



**PROCEEDINGS OF A NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS'
WORKSHOP ON THE BOTSWANA VULNERABILITY
ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE (BVAC)**

REPORT

**UNDP CONFERENCE ROOM,
UN PLAZA, PLOT 27
GABORONE, BOTSWANA**

7 – 8 MAY 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SADC Vision and Mission on Vulnerability Analysis

In order to assist its Member States realise their goals of ensuring food security for households, SADC set up Vulnerability Assessment Committees in member countries beginning in the late 1990s to better manage food insecurity and vulnerability to other disasters. In 2001 a more formalised system was put in place, primarily in response to the 2001/02 emergency food crisis that had arisen in the region.

These strategic visioning initiatives have coalesced into a SADC Statement of Intent to strengthen national and regional vulnerability analysis systems in order to inform policy formulation, development programmes and emergency interventions towards reducing vulnerability in the region. A number of activities have and continue to be undertaken to further this vision, including the setting up of National Vulnerability Assessment Committees (NVACs) in member countries.

1.2 Background

In May 2004 the SADC Heads of State Summit endorsed and mandated the setting up and strengthening of vulnerability assessment and analysis (VAA) groups in order to better understand household vulnerability. In addition to the 6 or so other SADC countries currently on VAA system, Botswana is the latest country to have requested SADC assistance in establishing a National Vulnerability Assessment Committee (NVAC) in order to undertake its own vulnerability analysis.

Issues

The issues of concern for most SADC countries seeking to establish NVACs (and the listing is not exhaustive) include the following:

- Credibility of an information system is a crucial consideration. Given that people's livelihoods are complex and that many factors impact on people's food security, vulnerability assessments should typically be multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral in coverage.
- Many agencies in government and outside of government should therefore be involved in order to achieve effective communication, collaboration and networking.
- Quality assurance in an information gathering system is also equally crucial. An NVAC should thus foster and optimize assessment-response linkages in an information system in order to ensure that the results typically translate into practical interventions.

2. The Meeting

A Stakeholders' workshop was organised at the UNDP Conference Room, Gaborone from the 7th to 8th May 2009 in order to constitute the Botswana Vulnerability Assessment Committee (BVAC). The workshop was jointly organised and facilitated

by the Botswana Government's Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and the SADC RVAA Programme Management Unit.

2.1 Objectives of the Meeting

The specific objectives of the workshop were:

- To consider the findings and recommendations of a scoping study on vulnerability assessments in Botswana and then, prioritise them accordingly,
- To introduce participants to the VAA information and assessment frameworks and methodologies and,
- To form a Botswana Vulnerability Assessment Committee.

2.2 Methodology of the meeting

The methodology adopted at the meeting was one of presentations firstly, of the scoping study report itself, and secondly, group work presentation by participants on the findings and recommendations of the study as well as presentations of technical papers by SADC experts. Each presentation was then followed by active discussions in the plenary, at which all participants were engaged and made valuable contributions in developing the Terms of Reference of the BVAC, once it was established (Refer to Appendix I to this report).

2.3 Attendance

The workshop drew participants from representative departments of the Botswana government and from non-governmental stakeholder groups, including the Botswana Red Cross Society (Refer to Appendix II for the List of Workshop Participants).

Representatives of International Cooperating Partners [ICP] (WFP, UNFAO, USAID/OCHA, FEWSNET, RHVP, OXFAM and others) in exception of the FAO, were however not present at the workshop; but were nevertheless recognised for their future role in providing technical support to the NVAC.

Equally, the role of SADC experts in the workshop was to help with the presentations of technical papers as well as in shedding light on the mechanics of setting up an NVAC.

2.4 Opening Session of the workshop

The Deputy Secretary for Socio-economic Policy in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, Mr. Disikalala Gaseitsiwe, performed the official opening of the workshop. And in doing so, Mr. Gaseitsiwe recalled to the participants the meeting of 27th October 2008 at the Gaborone International Convention Centre, at which the workshop participants considered the first draft of the scoping study report on the establishment of a Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis System in Botswana.

