operational regimes. Integrating efficient targeting systems makes it possible to effectively monitor and evaluate impact of development programmes. For example, organisations that have been implementing different interventions to reduce or reverse the adverse effects of the HIV and AIDS pandemic regard an efficient targeting system as a prerequisite to enhance the success of these programmes. Past studies have shown that HIV and AIDS in particular, has a broad livelihoods impact. Hence a development programme that integrates all the livelihood dimensions in its targeting is likely to have much greater success in mitigating the impacts of the epidemic. Such a programme would need to know the different dimensions through which the epidemic affects households.

In 2004, FANRPAN evaluated the impact of HIV and AIDS on rural households in seven SADC countries, and identified the need to measure household vulnerability quantitatively to ensure that interventions in the HIV and AIDS crisis are effective.

It is important that development programmes know how much of the impact of the HIV and AIDS shock they are alleviating on targeted households. The FANRPAN study proposed a statistical method for computing household vulnerability, the Household Vulnerability Index (HVI). The HVI was developed by investigating the multiple dimensions through which households are prone to shocks, applying appropriate weights and scales to each of the impact areas and deriving a universal household index that made it possible to compare vulnerability across households and communities.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the HVI pilot study conducted in Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe was to further develop and test the HVI as a statistical tool for quantifying household vulnerability resulting from shocks such as HIV and AIDS. Key outputs from the study were a refined method for constructing the HVI and a computerized tool for its computation. This computerized HVI tool enables wider use of HVI by development organisations in targeting for their programmes.

Study Approach

The HVI was developed by investigating the different dimensions through which households are prone to impacts of shocks, applying appropriate weights to these impacts, and setting scales for each of the impact areas, and deriving a comparable household index. HVI analysis assumes that household wealth can be classified into natural, physical, financial, social and human capital assets. Shocks such as HIV and AIDS attack one



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or more of these assets. The nature, extent and depth of the impacts on household assets are used to award vulnerability scores and weights - which are then used to compute the index for each household. A detailed approach and step by step methodology is documented in the book "Silent Hunger: Policy options for effective responses to the impact of HIV and AIDS on Agriculture and Food Security in the SADC region" (<http://www.fanrpan.org/documents/d00351/index.php>).

The study was guided by a reference group composed of individuals from government departments, civil society organisations, research institutions and multilateral agencies. The study also sought to involve stakeholders in the development of the HVI through dialogue which was stimulated through existing forums such as the Agricultural Coordination Working Group in Zimbabwe. Data collection for the field testing was conducted in Swaziland and Zimbabwe. Data from the FANRPAN 2004 study was also used, especially in Lesotho where a comprehensive database existed.

Benefits arising from the use of HVI

The HVI approach sheds new light on the degrees and levels of household vulnerability introduced by shocks such as the HIV and AIDS pandemic on household agriculture and food security. Through this approach, households are categorized into three levels of vulnerability, i.e., coping, acute and emergency. Based on these levels development response packages are proposed to assist the most vulnerable households fight their external and internal vulnerability. Data collected for the HVI is also a usable indicator for monitoring how assisted households graduated or deteriorated from one level of vulnerability to another. The HVI approach also traces the origins of vulnerability in each household, thereby shedding light on the packages of responses required to move the household from one level of vulnerability to another. The HVI approach, therefore, provides a tool that can be used by development partners to efficiently monitor the effectiveness of their intervention programmes. The tool can also be used to introduce quantitative mainstreaming of the impact of HIV and AIDS in vulnerability assessments.

Reception of HVI among partners

The HVI concept was introduced to development partners in Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. Indications are that several partners will incorporate it in their interventions. There was a general consensus among stakeholders in Zimbabwe as regards the usefulness of the HVI model. Civil society organisations and UN agen-

cies felt that the HVI could improve targeting of interventions meant to reduce the effects of HIV and AIDS. They also indicated that the index has the potential to assist in assessing the effectiveness of HIV and AIDS interventions since it makes it possible to quantify improvements in household livelihoods after an intervention. The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee, for example, felt that the index could go a long way in improving the quality of vulnerability assessments. Certain organisations such as Food Security Network of Zimbabwe (FOSENET), World Vision, World Food Programme (WFP), and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) are willing to put it to test within their programmes.

FOSENET commissioned a study for assessing the impacts of HIV and AIDS on agriculture and food security in two districts in Zimbabwe, using the HVI model. *World Vision International* also felt that the model could improve their food aid transfer programmes. The organisation has partnered with FANRPAN to conduct an operational research meant to use the HVI in targeting for its programmes in selected countries. *WFP* has also indicated that it will be part of the process of developing and improving the HVI. It has also indicated that it wishes to test the HVI model using its existing datasets. *FAO*, whose mandate in the region is to provide a forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy, has been very instrumental in promoting the HVI concept. The organisation has invited FANRPAN to participate in the agriculture community working group meetings in Zimbabwe. The organisation has also published information on the HVI in its monthly journal article.

