Mainstreaming Participatory Vulnerability Analysis in ActionAid International

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Abstract

This paper will briefly talk about the road map for mainstreaming Participatory

2. What is PVA?

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 action. The overall aim of PVA is to link disaster preparedness and response to long-term development. The message at the heart of PVA is that communities know their situations best and so any analysis should be built on their knowledge of local conditions. The essence of PVA is for the community not only to develop action plans, but to have their confidence built through valuing their knowledge and to be able to constantly seek opportunities to enhance their resilience to difficult conditions.

ActionAid International recognizes that vulnerability is dynamic and complex such that it cannot be analyzed directly. However, it is important to break down the complexity of vulnerability into manageable components so that we can jointly develop actions, interventions, and strategies to reduce exposure to hazards and shocks. PVA enables communities and development practitioners to make a qualitative analysis of vulnerability or a predictive judgment of what might happen to them as individuals or as communities. Understanding vulnerability requires scrutiny of power relations that determine who gets what, who makes what decision and who is most affected by these decisions in society. These decisions can hinder or enhance the realization of human rights, which is fundamental to the reduction of vulnerability. PVA builds on the recognition that everybody has fundamental rights established in legal and policy instruments, and international agreements. It also considers in particular who has obligations, and who is in a position to help reduce insecurities in human lives, strengthen or improve people's infrastructure of protection and promote empowerment. This is founded on the notion of human security, which allows us to link vulnerability, power and human rights.

There are multiple determinants of vulnerability and some of them fall outside individuals or the community. Therefore PVA incorporates a multi-level and multi-agency approach which enables communities and field staff to conduct vulnerability analysis at the community, district/regional, national and international levels.

PVA uses a step-by-step analytical framework that produces: systematic analysis of the causes of vulnerability, situation analysis of vulnerability, analysis of existing actions, and action plans from analysis – with key players who can mitigate or exacerbate vulnerability. PVA tracks how vulnerability is progressive over time and uses participatory tools[2] which ActionAid International field staff are familiar with.

[2] PRA and REFLECT: see www.actionaid.org.uk/education/reflect and Section 6 below.

Ethlet Chiwaka, Mainstream

Clearly, there was a need to re-think AAI's approaches to contextual analysis and emergency programming based on the issues raised during the review. Following this process, a strategy for emergencies work was developed, which recognized the importance of analysis to ensure information for decision making and program design is generated with communities and that analysis is key to maintaining a rights-based focus in emergencies. In the same year, a DEC review of the Southern Africa food crisis[6] highlighted that communities benefiting from AAI's programs were not hit any different from communities not benefiting from AAI 's work. This led to an increased acceptance of the PVA approach at the Directors' level. It is worth mentioning that at the same time ActionAid was going through a process of internationalization, becoming ActionAid International, moving our international secretariat to South Africa and creating a global movement that links people and organizations in developed and developing countries together, as equal partners in fighting global poverty. This process has meant a lot of changes in the way we do things and make decisions

3.4 What happened next

We then worked to get a tighter guide appropriate for local staff based on information from the Swansea field guide. This process was led by our former

arrangements for community representatives to come to Freetown, including representatives from partner community-based organizations (CBOs) with whom we carried out the PVA – only three people came to this meeting and there was no government representative, which defeated the whole purpose of the process. We are constantly seeking ways to increase engagement of decision makers as well as policy makers in this process.

PVA requires participation of partners and stakeholders in the area where it is being conducted. The success of PVA depends partly on the diversity of stakeholders involved because their actions can exacerbate or reduce vulnerability. Our experience has shown that it is rewarding to start at the micro level, with a smaller team, and scale up afterwards. So we conduct PVA in one district, and within the district we further select villages or areas where discussions are held.

4. Application of PVA

In Zimbabwe PVA was used to analyze vulnerability to HIV/AIDS to inform development interventions and policy work. The outputs have been used to beef up a proposal for food security interventions for households affected by HIV/AIDS. In addition, the outputs are being used to advocate for inclusive methods for food security-related vulnerability assessment, which are key for early warning and preparedness at the country level. There is more work in the pipeline to influence donors, government institutions and networks to release more funding for disaster risk reduction as well as champion more inclusive approaches to vulnerability analysis.

In The Gambia, where the PVA field guide was piloted , PVA was used to analyze vulnerability to hazards. The findings revealed that vulnerability to disaster is gender differentiated and that, depending on what resources men and women have access to or control over, such resources can be used to strengthen protection. In Bangladesh, PVA has been used to analyze vulnerability to floods and cyclones, so that communities and field staff can develop strategies and interventions for preparedness. In western Uganda, PVA was used to analyze post-conflict effects as part of the strategic planning process for Bundinbugyo area. The outputs from the PVA exercise strengthened the voice of women on issues of rape, child mothers and early marriages. Women have since been linked to national organizations promoting gender equality, to help them strengthen a gender awareness campaign.

