

Helpdesk Research Report: Social Assessments of Disaster Reconstruction Activities
23.07.08

Query: Please identify literature on social assessments (or social impact assessments) for disaster reconstruction. Please include examples of good practice, and methodologies

Enquirers: China Agricultural University, Beijing, and DFID China

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1. Overview

In post-disaster situations, a comprehensive assessment of damage, needs, vulnerabilities and capacities is crucial for developing effective strategies for reconstruction and recovery. However, it is widely acknowledged that most assessments still retain a narrow focus on damage to physical infrastructure, and do not sufficiently address socio-economic factors and the individual needs of affected communities. Not only can this lead to a disconnected or inappropriate response, resulting interventions also cannot take into account area-specific needs, or the resources, capacities and adaptation mechanisms already present within the affected communities themselves. In addition, they can be hampered by limited understanding about how social groups are affected differently by disasters, how recovery interventions might impact social vulnerability and livelihoods, and how immediate and future risks can be reduced.

From the literature below, it appears that a 'social assessment' has broadly two functions: to assess the social impact of the disaster itself; and to analyse and manage the social consequences of reconstruction interventions. There seem to be relatively little material on the latter in post-disaster contexts. This query therefore focuses on the two related components of such an assessment. The first is meaningful community participation in recovery planning and implementation. A great deal of the literature included below provides guidelines and methodologies for consultation with stakeholders on needs assessment, project design and participatory processes for implementation and monitoring.

The second is analysis of local vulnerabilities, and how they can be reduced in ways that lead to sustainable solutions. The International Federation of the Red Cross' Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) framework has been widely used by practitioners for almost ten years. Its 1999 guidelines (see below) state that the VCA can be used to:

- understand the problems (symptoms) and where they come from (underlying causes);
- assess what resources, skills and capacities already available;
- encourage focus on specific local conditions (specific threats and risks, most vulnerable groups, sources of vulnerability, local perceptions of risks, and local resources and capacities);

- highlight different areas of responsibility for reducing vulnerabilities in terms of whether political, technical, financial or social inputs are required. (p.22)

Note: This query builds on the May 2008 helpdesk report entitled 'Community Participation in Disaster Rehabilitation and Recovery' and focuses explicitly on tools, guidelines and methodologies for effective community participation.

2. Key Documents

Assessment Methodologies

- Dufour, C., Grunewald, F. and Levy, K., 2003, 'Participation by Crisis-Affected Populations in Humanitarian Action: a Handbook for Practitioners', Overseas Development Institute, London http://www.proventionconsortium.org/themes/default/pdfs/CRA/ALNAP_2003_meth.pdf

Chapter 3 of this handbook sets out the essential questions that should be addressed through a social assessment:

- **What are the key elements of the context?** This requires knowledge of the area's history, geography, economy, culture and social anthropology.
- **What happened?** This entails analysing the crisis and its effects on the local population and its environment.
- **Who is who?** Identifying which organisations are present in the zone, as well as the local authorities, stakeholders, and the affected population.
- **How is the affected population facing the crisis?** Understanding vulnerabilities, capacities and coping mechanisms is essential in the design phase.
- **What are the needs and the demands?** The needs and demands of whom? It is crucial to comprehend what people require and what factors affect how these needs are transformed into demands.

Various methodologies are also suggested. These include participatory situation analysis; participatory crisis-impact analysis; participatory stakeholder analysis; participatory capacities and vulnerabilities analysis; and participatory needs and demands analysis.

- Environmental Planning Collaborative (EPC) & TCG International LLC (TGILLC), 2004, 'Participatory Planning Guide for Post-Disaster Reconstruction', EPC India/ TGILLC, Washington DC <http://www.tcgillc.com/tcgidocs/TCGI%20Disaster%20Guide.pdf>

Section II of this guide highlights that disaster assessment is usually carried out in two distinct phases: a *preliminary* or *rapid assessment* carried out immediately after the disaster to determine the geographical extent of the disaster's impact as well as the numbers, categories, locations and circumstances of the affected population; and a more detailed assessment carried out at a later stage to gather more specific information on the extent of the loss and damage, and the needs of the affected population. The latter can be divided into: a damage assessment which collects information on the damage to buildings, livelihoods, agriculture, services, infrastructure and utilities; and a needs assessment that determines the level and types of assistance required by the affected population, their priorities, and their preferred strategies to meet these priorities. Section IV outlines the various steps for formulating participatory reconstruction plans. These are:

- **Collecting background information** on the affected areas;
- **Launching a planning process** which encourages the involvement of the local government;
- **Forming a reconstruction committee** which includes leaders of the community, elected local officials, representatives of community based organizations, as well as of the various interest and vulnerable groups in the community;
- **Identifying stakeholders** including community and citizen groups; the government; civil society organisations; the private sector; professional groups; and the media;
- **Organising public awareness** and outreach activities;
- **Developing strategies** based on an assessment of local capacity and resources;
- **Building consensus** on a common community vision for reconstruction;

- **Identifying development opportunities** and formulating a plan;
- **Providing for wider consultation** on the plan through community forums, workshops, focus groups, and public distribution of the documents.

