

Vulnerability context

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Concept

- Vulnerability context refers to the external factors that affect people's livelihoods – often, but not always, negatively.
 - Vulnerability is classically defined as exposure to risk and stress, and the lack of ability to cope with the consequences of risk.
 - These factors are not controllable by local people
 - Vulnerable peoples are in stress with different sources
1. Environmental : natural disasters (drought/flood), environmental degradation, population pressure
 2. Social : class, caste, gender, ethnicity, disability etc.
 3. Political : political groups, power exercise etc.
 4. Economic : purchasing power, unemployment, high interest rate etc.
 5. Household changes : illness/death of family members, birth, marriage
 6. Health : diseases like malaria, AIDS, SARS, corona etc.

Why is it important?

The factors that make up the *Vulnerability Context* are important because they have a direct impact upon people's asset status and the options that are open to them in pursuit of beneficial livelihood outcomes.

Characteristics of vulnerability:

- The deterioration or destruction of primary livelihood systems
- The loss or depletion of productive assets
- Long-term dependence on unsustainable coping mechanisms
- Environmental degradation and deterioration of natural resources to the point that carrying capacity may be exceeded and production has declined below recovery levels
- Increasing impoverishment of community and households
- Geographical isolation (in terms of infrastructure and communication)
- Dependence on relief assistance
- Breakdown of social institutions and relations

Time dimension

Time dimension is all those vulnerability that occur regularly or every year where as multiple dimensions affect vulnerability indirectly. Time dimensions include:

- Shocks (sudden, unexpected changes)
- Trends (more gradual changes over a longer timeframe)
- Seasonality (recurring patterns of variation over the course of a year)

Shocks

- Shocks are sudden events that have a significant impact – usually negative – on livelihoods
- They are irregular and vary in intensity and include events such as: natural disasters, civil conflict, losing one's job, collapse in crop prices
- Shocks can destroy assets directly (in the case of floods, storms, civil conflict, etc.)
- They can also force people to abandon their home areas and dispose of assets (such as land) prematurely as part of coping strategies.

Seasonality

- Seasonality refers to seasonal changes, such as those affecting:
 - assets,
 - activities
 - prices,
 - production,
 - health, employment opportunities etc.
- Vulnerability arising from seasonality is often due to seasonal changes in the value and productivity of natural capital and human capital (through sickness, hunger etc).
- The poor are often more vulnerable to these changes than richer groups.

Trends

- Trends are a key element in the vulnerability context
- They can have either a positive or a negative effect on livelihoods and involve changes that take place over a longer period of time than is the case with changes brought about by shocks or seasonality
- They are usually more predictable than shocks
- They have a particularly important influence on rates of return (economic or otherwise) to chosen livelihood strategies.
- Example of trend from fisheries sector, e.g. long-term reduction in wild fish catch

Examples of trends, shocks, seasonality

Trends	Shocks	Seasonality
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Population trends• Resource trends (including conflict)• National/international economic trends• Trends in governance (including politics)• Technological trends	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Human health shocks• Natural shocks• Economic shocks• Conflict• Crop/livestock health shocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Of prices• Of production• Of health• Of employment opportunities