In Nigeria, PVA was used to analyze ethnic conflict to inform ActionAid International's response to the conflict that erupted in several parts of Nigeria in 2003. The scoping study helped communities initiate a process of conflict resolution at the local level. In Sierra Leone, PVA was used to analyze vulnerability to conflict. Some of the outputs have been used to develop a

link conflict reduction work from community to international level through the Africa disaster reduction platform. In Pakistan, PVA was used to develop case study material for the World Conference in Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan, in January 2005.[8] The case studies strengthened the d ConfetformaddiRedu, Worl

patients are looked after by relatives (generally female), supported by CSO volunteers. As a result the burden of care is pushed onto women or girls. This role is very demanding to the extent that they find it difficult to engage in productive activities like farming. The communities decided to advocate for changes in the criteria for food-for-work programs to include HIV/Aids care work. Through the PVA process they were able to raise this issue at the district and national levels. This was the first time for this particular community to work together in this way. Discussions are in progress to make an amendment to the food-for-work criteria.

In Sierra Leone, women cannot own land because of gender marginalization. During the PVA exercise, for the first time women formed a group and came up with strategies to raise awareness of these issues in their own community and begin to negotiate with men for equal ownership of land and other resources. At the village feedback meeting, women used a song as a starting point to raise this issue. They gained support from young people both male and female. ActionAid International will continue to support the women's group to campaign for equal ownership of land and other assets.

6. Challenges Faced

1) Lack of a culture of disaster preparedness
There is a need to get people to think of disaster preparedness or disaster risk reduction in development programs. In some countries disaster preparedness is not seen as part of development programming. Due to this culture and attitude it is difficult for some staff and Country Programs to appreciate the importance of PVA in facilitating the process of disaster preparedness. There are projects and

and a systematic analysis. At ActionAid International we are in the process of mobilizing resources to pilot the merger of the PVA and REFLECT methodologies.

PVA assumes that staff are familiar with participatory tools used for PRA/REFLECT and so makes no provision for training in such tools. The reality is different: there have been real constraints during training and implementation of PVA. There are very few people out there who are conversant with participatory methodologies and there is a lack of consistency due to staff turnover. In addition AAI's shift in emphasis from service delivery to policy and advocacy in practice has meant that Country Programs had to get rid of some of the staff who were good at participatory methods and hire policy staff, conversant with

wealth of knowledge which vulnerable people themselves have and the contribution they can make.

2) Power and partnership

Decision-making processes for PVA are crucial for a successful PVA exercise. Who decides what, who is to own the report, ensure follow-up and fund the programs becomes very complicated where AAI is working through partnership. For example, AAI Zimbabwe's partner, FACT Chiredzi was not willing to share ownership. We had planned to conduct PVA in two areas, one where FACT Chiredzi has been working for a long time, the second a new area, which is neglected by many CSOs in Chiredzi. The idea was that for this new area, PVA would generate information, which would be used as a baseline survey (a sort of appraisal). FACT Chiredzi staff identified this area and arranged meetings. Its leadership decided to cancel the field trip at the last minute because of political tensions in this area, fearing that PVA might unlock political discussion and grievances. Much as the PVA team felt that we needed to go this area to conduct PVA, we could not overrule the decision of FACT Chiredzi. This is a direct consequence of decentralized decision-making process at AAI – we believe that more power and ownership should come from the field but sometimes these decisions have negative implications on the most vulnerable.

3) 'Money' – mainstreaming should be well resourced

Lack of adequate resources to mainstream PVA has been a key constraint. This has been reflected at two levels. First, resources set aside by the International Emergencies Team which is currently championing the process of mainstreaming PVA at ActionAid International, have not been adequate. Decisions on resource allocation have not been made with a long-term perspective. This is not new: generally, mainstreaming of participatory methodologies at ActionAid International has been faced with similar constraints; mainstreaming is not seen as a process but a 'short-term activity'. However, elsewhere AAI has done very well, for example in mainstreaming REFLECT where the team has successfully raised resources. AAI is currently re-focusing its thinking strategies to ensure smooth rollout of PVA.

Second, there are many country programs intending to conduct PVA, yet PVA requires real investment for the initial training, to train facilitators including staff from the country office, partner organizations and other stakeholders in the area of operation. The practice has been for country programs to budget for one cycle of PVA and actions coming out of it in three-year plans. However, with competing priorities for the limited resources available, most of these countries do not budget for PVA.

At the centre of PVA is the recognition that actions and interventions generated through PVA need to be strategically followed up for the benefits of PVA to be appreciated by both communities and partner organizations. This is a big challenge because it is common practice among researchers and development

3) Raise resources to finance the strategy and finance PVAs in country programs, including actions generated from these exercises.
4) Build a cadre of staff, and networks that will champion PVA in country programs and regions but also share best practices and learning. This will feed into further development of the approach.
5) Systematically bring synergy between PVA and other participatory methodologies. There is need to link PVA with adult literacy so that poor and marginalized people can feel more able to talk at district level.
6) Think critically about how to balance participation and systemic dimension of PVA. On the one hand PVA gives the poor and marginalized a voice in the policy and decision making arena; on the other 584. 0 0 12 303.3599Rs0rTrA92d5992 5

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