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UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, the participant will be able to

1. Understand the significance of contextual knowledge in emergency response situations and how to develop a rapid context analysis.

2. Explore the concept of 'vulnerability', how vulnerable groups are affected differently during crises and recognise the influence of contextual factors such as political economy, cultural norms, and social dynamics on vulnerability.

3. Demonstrate the ability to conduct a rapid context analysis aimed at identifying inequalities and vulnerable groups.

CONTEXT ANALYSIS

- Existing knowledge – both formal, published and 'lay' knowledge – on social, cultural, economic and political factors.

- Asks where, why and how people do things which contribute to resilience and vulnerability and either facilitate or impede participation in interventions.

Resources

- **Rapid Remote Context Analysis Tool (RR-CAT)**

- **Rapid Anthropological Assessments in the Field (RAA)**

Social Science in Humanitarian Action

Rapid Remote Context Analysis Tool (RR-CAT) in Epidemics

Practical Approaches

This SSHAP Practical Approaches brief underlines key considerations when appraising the context in which an outbreak occurs. It gives guidance on the relevant social science knowledge available and can result in a summary that comprises critical knowledge on a certain area in granular detail and highlights key areas for additional primary data collection. This summary can then be used to advocate for appropriate and contextualised response mechanisms.

Local social scientists or operational researchers embedded in an epidemic response should use this tool to gain a background understanding of the contextual aspects that shape vulnerability to both the disease and the response. This background can then serve to support the design of more specific research mechanisms or primary data collection efforts as part of the epidemic response. Because social organisation may have changed significantly due to the epidemic and potential coexisting emergencies, such in-country social science data collection efforts running parallel to the response are strongly recommended.

TYPES OF EVIDENCE

What are the different types of evidence we might bring together?

- Situation reports (SitReps)

- Data regularly produced by key responding agencies (UNICEF, WHO, IFRC)

- Ad hoc data / operational studies

- Health system data

- Articles published in journals

- Relevant websites (e.g. Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform)

- Policies (public policies, guidelines, frameworks produced by governmental orgs)

- Media (articles published in newspapers and magazines)

- Reports (published and unpublished)

USING SECONDARY DATA

Why?

- Sometime there's a lot of relevant data already available

- Can save time and funding

- Improves understanding of the community

- Informs needs and gaps for more targeted future assessments

- Reduces assessment fatigue for communities

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FINDING SECONDARY DATA

Some useful platforms include:

- Recent assessments and evaluations

- Data from Government and other humanitarian actors
    - UNOCHA https://www.unocha.org
    - ReliefWeb https://reliefweb.int/
    - ACAPS https://www.acaps.org/
    - Community Engagement Hub https://www.communityengagementhub.org/
    - Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform socialscienceinaction.org
    - IASC portal https://aap-inclusion-psea.alnap.org/resources-iasc
    - Health data https://www.dhsprogram.com/
    - IFRC Go https://go.ifrc.org/ & https://go.ifrc.org/preparedness#operational-learning
    - IFRC Document library https://www.ifrc.org/documents/all
    - Google Scholar: http://scholar.google.com/
    - Directory of Open Access Journal: http://www.doaj.org/
    - Cochrane Library: http://www.cochranelibrary.com/

- CDAC's Media & Telecommunication landscape guides

- Demographic health studies

Prevents survey fatigue

AND

Saves time and resources

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CONDUCTING A RAPID DESK REVIEW

What is a rapid desk review?

A rapid review is a type of evidence synthesis that accelerates the process of conducting a traditional systematic review through streamlining or omitting specific methods to produce evidence for stakeholders in a timely and resource-efficient manner.
- Focuses on the secondary data available
- Audience = response actors / decision makers
- Operational - data to guide response decisions (not for peer review publication)

RAPID DESK REVIEW

How do I carry out a rapid desk review?