Mr. Gaseitsiwe asked the participants to then focus their attention on the main findings and recommendations of the study with a view to understanding them in order to chart the way forward. He also observed that during the workshop, the participants would be introduced to concepts of livelihoods and their relationships to hunger, food insecurity and poverty. Participants would then learn firsthand the linkages of vulnerability assessment and analysis to policy-making. Such an appreciation of concepts would then lead them to understanding vulnerability, generally.

Mr. Gaseitsiwe encouraged participants to put maximum efforts in the group work in order to help re-shape drought and food security monitoring activities of government. To that end, he was therefore optimistic the successful outcome of the workshop would largely reflect the quality of the participants' own inputs in the group work exercises. He therefore implored participants to actively participate in the process in order to identify value-adding recommendations that could influence policy.

Mr. Duncan Samikwa, SADC RVAA Programme Manager, in his address gave a brief history about the evolution of the Vulnerability Assessment Committees within SADC region, underscoring the multi-disciplinary nature of these committees. The composition of these NVACs boded well for the efficiency of such an information system in servicing and guiding policies and interventions.

In welcoming the participants to the workshop, Mrs Chada Koketso, the chairperson and Deputy Director at the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, reiterated the task at hand for participants namely, to refine and crystallize the findings and recommendations of the scoping study on Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis System for the National Food Security. The chair also recognised participants' presence at the workshop as signalling their collective desire to influence the poverty and food security agenda of government in their deliberations.

Mrs. Koketso recapitulated for the participants the benefits of a Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis System as likely to enrich, enhance and foster multi-disciplinary analyses. Such analyses would of course be combining different source data to identify populations at risk; what the risks are; how populations cope and are effective in their coping strategies and finally, what types of interventions are required. The other benefits would be in identifying other risk types to mainstream into drought and poverty reduction strategies of government. Such a development would then serve to improve the quality of development planning, overall.

3. Analysis of the presentations

Presentation 1

The findings and recommendations of the Scoping study were presented by Mr. Masozi Kachale of the SADC RVAA PMU, followed by discussions. Beyond the main findings of the study, Mr. Kachale had drawn attention of participants to issues of poor designs of drought intervention programmes, poor policy linkages and underscored the need to rationalise potentially those institutions dealing with all forms of risk management (food and nutrition insecurity, droughts, floods, diseases etc). Rationalisation of institutions could be on the basis of VAA findings.

Mr.Kachale had also noted the lack of baselines in data and information gathering activities of the members of the Early Warning Technical Committee. This omission had tended to bias information and crucial decision-making. A view was expressed that Household Income and Expenditure Surveys (HIES) could serve the same purpose as baselines. However, after some discussion it was found that baselines served a more strategic purpose in vulnerability assessments than did HIES as a tool of research.

Overall, it appeared at that stage that participants did not understand vulnerability, necessitating a change of programme to allow presentations on key concepts of vulnerability, food security and livelihood-based approaches to vulnerability assessments to be introduced during DAY ONE of the workshop (See Appendix IV for the Draft Agenda).

These changes necessitated that measurements be deferred to a future presentation. Thus, the change of agenda relegated group-work exercises to later segment of the workshop when participants would have understood vulnerability and consequently, the motivation for developing the Terms of Reference for the new BVAC.

Presentation 2

Vulnerability. In his presentation, Mr Charles Rethman of the SADC RVAA Programme differentiated vulnerability from poverty by stating that vulnerability and poverty were not similar. Thus, people who were affected by poverty were not necessarily vulnerable.

Equally, “affected” refers to an event; while “vulnerability” refers to people’s ability to modify the effects of an event. Knowledge of how people make a living is therefore the best way of working out a ‘response strategy’.

Food Security refers to physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, which meets dietary needs and food preferences for active and healthy life. Its dimensions are as follows:

- Availability – physical food supplies or sufficient quantities of food from production, food aid and/or through imported supplies of it.
- Access to food – refers to ability to access food through income, its distributions and pricing.
- Utilisation of food – refers to proper biological use of food; food intakes and food storage.