Section VI of the guide also provides recommendations on how to manage information.

- ProVention Consortium, 2007, 'Strengthening the Social Analysis Component in Rapid Impact and Vulnerability Assessment', Workshop Report, 29-31 January 2007, Panama
http://www.proventionconsortium.org/themes/default/pdfs/social_analysis_in_rapid_assessment_ws.pdf

This is the report of a workshop which aimed to share experience and ideas for strengthening the social analysis components in post-disaster rapid impact/vulnerability assessment. The workshop focused in particular on assessment in the first 1-4 weeks after a disaster, drawing on the knowledge and experience of a range of international and regional organisations. The report includes a working document that was formulated during the workshop. It offers the following definition of 'social analysis': "A social analysis is an investigation, gathering and treatment of information that includes elements such as the social characteristics of the population and locality we are targeting: the size and location of populations, ethnicity, livelihoods and income, infrastructure, intrahousehold, community and broader power relationships, organization of civil society and State administration, relations with community key-actors, identification of capacities, education, public health, level of conflict and nature of conflict-management mechanisms and cultural issues. This information should be built on the basis of a multi-thematic participation taking into account private and public sector and the community" (p.5). A proper social analysis should be built on the following components:

- **Availability of resources:** The availability of financial, environmental and human resources (including the knowledge and capacity aspects, i.e. the social capital of the community) should be determined.
- **Principles and standards:** The application of all the principles and standards guiding humanitarian action [e.g. impartiality, human rights, Code of Conduct, Sphere and Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) standards, specific values and principles of one given actor, such as rights and needs based approach, etc.] should apply.
- **Levels of analysis:** Social analysis can be conducted at the national, local or community, and household level. The process should make sure that vulnerable groups including the disabled, children, people affected by HIV/AIDS, the elderly, indigenous persons, landless tenants, etc. are included in the process.
- **Factors:** A large number of factors could be considered, including cultural, economic, political, environmental issues, power relationships, decision-making structures, religion, ethnicity, gender, age interrelations, potential conflicts, etc. Other aspects such as coping mechanisms and strategies, vulnerability to specific hazards, local capacities, and livelihoods are also important.
- **Processes:** While not specific to social analysis, the importance of having a baseline, and of analysing social aspects as an on-going process, is paramount. Similarly, the method of data collection should be based on trust and mutual respect vis-à-vis the community. Ideally, social analysis should be undertaken in the pre-disaster period and be used as a basic tool in recovery and reconstruction in the post-disaster analysis. Overall a multi-disciplinary approach should be applied to this analysis.

The report ends with a description of a variety of initiatives related to social analysis and rapid assessment.

- Bhatt, M. R, Pandya, M. and Murphy, C., 2005, 'Community Damage Assessment and Demand Analysis', All India Disaster Mitigation Institute, Ahmedabad
http://www.proventionconsortium.org/themes/default/pdfs/AIDMI_ELS-33.pdf

The first chapter of this report discusses the need for community-based needs analysis. The authors argue: "Most assessments are specifically conducted to assess the physical damage resulting from the disaster. Socio-economic factors and individual needs of survivors are not incorporated into these assessment methods. This leads to an inappropriate and haphazard response, which does not account for the area-specific needs and latent capacities of the victims" (p.1). The second chapter

addresses common challenges for gathering accurate information. It also offers recommendations for constituting an analysis team and details the assessment process. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the Sphere Project's Minimum Standards in Disaster Response and the Red Cross's Humanitarian Charter and provide checklists for community need analysis. These sections provide guidelines organised by sector - water and sanitation, food security and food aid, shelter and site planning, and health services.

- International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), 2005, 'Guidelines for Emergency Assessment', IFRC, Geneva
<http://www.proventionconsortium.org/themes/default/pdfs/71600-Guidelines-for-emergency-en.pdf>

These guidelines provide advice on the organisation of emergency assessments including the phases of planning, fieldwork, analysis and reporting. All assessments are based on the IFRC's vulnerability and capacity framework which entails an analysis of problems at the community level and the capacity that people have to address these. This approach focuses on active participation of key community stakeholders to enable them to identify and prioritise needs.