- No more than 2-3 days
- Identify 1-2 persons to compile and synthesize the available evidence (can often be done by staff outside the affected area)
- Quick search through available evidence:
    - Published and grey literature, public health data, internal and partner resources
- Summarize in 2-4 pages maximum
- Focus on implications for response planning and next steps: "so what"
- Highlight the gaps in information
- Share widely with all response actors for collective discussion and decision making

1. What do we know?
Available data, case studies, research,feedback, assessments, evaluations, observations, assumptions

2. What had been done before?
Successful approaches, potential innovations

3. What information is still needed?
(evidence gaps)

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	Secondary data analysis
Social & cultural context	[e.g. Community demographics & structures; Community relations & communication; Culture & beliefs; Perception of response actors]
Impact & severity of outbreak *Impact and effects of the crisis on people, systems and structures*	[e.g. Overall impact; impact on access to information; impact on community structures; impact on vulnerable groups & dynamics; Knowledge, attitude and practices in relation to risks]
Capacities & response *The ability of the main stakeholders involved in the outbreak response to meet the population's needs*	[e.g. Capacity and response at national level; Capacity and response at provincial level; Community capacities; International agency capacity & response]

FOCUSSED ANALYSIS

Good context analysis investigates:

1. **CHANGE:** how the situation is different now compared to before the crisis, how might the crisis impact, and pre-existing vulnerabilities

2. **GROUP DIFFERENCES:** understand the situation of different groups (age, gender, ethnicity, etc.) and prioritize based on vulnerability

3. **GAPS:** any holes in the information you still need

4. ACTION: **Analysis is the process of transforming data into something useful for action.**

EXPLORING VULNERABILITY IN CONTEXT ANALYSIS
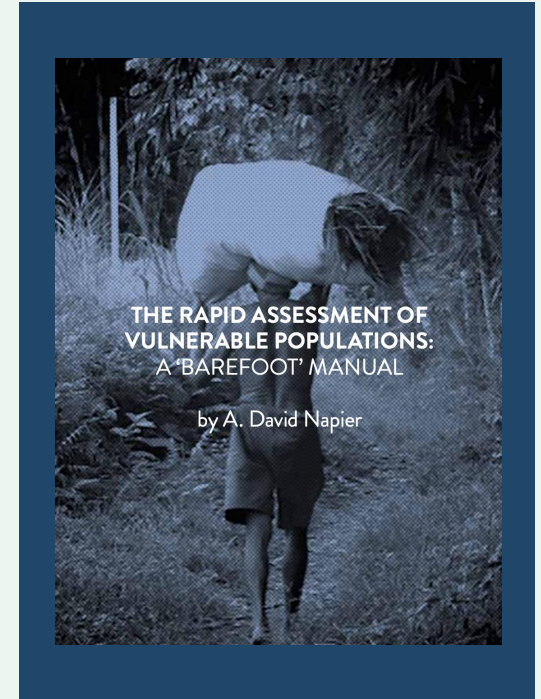
Vulnerability

The characteristics of individuals, households or groups that put them at risk of physical or mental harm, and/or of being unable to meet their basic needs.

Vulnerability can shift and change dramatically under crisis conditions.

It is critical that responders understand all of these dynamics as they are playing out on the ground in order to ensure equitable response and resource distribution.

Rapid Assessment of Vulnerable Populations: A 'Barefoot' Manual

1. Knowledge of existing external (formal) responses

2. Knowledge about local community responses

3. Identifying vulnerabilities on the ground

THE RAPID ASSESSMENT OF
VULNERABLE POPULATIONS:
A 'BAREFOOT' MANUAL

by A. David Napier

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DRIVERS OF VULNERABILITY: THE ROLE OF CONTEXT

Political economy

- Power & political marginalization & exclusion (global, national, local)
- Poverty & inequality
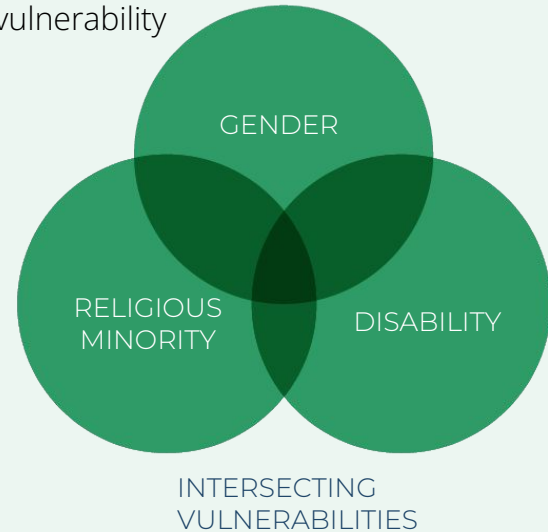- (Lack of) access to resources