Presentation 3

The **Livelihood-based Vulnerability Analysis (LBVA)** is an analytical framework that defines the information that needs to be collected and the way in which this information is to be analysed in order to answer particular sets of questions. It therefore uses baselines (e.g. total access to food and income in a normal year) where

household sizes and composition are key parameters. Baselines are a way of organising the information data and ensuring its quality.

An understanding of people's livelihoods is essential for analysing the impacts of significant changes (programme or policy changes) to people's welfare. Why an LBVA process? An LBVA framework was necessary in order to measure people's entitlements, holistically. Thus, people's lack of access to food or entitlement is typically as a result of production and exchange that fail them during a given year.

What is needed in an information system? Key characteristics of an information system are:

- An information system must be credible in order that users can buy into and own it;
- Information outputs must be timely;
- It must be low cost system, affordable and scalable depending on demands for such a system and;
- It must be capable of being modelled.

What to measure? A 'classic approach' looks at the following five (5) variables or components to the system: assets, income, expenditures, foods and markets.

Tools of analysis -- common tools of analysis frequently used are GIS tools and statistical analysis.

DAY TWO Presentations

Presentation 4

VAA linkages to policy. This treatment served to provide strategic orientation to the work of the national VAC. Examples of policies could be a government strategy; food security policies, poverty reduction and/or social welfare policies. An example of the Malawi's Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) was used as a primer for the work of the national VAC in Botswana:

Social Protection Strategy as Example

- For disaster risk management, information is needed for targeting on:
 - Slow onset disaster e.g. extent of hunger
 - Rapid onset disaster e.g. floods
- Social Protection Programmes

: Information is needed for targeting broad safety-net activities such as,

- Predictable welfare transfers (i.e. cash-in-kind)
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- Productivity-enhancing transfers (e.g. input subsidies)

: Information is also needed for evaluating intervention programmes through,

- Modelling impacts
- Comparing costs and benefits
- Relationships between incomes and other important welfare indicators, e.g. malnutrition, HIV/AIDS rates

All that information is fed through to a High-level Social Protection Committee.

Food Security Policy Example

High-level forum is created for sharing and disseminating food security information as well as discussing options and solutions:

There are Four (4) Pillars or Dimensions to Food Security:

- Food availability
- Food access
- Food utilisation
- Stability. And the VACs provide information on at least 3 of these dimensions.

How VAC information is used: VACs provide missing entitlements, expressed as,

- Food (cereal) e.g. in terms Food Aid provided by WFP
- Cash Equivalents, e.g. cash transfers, grants, costs of program designs, deliveries etc
- Number of People At Risk, which will typically determine the program scale; the wealth breakdown criteria to be used for targeting and ration size calculations etc.
- Baseline Profiles

Group Work Presentations

Guidelines for group work on developing the Terms of Reference of the BVAC was presented, followed by formation of two groups of participants. For the participants to own the TORs, they will have to have developed them themselves to be able to relate outputs to their own activities. Most participants at the workshop will constitute the general membership of the BVAC.

A draft text of the Terms of Reference (TORs) of the Botswana Vulnerability Assessment Committee was agreed to at the end of the workshop. These TORs are attached to this report as protected text (see PDF Text of the same as Appendix I below).

Formalisation of the BVAC and the Way-forward

Similarly, the process of formalising the membership of the BVAC was concluded, with participants confirming availability to serve in the committee. Additional confirmations will be received from those organisations, which were not represented at the workshop at least by launch date of the BVAC in future. The official BVAC Membership list is attached to this report as protected text (see PDF text of the same in Appendix III)

Actions

The following actions were proposed as a way forward:

- The recommendations of the Scoping Study will be presented to the Rural Development Council for approval and adoption on the **12th June 2009**.
- .Under an Exchange Programme of the Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Project (RHVP), a benchmarking visit will be arranged to a prototype SADC NVAC as part of capacity building for the new BVAC members.
- Zoning of Botswana is scheduled for this year, starting in **August/September 2009**.
- Capacity building - Training on Baselines will be started by **October/November 2009**.
- Capacity building - Training on Focus Analysis is scheduled for **January/February 2010**.