See also:

- International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), 1999, 'Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment: An International Federation Guide', IFRC, Geneva
http://www.proventionconsortium.org/themes/default/pdfs/CRA/VCA1999_meth.pdf
- 'The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations' Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva
<http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/450e963f2.html>

This Tool outlines a series of steps to follow for conducting a participatory assessment with refugees. Its overall aim is to assist UNHCR offices in strengthening partnerships with persons of concern, in gathering baseline data for age, gender, and diversity analysis and in developing the most appropriate protection strategies. The report states: "Participatory assessment is a process of building partnerships with refugee women and men of all ages and backgrounds by promoting meaningful participation through structured dialogue. Participatory assessment includes holding separate discussions with women, girls, boys, and men, including adolescents, in order to gather accurate information on the specific protection risks they face and the underlying causes, to understand their capacities, and to hear their proposed solutions...It helps mobilize communities to take collective action to enhance their own protection and forms the basis for the implementation of a rights and community-based approach...Participatory assessment is one phase of a comprehensive situation analysis" (p.2). For the UNHCR, situation analysis is made up of three interlinked phases:

- **Phase 1 - Analysis of existing information:** All the available information on a particular situation concerning refugees, internally displaced persons, and/or returnees is gathered from a wide range of internal and external sources. The information collected should be reviewed from an age, gender, and diversity perspective to identify protection gaps in information, in services, in assistance or in advocacy.
 - **Phase 2 - Participatory assessment:** Structured discussions are organised with refugee women, girls, boys, and men of all ages and backgrounds, providing them with an opportunity to explain the protection risks they face and to participate as partners in the design of programmatic responses to issues affecting their lives.
 - **Phase 3 - Participatory planning:** A planning meeting takes place to prepare the annual Country Operations Plan (COP) for submission to UNHCR headquarters. Participants include donors, host government authorities, implementing and operational partners, and refugees. Together, they review and analyse the information available and develop the operational objectives at the country level.
- Webpage: 'Community Risk Assessment Toolkit', ProVention Consortium
<http://www.proventionconsortium.org/?pageid=39>

This web-based resource includes a toolkit aimed at strengthening community level risk assessment practice. It includes a rich collection of methodologies and case studies. These are accompanied by guidance notes which summarises the resource and enables users to identify the most appropriate assessment methodologies and applications. Each guidance note provides a detailed analysis of the method and case study concerned and presents a brief abstract. A number of resources on assessment specifically in post-disaster contexts are also included. The resource also has a search tool which allows users to carry out searches in methodologies and case studies according to a wide range of predetermined categories, as well as a glossary of terms. This provides a detailed explanation and, where available, a definition of the main terms used in the field of community risk assessment in general and in the CRA Toolkit in particular. A number of key websites, publications, conceptual articles and information on participatory action research are also provided.

- ProVention Consortium, 2007, 'Tools for Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction Guidance Note: Social Impact Assessment' ProVention Consortium, Geneva
www.proventionconsortium.org/themes/default/pdfs/tools_for_mainstreaming_GN11.pdf

This guidance note looks at the use of social impact assessment (SIA) as a tool for assessing disaster risks when planning development projects. It outlines the principal approaches and methods used in SIA and identifies entry points for introducing natural hazard and related disaster risks.

Vulnerability Analysis

Gender

- Bradshaw, S., 2004, 'Socio-Economic Impacts of Natural Disasters: A Gender Analysis', Economic Commission for Latin America and Caribbean, United Nations, Santiago
<http://www.eclac.org/publicaciones/xml/3/15433/lcl2128i.pdf>

This paper analyses the socio-economic effects of hurricane Mitch using a gender approach. It proposes new analysis indicators for crisis situations that may better reflect women's disadvantageous position relative to men. The first section of the document discusses key concepts used in gender and disaster analysis, in the context of the region and hurricane Mitch. The following section examines the direct and indirect impacts of the hurricane and how they have affected women. It also looks at responses to Mitch at three levels: first, that of individuals and their strategies for coping with the crisis; second, the actions of governments and the coordinated bodies of civil society; and third, reconstruction initiatives carried out by national and international organisations. The final section attempts to draw together the key points and challenges suggested by the analysis. It also offers some recommendations for integrating this approach into future emergency and reconstruction scenarios and for reducing women's current vulnerability.