Historic factors/legacies

- Colonialism
- Conflicts

Cultural & social drivers

- Norms around roles
- Taboos
- Discrimination

Social difference

- Dimensions of vulnerability
- race/ethnicity
- education
- religion
- gender
- etc..

GENDER

RELIGIOUS MINORITY

DISABILITY

INTERSECTING VULNERABILITIES

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VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENTS

External response	Community response	Assessing vulnerability
• Nature of assistance received (and from which government agencies, UN agencies, international NGOs, local NGOs)? • Period (when)? • Temporary or long-term? • Type (kind of assistance provided?) • Needs met? • Can everyone access? Specific criteria established for those who are eligible?	• Nature of community cooperation (presence or absence?) • Temporary or long-term? • New forms of community response? • Can everyone access? • Sustainability (will they continue and/ or grow?) • How to best work with them to enhance sustainability, or replace them if they are harmful?	• Identifying the vulnerable (who suffered most?) • Type of vulnerability? • Coping patterns? • Kind of adjustment? Stable or unstable? • Temporary or long-term?

GROUP EXERCISE
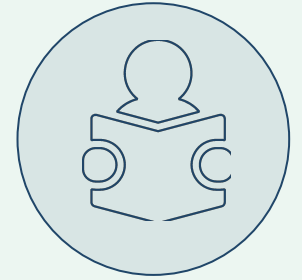
Think of a public health or humanitarian emergency you are familiar with

Who was/is particularly vulnerable during this crisis? In what ways?

Are there social groups you think might have been/might be vulnerable that have not been recognized?

What are some of the drivers that may have led to this vulnerability?

Are there examples of resilience within affected communities, & even vulnerable groups, that responders have/could have built upon?

How might have you designed an aspect of response differently (CE, contact tracing, treatment, etc.) to ensure no one is left behind?

NEXT STEPS

Discuss findings from context analysis with response partners.

Identify further research needs (use this **worksheet** to support planning and prioritization).

Agree who / how additional information will be gathered.

SBCC FOR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS IMPLEMENTATION KIT

WORKSHEET 2.4: IDENTIFYING FURTHER RESEARCH NEEDS

Purpose: This worksheet will help you identify if and what further research you may require to develop adequate communication interventions to respond to the emergency.

Directions: Complete this worksheet referring to the information that you collected from the desk review. Consider the primary research methodologies described earlier in this unit to determine the most suitable approach for answering further information needs.

Please note that this worksheet is followed by a completed example that you can use as reference if necessary.

	Yes/No	Notes
Is there anything else you would like to know about the behaviors, attitudes, knowledge or perceptions of how the population is responding to the emergency?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Do you need to know more about the barriers and facilitators of behaviors related to the emergency?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Do you need to know more about the culture, norms and traditions that govern behaviors related to the emergency?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Are there vulnerable and at-risk groups that have been omitted by the secondary research you reviewed?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Do you need to know more about the people of influence in the lives of the affected populations?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Do you need to know more about the programs and organizations operating in the affected areas?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Have you identified any contradictory information from your secondary research that	☐ Yes	

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SUMMARY

- Contextual knowledge is of critical importance during a humanitarian emergency.

- As early as possible during an emergency conduct a rapid desk review to provide all response actors with the needed context analysis.

- Clear analysis critical for informing next steps: Why does the data matter?

- Important to understand the broader social context of a setting in order to understand issues of vulnerability and inequality.

- Context analysis can support responses to be better able to address the needs of vulnerable groups, and build upon community resilience, in both the immediate and long term.

- **Data is for sharing and collective decision making** on how to organize the response, how to prioritize needs vs resources, understand the information gaps and how to address them.

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