Closing Remarks

In closing the workshop, the chairperson thanked the participants for their invaluable contributions in developing the Terms of Reference of the new Botswana National Vulnerability Assessment Committee. She also promised to convey to them in future the date and venue for the formal launch of the Committee.

Appendix I

(See PDF text of the Terms of Reference of the Botswana National Vulnerability Assessment Committee, BVAC)

Appendix II

List of Participants at the National Stakeholders' Workshop on the formation of the Botswana Vulnerability Assessment Committee (BVAC), held on 7 – 8 May 2009 in the UNDP CONFERENCE ROOM, UN PLAZA, PLOT 27, GABORONE, BOTSWANA

Date: 7 May 2009

Name	Min/Dept/Organisation	Designation	Tel/E-mail
K.L. Molefhi	MFDP/ DEFP	PFSC I	3950367/ kmolefhi@gov.bw
M. Galeemelwe	MLG- DPH	PHO	3953810/ mgaleemelwe@gov.bw
L.P. Mogalakwe	Labour Dept	PIRO	3611545/ pmogalakwe@gov.bw
K. Lempadi	MOA- DVS	CTO	3689294/ kelempadi@gov.bw
Mesho E.O.	MOA- DAP	SCO	3972070/ emesho@gmail.com
J.K. Reakae	MEWR	CTO	6860452/ jreakae@gov.bw
G.C. Molatlhegi	MOA-DABP	S.AE	3689383/ gcmolatlhegi@gov.bw
P. Zambezi	CSO	CS	3671394/ pgopolang@gov.bw
K.M. Ofaletse	MOA- DABP	PAE	3689404/ kofaletse@gov.bw
M. Matsietsa	MOA- CP	PASO	3689000
M.K. Molefe	MOA- DAR	PARO	3668100/80/ mkmolefe@gov.bw
B.T. Rakgantswana	MFDP/DEFP	PFSC II	3950265/ trakgantswana@gov.bw
D.M. Gaseitsewe	MFDP/DEFP	DSSEP	3950350/ dgaseitsewe@gov.bw
C. Koketso	MFDP/DEFP	DDRDP	3950181/ ckoketso@gov.bw
K. Waditshwene	MFDP/DEFP	SPO	3950250/ kwaditshwene@gov.bw
Ndoze M.	MFDP/PDC	PO(P)	3950354/ mndoze@gov.bw
Moses Keetile	UNFPA	NPO	3952121/ keetile@unfpa.org
S. Kgosietsile	Bots Red Cross Society	PMER	3952465
C. Rethman	RVAA Programme	TA Info & DB Manager	3187317/ charles_rethman@yahoo.com
Masozi Kachale	RVAA Programme	Livelihoods & GIS TA	makachale@yahoo.com
Atamelang Mokgare		VAA workshop Facilitator/ Consultant	mokgare@yahoo.com

D. Samikwa	RVAA Programme	Prog. Manager	dsamikwa@sadc.int
K. Sebolaaphuti	MFDP/DEFP	PPSC II	3950191/ ksebolaaphuti@gov.bw
P. Nguvauva	MLG/DSS	PSW II	3912402/ pnguavauva@gov.bw
Gasy Sawdon	SADC RVAA Programme	RVAA Coordinator	71356017/ sawdon@botsnet.bw
T. Morapedi	MFDP/DEFP	Intern	74462133/ tbotash@yahoo.com
G. Mangole	MFDP/DEFP	Intern	72431687/ gmangole@yahoo.com
B. Sebika	MFDP	Intern	71923272/ sebikab@yahoo.com
M. Basheke	MDH- NUTRITION	PHO	72447105/ mbasheke@gov.bw
B. Matlhaga	MFDP/RDC	CREC	
P. Ramosweu	MFDP/RDC	PREC I	
David Tibe	FAO/UN		

Appendix III

(See PDF Text List of Official Membership of the Botswana Vulnerability Assessment Committee, BVAC)

Appendix IV

(Agenda of the Workshop)