- Deare, F., 2004, 'A Methodological Approach to Gender Analysis in Natural Disaster Assessment: A Guide for the Caribbean', Economic Commission for Latin America and Caribbean, United Nations, Santiago
http://www.cepal.org/mujer/proyectos/gtz/publicaciones/word_doc/manual31.pdf

This report argues that responses to natural disasters in the Caribbean have been mostly characterised by an overemphasis on the replacement of damaged infrastructure, often at the expense of a closer focus on social aspects of the populations affected. The author argues that incorporating gender analysis into the evaluations carried out in the emergency phase of the disaster cycle can help redress this imbalance and ensure that the differentiated needs of women and men are taken on board during rehabilitation and reconstruction. This document presents tools and methodologies to conduct gender analysis in this area, including:

- gender analysis of data collection methods;
- evaluation of pre-disaster gender relations;
- incorporation of gender analysis in the evaluation of post-disaster casualties and material loss;
- examination of the gender aspects underlying the division of labour and allocation of resources;
- gender analysis of the impacts on health and social network response.

Children

- Luneta, M. et al, 2007, 'Child-Oriented Participatory Risk Assessment and Planning: A Toolkit', ProVention Consortium, Quezon City
http://proventionconsortium.org/themes/default/pdfs/CRA/COPRAP_meth.pdf

This step-by-step toolkit provides participatory risk assessment tools to identify the need, capacities and vulnerabilities of children aged 7-17 years and to design appropriate disaster planning. It includes twelve tools which outline the objectives, materials, step-by-step procedures and guidelines relevant for conducting a participatory assessment with children. Participatory tools include:

- drawing, using clay as a model, or mapping dangers, hazards and resources in the community;
- identifying needs and conditions before, during and after a flood or storm; and prioritising problems and solutions;
- advocating to district leaders, local government units, NGOs, parents and youth;
- involving adults to discuss livelihood, community organizations, establish a disaster timeline and do hazard and risk mapping.

Sectoral Assessment

Livelihoods

- United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)/ International Labour Organization (ILO), 2008, 'The Livelihood Assessment Toolkit: Analysing and Responding to the Impact of Disasters on the Livelihoods of People', FAO/ILO, Rome/ Geneva
http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/tc/tce/pdf/Livelihood_Assessment_Toolkit.pdf

This toolkit aims to assess the impact of disasters on the livelihoods of people and the capacity and opportunities for recovery and increased resilience to future events. It is comprised of four volumes, providing an introduction and tools to address baseline studies, initial assessment, and post disaster assessment. Volume one provides an introduction to the toolkit including its conceptual framework, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF). Volume 2 provides a general outline of a useful pre-disaster livelihoods baseline. This provides a credible basis for designing a good post disaster assessment. Volume 3 provides guidelines on setting up a post disaster initial assessment and is designed to generate a credible picture of the current and likely impact on livelihoods of a sudden-onset natural disaster soon after it has occurred. Volume 4 provides guidelines on setting up a detailed livelihoods assessment to look at the impact of disaster on livelihoods and identify opportunities and capacities for recovery at household, community, and local economy levels.

Environment

- Kelly, C., 2005, 'Guidelines for Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disasters', Benfield Hazard Research Centre/ CARE International, London
http://www.benfieldhrc.org/disaster_studies/rea/rea_guidelines.v4.4.pdf

The Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment in Disaster (REA) is a tool to identify, define, and prioritize potential environmental impacts in disaster situations. A simple, consensus-based qualitative assessment process, involving narratives and rating tables, is used to identify and rank environmental issues and follow-up actions during a disaster. The REA is built around conducting simple analysis of information in the following areas:

- The general context of the disaster;
- Disaster related factors which may have an immediate impact on the environment;
- Possible immediate environmental impacts of disaster agents;
- Unmet basic needs of disaster survivors that could lead to adverse impact on the environment; and
- Potential negative environmental consequences of relief operations.

A completed REA identifies critical environmental issues. Some issues arise from conditions existing before the disaster. Others are new to the location or population experiencing the disaster. The nature and impact of environmental issues will change during and after the disaster and new issues may

arise. For these reasons, the output from an REA is not a static assessment but one to be reviewed and revised throughout the post-disaster period.