Other partners in the SADC region that would find the HVI useful

Several other partners in the SADC region will find the HVI useful in their programmes. These include:

Non Governmental Organisations (NGO) implementing impact mitigation programmes but not using a universally acceptable approach to targeting and monitoring of their programmes could use the HVI for targeting, monitoring and evaluation. The HVI provides a basis upon which organisations can effectively target and monitor the effectiveness of those programmes. The model also provides an efficient way of deriving appropriate response packages for identified vulnerable communities.

Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET) - This is an international network whose mandate is to strengthen the abilities of African countries and re-

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gional organisations to manage risk of food insecurity through the provision of timely and analytical early warning and vulnerability information. The network uses the livelihood framework to food security analysis. It is in this analysis where FEWSNET can integrate the HVI to come up with refined results that efficiently identify food secure and insecure households, zones, countries or regions. This is important for decision making especially emergency relief planning purposes.

Regional Vulnerability Action Committee (RVAC) - these committees are responsible for conducting vulnerability assessment in all the SADC countries. Of late there has been a disgruntlement from the civil society organisations in the region on the lack of a significant consideration of HIV and AIDS as a factor that affects food security. The HVI provides a method by which the RVAC could quantitatively include impacts of HIV and AIDS in its analysis. In this way the RVAC would be able to determine the extent to which HIV and AIDS is affecting food security in the SADC region.

Key Recommendations for Targeted Responses

Vulnerable households face a lack of access to credit, limited participation in natural resources management, receive limited support from civil society organisations, are unable to produce for the market and in some cases are child headed. Thus the FANRPAN study recommends that governments use the following strategies in order to improve the livelihoods of the vulnerable communities:

Improving access to rural financial markets- Governments need to design intervention programmes for vulnerable households with limited access to rural financial credit that are aimed at enhancing their financial assets. Several strategies can be employed which, include:

- Promotion of internal savings and lending schemes
- Provision of inputs such as fertilizer and seed on credit on condition that farmers will pay back after harvest
- Promotion of microfinance projects so that households could start generating income for themselves
- Financial institutions should develop tailor made credit packages for the rural farmer.

Promotion of income generating projects- Vulnerable households in the study can no longer afford to invest in

natural resource management and turn to the forest for survival. Governments should come up with sustainable income generating projects for improving the livelihoods of such households. The income generating projects will provide the much needed income to acquire food and clothes, pay for education, meet medical expenses and invest into the land in the form of improved soil fertility, etc.

Enhance household productivity- If households are able to produce for the market they can earn income and thus enhance their livelihoods. A number of factors determine whether affected households grow crops for the market, those of interest in this study are inadequate water, shortages of draft power and labour and non affordability of fertilizers and seeds. It is recommended that the following strategies should be used to enhance the productivity of rural households:

- Promotion of micro-agricultural water management technologies for production year-round
- Establishment of irrigation schemes that will allow for an all round production season
- Promotion of labour saving technologies
- Promoting the cultivation of open pollinated varieties that allow households the opportunity of retaining seed for the next season
- Use of input voucher schemes to enable poor vulnerable households to purchase essential production inputs.

Enhance social protection for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC)- social protection policy should be informed by the current state of OVC. It is important to note that most child headed households fell under the acute level category. Without requisite support, such households may deteriorate to emergency level or even disintegrate. Hence governments' and development partner programmes need to target child-headed households as a particular special group.



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Key Recommendations for Regional Policy

1. Policymakers and development specialists can use the HVI to design, plan and implement comprehensive and well targeted public funded social protection programmes that specifically reduce household vulnerability and improve food security among HIV affected families.
2. There is potential value addition from further research to provide practical solutions to developmental problems. Researchers working on different areas such as HIV and AIDS, agriculture, food security, and health can utilize the model to come up with practical solutions in their studies. Such research could also help improve on the model which will be a positive development.
3. The model will not be useful without support from policymakers in the SADC region and funding partners who provide the financial resources for its application. Efforts should be made to ensure that there is a continued dialogue especially with the responsible policymakers so that there is unwavering government support in the promotion of the model in government and other development partners' programmes.
4. There is a genuine need to build upon existing opportunities to form strategic partnership with organizations willing to take the HVI to another level. This will help promote the wide use of the HVI in the development community. The partnerships will provide an opportunity to apply the HVI on a wider spectrum and maybe in different environments. This is important as it then assists in evaluating the universality of the model.
5. A major challenge is to target the benefits of social protection transfers to the most needy - especially in the context of HIV and AIDS. Vulnerability should not be used synonymously with need as it should reflect the likelihood of a particular outcome arising for a defined group in the future.
6. Social protection must be perceived in its broader sense of providing assistance to those who are chronically unable to make ends meet as well as social insurance against transitory fluctuations in household access to food.

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About FANRPAN

The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) is an autonomous regional stakeholder driven policy research, analysis and implementation network that was formally established in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) in 1997. FANRPAN was borne out of the need by SADC governments who felt that comprehensive policies and strategies were required to inform regional integration. FANRPAN is mandated to work in all SADC countries and currently has activities in 13 Southern African countries namely Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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