Case Studies

- Birkmann, J. et al., 2007, 'Rapid Vulnerability Assessment in Sri Lanka', United Nations University, Bonn
<http://www.ehs.unu.edu/file.php?id=378>

This study aimed to define criteria and indicators to estimate and measure vulnerability at the local level to tsunamis in selected municipalities in Sri Lanka. It also identified various vulnerabilities, coping capacities and potential intervention tools. Moreover, the study focused on the advantages and disadvantages of different techniques to measure vulnerability. Four different methodologies and data sources were analysed. These included for example remote sensing to estimate the vulnerability of the built environment (physical vulnerability) and a questionnaire-based survey to assess major characteristics of the vulnerability of different social groups (socio-economic vulnerability). The study found for example that:

- females were more vulnerable to the tsunami than males;
- affected individuals needed loans to rebuild their properties; and businesses and friends, neighbours and relatives were mostly the source of loans, rather than the formal banking sector;
- people and households in Batticaloa faced greater difficulties recovering from losses than people and households in Galle. While, for example, 60 percent of the affected population needed more than two years to replace their actual housing damage, this was true of only 25 per cent in Galle.

The results provide important conclusions, recommendations and incentives for a more sustainable reconstruction of the cities of Galle and Batticaloa, and for coastal communities in general. They also offer insight into how to identify and measure susceptibility, and the unusual difficulties different types of household have had in trying to recover. This analysis could be used in the future to define more precisely those households which need aid the most.

- International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), 'Community Participation in Rebuilding in the Maldives', IFRC, Geneva
http://www.proventionconsortium.org/themes/default/pdfs/IFRC_Maldives_recovery07.pdf

This report discusses the development of a Community Involvement Plan in order to stimulate greater community involvement in a relocation and reconstruction project. The Plan was developed together with the government to promote better two-way communication between the communities concerned, including the island authorities, and the International Federation. It also sought to provide opportunities for meaningful and active community involvement in the project. The plan introduced a variety of simple and practical initiatives to address community concerns and questions about the housing project as it evolved, while cementing budding relationships among all those involved in the project. These initiatives included using visual aids, organised site visits, informal visits and meetings, a telephone hotline, and interactive and graphical communication methods.

Further Resources

- The Emergency Capacity Building Project, 2007, 'Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies: The Good Enough Guide' Oxfam GB, Oxford
<http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/aid/2007/0209goodenough.pdf>

This guide outlines a set of core ideas, tools and a 'Good Enough' approach on impact measurement and accountability as developed during a 2006 workshop by representatives of seven international NGOs. The core ideas or 'basic elements' of impact measurement are:

- Establish a basic description (profile) of affected people and related communities.
- Identify desired changes, in negotiation with affected people, as soon as possible.

- Track all project inputs and outputs against desired change.
 - Collect and document individual and community perspectives through participatory methods in order to:
 - Increase understanding of what change they desire
 - Help establish a baseline and track change
 - Explain methodology and limitations to all stakeholders, honestly, transparently, and objectively.
 - Use the information gathered to improve projects regularly and proactively.
- International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA), 2003, 'International Principles for Social Impact Assessment', IAIA, Fargo, US
http://www.iaia.org/Members/Publications/Guidelines_Principles/SP2.pdf

This documents sets out the standards and norms for social analysis in rapid assessment. It outlines the features of a social impact assessment (SIA), considers how social impacts should be conceptualised and suggests activities that can constitute an SIA. These include:

- considering the environmental design of the planned intervention;
- identifying interested and affected peoples;
- facilitating and coordinating the participation of stakeholders;
- documenting and analysing the local historical setting of the planned intervention so as to be able to interpret responses to the intervention, and to assess cumulative impacts;
- collecting baseline data (social profiling) to allow evaluation and audit of the impact assessment process and the planned intervention itself;
- developing a rich picture of the local cultural context, and an understanding of local community values, particularly how they relate to the planned intervention;
- identifying and describing the activities which are likely to cause impacts (scoping);
- predicting (or analysing) likely impacts and how different stakeholders are likely to respond;
- evaluating and selecting alternatives (including a no development option);
- describing potential conflicts between stakeholders and considering resolution processes;
- developing coping strategies for dealing with residual or non-mitigatable impacts;
- contributing to skill development and capacity building in the community;
- developing appropriate institutional and coordination arrangements for all parties;
- devising and implementing monitoring and management programmes.

3. Additional information

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Websites visited

Provention Consortium, International Recovery Platform, UNDP Crisis Prevention and Recovery, DRR Sourcebook, ECLAC, All India Disaster Mitigation Institute, International Association for Impact

Assessment, UN HABITAT Disaster Assessment Portal, Radix Online, Eldis, World Bank, FAO, UNISDR

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